



**PAPA Promoting work - life bAlance to
professional male Parents (or/and single
parents) and cArers)**

GUIDE - TOOLKIT



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PROJECT PAPA : Promoting work - life bAlance to professional male Parents (or/and single parents) and cArers)

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The development of technology has brought about rapid developments in employment both in nature and in the structure of work with a direct result of changes in lifestyle and work that cause conflict in private and professional life, due to the increasing demands of working life and for all sexes.

The balance between professional and family life, called internationally *work-life balance*, does not only concern personal time but also family relationships and quality of life in general. We live in an era where balancing personal and professional life is not only a challenge for women. The interest now also shifts to men and in fact, it is imperative to focus on the active role of men in equality issues as human rights.

Men have traditionally been pressured to spend more hours in the workplace resulting in a lack of balance between work and family for the father, who is considered the "bearer" of home. This lack of balance is reflected in unavailable time for childcare, absence of his participation in family life, as well as negative effects on his own health (physical and mental) and their interpersonal relationships.

It is therefore necessary to activate and strengthen men so that they become positive recipients of the harmonization of family and professional life, through substantial equality but also through the upgrading of the role of the father within the family, given that the absence of the father directly affects the psycho-emotional and social children's development.

Among other things, a means and an important tool for their activation, but also an important



tool is the use of parental leave, as provided in European Legislation (European Directive 1158/2019) which was incorporated by Law 4808/2021 into the national legal framework in Greece and law no. nr. 144/2020 on parental leave in Iceland. Establishing parental leaves as well as strengthening the duration of paternity leave, sets basic conditions in order to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family, and to provide the opportunity for more active participation of fathers in the provision of parental care.

The PAPA (Promoting work-life balance to professional male parents or single parents and carers) project funded by the European Union within the Erasmus+ KA210-ADU program coordinated by the Institute of Prevention and Development (IPD) from Greece, in collaboration with Einurd from Iceland is an innovative project, which will address the need to balance the family and professional life of the working father.

The goal of the PAPA project is to address the conflict between personal and professional life, which is associated with a number of indicators of bad health and reduced well-being (such as higher levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, decreased life satisfaction, etc.) with an emphasis on working male parents and/or single parents and carers of any age.

The basis of the PAPA project was created and designed by the Institute for Prevention and Development - IPD, which was then developed and implemented with Einurd partner. Through specially designed educational activities, the project aims that the target group "parents" and in particular "working male parents (and/or single parents) and caregivers" will be able to acquire skills, understand the importance of work and family life balance and be encouraged to undertake equal shares of caring responsibilities. To achieve consequently, the treatment of reduced well-being, high stress levels and emotional exhaustion that have a negative impact not only to their health but also to the bond of fathers with their children.

With the PAPA project and in particular with the development of the Guide that you hold in your hands, we seek to effectively help the target group, since it can be easily used either personally by the beneficiaries, or for the conduct of educational activities by interested parties, or for information and raising awareness among the general public about the issue.

The PAPA project was created in the summer of 2022 and after being approved for funding, its



implementation began on 1/3/2023. The kick – off meeting of the partners took place on 5/4/ 2023 and then the field research with questionnaires and interviews began to be conducted in both participating countries (Greece – Iceland).

The first action open to the public was implemented live on 4/7/23 as part of Father's Day celebration. It was an empowerment and well-being activity for fathers and in particular a two-hour experiential workshop with stress management, mindfulness and embodiment techniques as a basic tool, which was intended to address the need to balance the professional and personal life of the modern working father. It was an action that took place for the first time in the region of Thessaly Greece.

On 9/1, 11/1, 16/1 and 18/1/24 the planned peer training was implemented online where the members of the partner organizations and other interested parties participated - as the activity was also open to the general public. The training was designed and implemented by the Icelandic partner Einurd. This specific training activity was necessary to achieve the goals of the project since many of the training tools and exercises included in the Guide - Toolkit you hold in your hands have been tested in real conditions, evaluated and perfected and thus ensured their effectiveness in the target group. In particular, the results of this activity consist of: a) a transformative approach in order to deal with the different dimensions of the parent's role in relation to active professional life b) the existence of an integrated stress prevention model with comprehensible, pleasant and easy-to-use exercises c) the existence of an effective material with activities and information regarding the promotion of work-family life balance and d) raising awareness and information about the negative effects of work-family life imbalance on the role of the father as well as on the father's health.



Introduction to the toolkit

The toolkit you hold in your hands is a guide for male parents, single parents, carers, all professionals or organizations wishing to organize non-formal learning modules aiming to create or strengthen the skills needed to promote the work-family life balance of the working father and the promotion of well-being and health. In the first part, it presents the stage of the research, an epigrammatic reference to the current legal framework of the EU as well as of the two participating countries regarding parental leave, the questionnaire used as a primary research tool. Then its results are analyzed and a brief comparison of the results of the two countries is made. The second part is devoted to the importance of active fatherhood in child's development, parenting styles, discipline and the establishment of rules and boundaries as key tools of child's development, positive reinforcement, emotional intelligence and the development of skills such as empathy and communication. The third part deals with the father's personal empowerment, self-care, and stress management in order to promote a strong father-child relationship. The information is given in the form of short advice and tips and is based on relevant bibliography that is summarized at the end of the guide. Finally, the appendix provides techniques and exercises for self-awareness, emotional intelligence, cultivating well-being, dealing with stress and mindfulness techniques, which can be used independently by all family members, individually and/or in groups.



PART I

CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH STAGE

1.1 Legal Framework

Parental leave for working men has historically been a crossroads for work-family balance in every society. The legislation on paternity leave differs significantly between the countries of the European Union demonstrating significant discrepancies between the legal systems with sometimes flexible and sometimes more conservative options. At this point, an epigrammatic reference will be made to the current legal framework both at the level of the European Union and at the national level of the two partner countries (Greece - Iceland).

At the level of the European Union, the Directive 2019/1158 on the balance between work and private life for parents and carers, aims to defend one of the fundamental principles of the Union: equality between men and women. Policies that promote work-life balance help alleviate gender stereotypes as well as divide responsibilities within the family, giving fathers an equal share of childcare responsibilities.

The Directive 2019/1158 aims at a multifaceted guarantee of equal participation of sexes in the labor market, motivating men to better combine family care responsibilities with the demands of their professional life, breaking down possible taboos and discrimination around this issue.

A minimum of 10 working days is therefore set for the exercise of the right to paternity leave for the father or the corresponding second parent, while the minimum requirements for parental leave and care leave are also provided for, which amount to 4 months and 5 working days, respectively. EU Member States must take the necessary measures to ensure that working parents with children up to a certain age and carers have the right to request flexible working arrangements for care reasons.

Through the Directive, the possibility of employees who exercise the right to leave to receive



the payment or allowance provided for by the respective articles, as well as the inviolability of their acquired employment rights, is guaranteed bilaterally. The Union is now called upon to meet the challenge of increasing the low rates of leave used by working fathers in its Member States by facilitating the combination of work and family life.

Law 4808/2021 marks the adaptation Directive (EU) 2019/1158 by Greek Legislation on work-life balance for parents and carers and the repeal of Council Directive 2010/18/EU. As a step towards the abolition of the chronic incompatibility between professional and family life for men in Greek society, a framework is introduced to strengthen the presence of the father in the distribution of family responsibilities.

With regard to parental leaves, the new legal framework significantly extends the duration of the 10 working days set by Directive 4808/2021 as a minimum to 14 days, with wages received in whole or in parts, for paternity leave. Any working father may, following the necessary procedures, obtain: either (a) 2 days leave before the expected date of birth, in which case the remaining 12 days are granted, in whole or in part, within 30 days of the date of birth, or (b) the total of the prescribed leave days after the date of birth. The law also provides paternity leave in the case of adoption of a child, aged up to 8, from the time the child joins the family.

Parental leave, as the employee's inalienable right to raise the child, is determined over a period of 4 months, which can be taken either continuously or in parts, until the child reaches the age of eight (8). It is also foreseen, for the first time, the granting of an allowance by the government services for the leave in question, on a monthly basis, in an amount equal to the minimum statutory salary, as defined each time. In addition, 5 working days of carer/caregiver leave and the establishment of flexible work arrangements for care reasons, such as teleworking, flexible working hours or part-time work, for children up to twelve (12) years of age are introduced. The law also provides a number of rights for working parents, including childcare leave, leave due to children's medical issues and leave for children's school performance.

It is also interesting that with the latest law 4997/2022, the mother is given the possibility to



transfer up to seven (7) months out of the nine months (9) special maternity protection leave to the father, if he works in a dependent labor relationship of a certain or of indefinite duration in enterprises or holdings with full or part-time employment. The mother, since she herself is the beneficiary of the special leave and provision of maternity protection, chooses how to exercise her right and in particular whether she will exercise all of it herself or whether she will transfer part of the right to the special leave to the father of the child. In such cases of division of leave between the parents, all the general and special provisions relating to the special provision of maternity protection apply to the father in the same way as they apply to the working mother who exercises the same right, especially with regard to the protection of working rights in his absence.

In Iceland, parental leave lasts 12 months and is divided equally between both parents, father and mother. However, 6 weeks can be transferred from one parent to another (see Ministry of Labor website VMST, n.d.). Single parents and families with children over the age of two – the age at which children can enroll in daycare centers and then kindergarten – receive special allowances. Primary school in Iceland is free for children and school meals are subsidized. All parents in Iceland also receive a leisure allowance for use in the children's sports, music education or other leisure activities. This allowance is paid by the municipalities and the amount varies. Finally, the state pays child benefits to parents with children under the age of 18, as well as additional amounts for children under the age of 7. Child benefits are paid in four installments during the year and their amount is determined by income criteria.

1.2 Questionnaire

At this stage of the research the aim was to search for the issues faced by male respondents who are working parents (and/or single parents) or carers in each country. The creation of the questionnaire began with the clear formulation and documentation of the research questions. Through the use of the questions, the aim was to obtain as information both the data and the conditions arising from the personal field of the individuals who make up the target group, as well as from the field of their immediate environment. To discover their behaviors, such as, indicatively, the distribution of



working time, the use of leaves or flexible forms of work. To present what their opinions are regarding the balancing of professional and family life and also their own attitude towards the matter. Finally, what is their knowledge about the subject of the research?

The research questions were mainly formulated in the following pillars:

- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ Child rearing- Involvement
- ✓ Work – Work conditions
- ✓ Family and professional life balance
- ✓ Legislation and Rights

More specifically, the needs for research were identified as follows:

- Research to record the actual work burnout
- Research on sleep management during working days
- Research on knowledge about relaxation techniques to deal with burnout and stress
- Research to determine geographical areas that may require further action for information on work life balance.
- Monitor the information of the respondents about the existing legislation on parental rights.
- Study of men's use of paternity leave and flexible work patterns.
- Research on the right information of the working environment for the balancing of professional and family life
- Research on the correct implementation of work environment policies for balancing work and family life
- Research on support from the work environment to parental identity.

From the implementation team, the "target group" was defined as male working parents (and/or single parents) or caregivers, including freelancers. It was important for the implementation team to identify the dimension geographically, both nationally and geographically outside the country. Taking into account the geographical configuration of Greece, the aim was to research and capture the



image, between a mainland and an island country, but also the possible difference that may exist between the large urban areas and the smaller regional ones, from which the rhythms of life vary but and to obtain the information as to whether the correct information is sufficient for both the companies and the agencies but also the employees themselves as well as whether actions related to the subject are carried out.

The questionnaire, a popular interview research method, was used as primary research. The questionnaire was structured through the digital platform Google Form, with a simple format and well organized in its pillars, to avoid any discomfort from the participants at the risk of degrading the quality of the data collected.

It was promoted in electronic form on the one hand through the social network channels of the participating organizations and also in the personal network of its members, it was sent to various companies by email and also in hard copy, it was shared and completed live at relevant events in order to cover a competent but also efficient number of responses (at least 100).

Attention was paid to correctly inform the respondents about the use and destination of the data resulting from the research and the purpose of their processing, i.e. that they are intended exclusively within the framework of the European PAPA project and are treated with absolute confidentiality and anonymity. It was ensured that the questionnaire is anonymous, and the respondents were assured, but also the implementation team took the relevant measures, that no data will be obtained from the survey about the connection through which the questionnaire was answered, but above all that in no case any of the data requested will be used to identify the survey participants or to identify the organization where they work.

The questionnaire was in the form of "Self-completion". Respondents filled in/selected the answers themselves. Short questions were used since very long and complex questions are difficult to understand. Questions containing two sub-questions at the same time were avoided, so that they are immediately understood and the participants can immediately answer them. The questionnaire did not include negative questions because they are difficult to understand especially when one has to choose



EINURD

IPD

Institute of Prevention
and Development

between agreement and disagreement.

The answer formats were dichotomous with "Yes" and "No" in questions aimed at obtaining information and facts. The scaled response format was adopted for questions that the implementation team wanted to seek more information about the actual response of the respondents and to take advantage of the possibility of deeper analysis of the data. Finally, there were few open-ended responses where respondents could shape their answers.

To collect the data the implementation team also conducted interviews: the interviews involved conducting individual conversations face-to-face, online or by telephone with the participants to gather information about their experiences, beliefs or opinions on the subject of the research. The interviews that were given are characterized by spontaneity and this is because they did not allow the interviewee to a large extent to post-process the answers he gave. For both the interviews and the questionnaire, hard professional language was not used, but a simple language understood by the general public.

1.3 Reporting and Analysis

After collecting the data from both countries and in order to properly report and analyze the results of the research stage, the project team used a structured process that facilitated the separation of the various findings and highlighted the most important ones. This process involved categorizing the findings of the questionnaires, categorizing the findings based on the topics discussed during the interviews, the end users who participated in the survey, and notable observations.

As mentioned above, the data collected during the research stage underwent a process of processing, correlation, grouping and turned into proposals for educational activities, selection of the most appropriate methodology and tools for the implementation of quantitative and qualitative research. At a second stage, during the debriefing procedure, attempts were made to give meaning to the set of primary and secondary data collected through analysis.

The results obtained can be summarized as follows:



Summary of the results of the questionnaire of the PAPA project of the organization "Institute of Prevention and Development" of Greece

In the research carried out, 140 persons aged between 19 and 45+ participated, coming from various geographical areas and mostly (75%) from Thessaly and Central Macedonia. More specifically, out of the 140 persons who completed the questionnaire, 57.1% were over 45 years old, 30% were between 30 and 45 years old, and just 12.9% were between 19 and 30 years old. This could indicate that the majority of men are having children at an older age than perhaps in the past, which is probably connected to the increased demands of today's society and the lack of creating safe conditions that will allow the creation of a family.

Regarding the educational level of the participants, it was surprising that 37.1% have a university degree, 32.9% have completed postgraduate studies while 7% hold a doctorate. Only 20% have completed secondary education while only 2.9% have attended high school (mandatory education in Greece). We realize, therefore, that more and more people are investing in knowledge and specialization through postgraduate and related educations which on the one hand develop the human resources looking for work since the professional advancement tends to become more competitive and on the other hand prolongs the expectation of creating a family, for those who wish, which is linked to the above mentioned information in relation to the age of the participants.

Out of the 140 persons who completed the questionnaire, 87.5% stated that they were in a marriage or cohabitation relationship, while 7.1% stated they were single. Additionally, 41% reported having one child, 49% two children and 10% three children. The fact that only 90% have one or two children indicates that the low birth rate in Greece and Europe is increasing with the main causes being uncertainty in the workplace, the high cost of prenatal check-up, childbirth and raising children and the difficulty of accessing health services. According to Eurostat data, released on the occasion of World Children's Day on November 20, 49,5% of households in the EU have one child, 38,2% two children and 12,4 % of EU households are raising three or more children. Regarding Greece, among households with children, 47.4% have one child, almost 37% have two children and 15.7% three children. This particular



survey conducted on a sample of 200 million people comes to confirm the rates of our own field research. Furthermore, according to the responses collected, 34.3% have a child or children aged 0 to 5, 30% 6 to 12, 18.6% 13 to 18 and 17.1% over 18 years old.

All those who responded to the questionnaire stated that their participation in raising children is considered necessary. However, only 57% of them reported that they are very actively involved in parenting, 33% reported that they are just involved (but not very actively), 7% reported that they participate only some of the time, and the remaining 3% reported that they do not participate at all. 79% of the respondents would like to have a more active role in raising their children but for 47% of them work was identified as a limiting factor in parenthood. According to studies, children with fathers who are involved in their upbringing and care for them do better in their education, in the long run, while fathers who are involved in upbringing and play with their children from a young age appear to have higher IQ, as well as better language and cognitive development. 76% answered that they do not participate in a parent and guardian association.

Moving on, regarding work-life balance only 60% reported having consistent work hours, while around 30% reported working more than 40 hours per week. About half of the respondents are not happy with their work schedule as they too often exceed their normal working hours while 25% too often take some work home as they do not have time to complete tasks at the office even working on weekends. However, only 7% take work with them on vacation. In addition, nearly 92% of the respondents reported sacrificing sleep time to spend more time with their family, and two out of three respondents checked their email even after leaving work.

In terms of the impact of work on their parenting role, half of the respondents reported missing an important event for their children (e.g. a school play) due to work, while fatherhood affects career choices for 72% of the respondents. Almost half of the respondents (54%) had to change jobs or adjust their work to raise their children while about 40% reported staying in a particular job even if they wanted to change it, due to fatherhood. In general, it emerged that fathers and caregivers in Greece are not very familiar with the context of work-life balance. Most answered that balance affects both partners since 54% answered that balance is interpreted as equal time dedicated to family and work, even pointing out that a supportive work environment greatly affects this situation. Unfortunately,



according to the data collected, in a large percentage (40%) their work environment is not particularly supportive since there are no policies related to work-family life balance while most of them were not even aware of the existence of these policies. Regarding mental health issues, almost half (44%) of the respondents are aware that family-work life imbalance is linked to stress and work burnout, while 70% stated that they do not know techniques to relieve stress and achieve breath control. Finally, 89% stated that they need more information regarding the management of stress and work burnout, while 42% of them have no knowledge of the Greek Legislation regarding parental leaves and special leaves in cases of need or if not use is made of the corresponding leaves provided by the mother.

Summary of questionnaire results of the PAPA project of the organization "Einurd", Iceland

A total of 75 fathers answered the questionnaire, of which 56% were aged 45+, 36% were aged 30-45 and 8% were aged 19-30. The level of education of the fathers surveyed was primary education by 8%, secondary education/VET by 24%, BS/BA degree by 28% and postgraduate by 40%. The fathers had very different professional backgrounds. Most of the respondents live in the capital (69.9%), although several live in other parts of the country, most of them in South Iceland (15.1%) which is close to the capital. The majority of respondents were either in a relationship or married (82.7%) while 10% were divorced. The fathers who responded had 1 to 7 children while most of them (24%) had two children.

All of them felt that spending time with their children was either important or very important, and most were actively involved in raising their children. The majority of fathers were employed (4 unemployed) and the majority did not have flexible working hours (66.7%) while most worked 40 hours per week and were mostly satisfied with their working hours while they usually do not work at home, on the weekend or during the holidays. About half of them were absent from important events in their children's lives because of work (51.6%) and most answered that being a father did not affect their choice of work (55.6%) but neither did their current work on whether they will have a child. Most of them were aware of the concept of work-life balance, just under half felt there was a balance (47.2%) while 37.6% felt they spent more time at work than with family. Most respondents felt that they had the support of their employers to actively participate in their parenting role and that their workplace



supported work-life balance (76.4%). Most of them did not know that their municipality of residence promotes a work-life balance policy (66.7%) and most of them were surprised by the idea that work-life balance could affect stress and exhaustion. Most of them had worked overtime and sacrificed sleep to spend time with their family (77.3%) or to work (74.7%).

Very few of them knew the benefits of breathing techniques or mindfulness activities, nor did they believe that the Municipality offered them such training to improve work-life balance. However, most of them were interested in receiving further information about such activities (68%).

Having presented the results of the questionnaires of both organizations we will attempt to compare them and observe possible similarities and differences of the two systems.

Starting with the similarities that emerged from the results of the questionnaires, most of the respondents in both countries were over 45 years of age and had a high level of education. Specifically, 57.1% in Greece and 56% in Iceland declared their age to be over 45, while 32.9% in Greece and 40% in Iceland hold a master's degree. In addition, most of them (82.7% and 87.5% in Iceland and Greece respectively) are married and usually have 2 children. Very important is the observation that in both countries, the participants are not aware of the laws and the protection and assistance policies provided by the municipalities as well as mindfulness and stress relief and breathing control techniques. Finally, a common point is the fact that in both cases the fathers have been absent at some point from an important event in their child's life and most have sacrificed hours of sleep to spend time with their families.

On the other hand, the differences between the two systems of Greece and Iceland seem to be many and important. The participants of both countries agreed that the participation of fathers in raising children is important, however in Greece unlike Iceland, only 57%, i.e. almost half, participate in it. In addition, regarding the working conditions in Greece, most are not happy with the work environment they find themselves in, given that the majority also work on weekends and during holidays, phenomena that do not seem to be found in Iceland. Furthermore, in Iceland the working environment is generally supportive and the existence or desire to have children does not affect and does not constitute a brake on the career path of fathers, in contrast to Greece, where having children



is a suppressive factor for fathers, given that most of them answered that the arrival of their child has negatively affected their dynamics, in terms of changing the work environment, while in any case employers do not support these important and essential changes of their employees' ' personal lives. In conclusion, in Iceland the employees stated that they are familiar with the concept of personal and professional life balance, while in Greece there is ignorance.

PART II

CHAPTER 2: PRACTICAL GUIDE- TOOLKIT

2.1. Introduction

Historically, mothers have received more research attention than fathers. In fact, regarding the question of the balance between family and professional life, mothers have been characterized more often as the main caregivers of children, while fathers have been characterized as "teammates". However, in many countries, gender roles have become more equitable over time, and research now shows that fathers play many important roles in children's development.

The father is not just a helper to the mother, but his role is important to the children in his own right. Children with aware and supportive fathers have higher levels of social competences and better relationships with their peers, better school performance and more advanced language skills. The father can serve his role even when he does not live with the child. When children – even when they do not live with the father - have regular positive contact with the father, they tend to regulate their emotions better than children who, while living with their father, do not have substantial contact with him.



2.2 Understanding the role and responsibilities of a father

A father's roles and responsibilities are multifaceted and varied, and it is important to understand them before proceeding with techniques to strengthen them. Indicatively, their most important aspects are the following:

1. "Bearer": Traditionally, the father was considered the "bearer" of the family, responsible for providing financial support and ensuring the material well-being of their children.
2. Protector: The father often takes on the role of protecting his children from harm, be it physical, emotional or psychological.
3. Role Model: The father serves as a role model for his children, influencing their behavior, values and attitudes. He teaches his children respect, responsibility and empathy.
4. Supportive: The father provides emotional support to his children, helping them to know and express their feelings openly and honestly. It also encourages them to pursue their interests and passions and celebrate their achievements.
5. Educator: The father plays a decisive role in the education of his children. He helps with homework, encourages their curiosity and instills their love of learning.
6. Caregiver: The father is involved in the daily care of his children, including the routine of feeding, bathing and preparing for bed.

2.3. The importance of active fatherhood in child's development

But why is active fatherhood so important? Because it plays a key role in a child's development in areas such as social competences, academic performance, emotional intelligence and well-being. In particular, children with sensitive and supportive fathers have higher levels of social competences, better relationships with peers and more advanced language skills. Finally, the father can influence a child's well-being indirectly, through his relationship with the child's mother. Conflict between parents is detrimental to children's well-being, especially if the conflict is hostile and unresolved. Supportive relationships between parents lead to better emotional self-regulation of the child and reduce the



chances of developing problematic behaviors.

In this context, active fatherhood is not only about meeting the child's material needs, but also his cognitive, emotional and social needs. It's about being there for the child, both physically and emotionally, and playing an active role in their upbringing.

2.4. Parenting Styles



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Researchers have identified four main types of parenting. Before we proceed to present them, we give you an exercise that can help you identify which type characterizes you more.



EXERCISE

Take a moment and try to answer the following questions honestly:

Answer YES or NO if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Do you believe that children should be seen but not heard (AN)



- When it comes to rules, do you think it's "my way or the highway"(AN)
- You do not consider your child's feelings (AN)
- You put a lot of effort into creating and maintaining a positive relationship with your child (AV)
- You explain the reasons behind the rules (AV)
- You set limits, enforce rules and give consequences, but consider your child's feelings (AV)
- You set rules but rarely enforce them (P)
- You don't give consequences very often (P)
- You believe that your child will learn better with little intervention from you (P)
- You don't ask your child about school or work (U)
- You rarely know where your child is and/or with whom (U)
- You don't spend much time with your child (U)

The letters AN, AV, P and U reflect the following parenting types. Read the descriptions and reflect on the answers you have given.

Authoritarian parent (AN)

This style is characterized by strict rules and high expectations. Parents who use this style often use punishment rather than discipline and expect their children to follow the rules without explanation.

Authoritative Parent (AV)

This style is characterized by reasonable demands and high responsiveness. Parents who use this parenting style set clear standards and guidelines, but are also understanding and supportive. (This is usually the recommended parenting style)

Permissive Parent (P)

This style is characterized by low demands with high responsiveness. Permissive parents tend to be very loving, yet provide few guidelines and rules. These parents do not expect mature behavior



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from their children and often seem more like a friend than a parental figure.

Uninvolved Parent (UN)

This style is characterized by few demands, low responsiveness and little communication. Inattentive parents may neglect children not intentionally or because they do not love them, but simply because they are overwhelmed by other responsibilities and do not have the time.

It is important to note that these styles are generalized. However, in reality, parents may display different styles in different situations and with different children in the same family.

But what is the effect of each style on the child's development?

- **Authoritarian Parent:** Children raised by authoritarian parents may become obedient and competent, but they may also rank lower in happiness, social competences, and self-esteem. They are often left wondering what exactly they did wrong as mistakes are punished - often quite harshly.
- **Authoritative Parent:** Children raised by democratic parents are often happy, capable and successful. This style encourages children to be independent, but still places limits and controls on their actions. It is considered the best parenting style worldwide.
- **Permissive Parent:** Children raised by permissive parents may rank low in happiness and self-regulation. They may have problems with authority and tend to perform poorly in school.
- **Uninvolved Parent:** Children who grow up with indifferent parents rank lowest in all areas of life. They tend to lack self-control, have low self-esteem, and are less competent than their peers.



2.5. Education - setting boundaries



2.5.1 Understanding the importance of discipline and setting boundaries

Discipline and setting boundaries are critical aspects of parenting as well as the entire course of child development. Here are some key points:

1. Safety and compliance: Boundary-based discipline involves establishing clear boundaries that show children what they are allowed to do and what is off limits. When children know what the consequences are for crossing boundaries, they comply more easily with them.

2. Structure and Guidance: Setting boundaries for children is thus a form of guidance and helps them develop important life skills, allowing them to understand acceptable behavior and develop a sense of discipline.

3. Social norms and expectations: When clear boundaries are established, children learn to adapt to social norms and expectations. This understanding contributes to their overall development and prepares them for future interactions and relationships.

4. Safe Environment: Boundaries promote a safe environment for children. By setting boundaries, parents can protect their children from potential harm and dangerous situations

5. Positive parent-child relationship: Setting boundaries encourages a positive parent-child relationship. It allows parents to provide consistent guidance and support, which helps build trust and



security.

6. Development of self-discipline and respect: As children are trained to comply with the limits set by their parents, they develop as they grow up self-discipline and self-respect, tools that will prove extremely useful to them in their adult lives.

2.5.2. Strategies for setting and enforcing rules

Setting and enforcing rules for children is a difficult task and a challenge at the same time. At this point we will give some strategies to make the enforcement of the rules and the establishment of limits as effective as possible:

1. **Clarity:** Be clear when setting boundaries. Don't assume. Children don't know the family rules until you talk to them. Also make sure children understand why these rules are made and the consequences of breaking them.
2. **Consistency:** Be consistent in enforcing the rules. Stick to the consistency set for a broken rule.



Tip: Discipline will be more effective if your children are involved in setting the rules.

3. **Communication:** Discuss rights, rules and boundaries often. Be willing to discuss with the children whether a rule is fair and reasonable. Encourage your children to come to you when they need help.

4. **Care:** Along with discipline towards the rules, don't forget encouragement and support. Praise your children when they follow your family's rules, especially when they do what is expected of them without reminders from you.

5. **Limit the number of rules:** The number of rules you set depends on your child's ability to understand and remember them. It is difficult for parents to consistently enforce many new rules. Focus on only two or three of the most important rules at a time.



Tip: Remember, the key to effective enforcement is consistency and clear communication!

And here comes the "difficult" question:

How can I enforce the rules without being too strict with my child?

Enforcing rules without too much strictness involves a balance of clear communication, consistency and empathy.

To achieve this we do not forget the following:

1. **Clear communication:** Clearly state your expectations and the consequences of not following the rules. Use simple language and give examples to make sure your child understands.
2. **Consistency:** Apply the rules consistently. This helps your child understand that the rules are important and non-negotiable.
3. **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise your child when it follows the rules, especially when it does it without reminders from you. This encourages positive behavior and makes following the rules a more attractive option.
4. **Natural consequences:** Allow your child to experience the natural consequences of their actions. This can be a powerful teacher and encourage your child to make better choices in the future.
5. **Build trust:** Show genuine interest in your child's life outside of rules and discipline. This creates a strong connection and makes them feel more comfortable and open to you more easily.



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2.6. How to handle tantrums



1. Validate the feelings behind the anger: Acknowledge your child's feelings without agreeing or disagreeing. Use positive acknowledgment statements such as: "*Now you feel bad*", "*I know that made you angry*", "*That probably made you sad*» etc. With this approach you help them recognize how they feel and recognizing how they feel is the first step towards learning to manage their emotions and calm down.

2. Stay calm: Do your best to stay calm. Don't let your child's anger interrupt what you're doing and try not to get upset. This lets your child understand that tantrums are not an effective means of getting your attention or getting what they want.

3. Ignore rage: If possible, pretend nothing is happening and do not respond to your child's demands. However, some behaviors should not be ignored, such as kicking or hitting others, throwing objects that could cause damage or injury, or screaming for long periods of time.

4. Remove your child from the situation: If you are at home and your child cannot calm down, try a time-out. Move it to a quiet area without safety hazards.



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2.7. Positive reinforcement techniques



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Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool for shaping and changing behavior. For example, saying "*Good job cleaning your room!*" may encourage your child to repeat the behavior.

- **Non-verbal rewards:** This can be a thumbs up, a pat on the back or a hug. These gestures can show your child that you noticed and appreciated their good behavior.
- **Tangible rewards:** These are physical rewards such as stickers, toys or treats. However, these should be used sparingly to avoid creating a situation where the child behaves well just to get the reward.
- **Activity Rewards:** These are rewards in the form of favorite activities, such as playing a game or reading a book together. This not only reinforces positive behavior but also strengthens your bond with your child.
- **Social rewards:** Telling another adult how proud you are of your child's behavior while your child listens can be a powerful motivator.
- **Consistency:** You consistently reward the behavior you want to see more often, rather than just focusing on their negative actions.



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2.8. Emotional Intelligence

To help the development of the child's emotional intelligence it is necessary to understand and manage our own emotions. Here is a brief overview of key ways to cultivate and develop the father's emotional intelligence, which in turn will instill it in the child:

- **Self-awareness:** Self-awareness is the first step to understanding your emotions. It means recognizing when you are experiencing an emotion, identifying what that emotion is, and understanding its cause.
- **Self-regulation:** Once you are aware of your emotions, the next step is to learn to manage them. This does not mean suppressing your emotions, but rather expressing them in a healthy and appropriate way.
- **Self-care:** Taking care of your physical health can have a big impact on your emotional health. Regular exercise, a healthy diet, adequate sleep, and making time for relaxation and recreational activities are all equally important aspects of self-care.
- **Mindfulness:** Practicing mindfulness can help you stay focused in the present moment, which can make it easier to manage your emotions. This can include techniques such as meditation, deep breathing or yoga.
- **Seeking support:** If you are struggling to manage your emotions, it can be helpful to seek support from others. This could be a trusted friend or family member, a mental health professional or a support group.



2.8.1 Recognizing and responding to your child's emotions

By being trained to understand and manage your own emotions you can work on recognizing and responding to your child's emotions, which is a critical factor in parenting. Here are some steps to guide you:

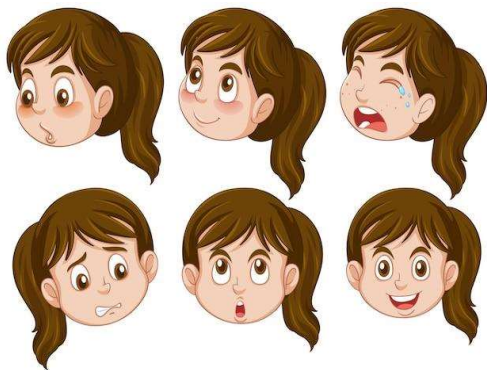
- **Observational Behavior:** Children express their feelings through their behavior. Pay attention to changes in their behavior as it could be a sign of their emotional state.
- **Active listening:** Listen to what your child says and how it says it. Its tone, volume, and speed of speech can provide clues to his emotions.
- **Validate feelings:** Let your child know that it's okay to feel the way they feel. Validation doesn't mean you agree with how it feels, but it does show that you understand and accept its feelings.
- **Empathy:** Try to put yourself in your child's shoes. This can help you understand why it feels a certain way.
- **Respond appropriately:** Your response should be appropriate for your child's emotional state. If it is upset, it may need comforting. If it is angry, it may need space to calm down, etc.
- **Teaching Emotional Literacy:** Help your child recognize and name their feelings. This can help them better understand their feelings and communicate them to others.
- **Modeling healthy emotional expression:** Show your child how to express their emotions in a healthy way by effectively managing your own emotions.



Tip: Remember, it's important to be patient with your child as it learns to deal with its emotions. It's also okay to seek professional help if you're having trouble understanding or responding to your child's feelings. It's a learning process for both of you.



What are some common emotions that children experience?



Children experience a wide range of emotions as they grow and develop. Here are some of the most common:

- **Happiness:** This is often the result of good news or positive experiences, such as receiving a gift or spending time with loved ones.
- **Sadness:** This feeling is usually the result of an unwanted incident or something not going as hoped.
- **Fear:** Fear is a basic mechanism possessed by all human beings. It can be caused by sudden, unexpected or unfamiliar stimuli. The nature of the fears is related to the age of the children.
- **Anger:** This is a common emotion in children and can be triggered by various situations, such as feeling misunderstood or not getting what they want.
- **Jealousy:** This emotion can arise when children feel they are getting less of something (such as attention, love or material goods) compared to other children.
- **Joy:** One of the most positive emotions experienced by children. It is similar to happiness, but is often associated with a sense of contentment and peace.
- **Affection:** Another pleasant emotion children often feel toward parents, siblings, friends, and

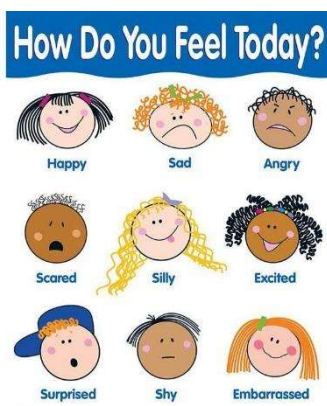


even pets.



Remember, it's normal for children to experience all of these feelings. As a parent or caregiver, it's important to help children understand and manage their emotions in a healthy way.

How can I teach my child emotional literacy?



Teaching emotional literacy to children means helping them understand and express their feelings.

Here are some strategies:

- ✓ Build emotion vocabulary: In the early grades, children should be able to identify and accurately label emotions such as sadness, joy, fear, surprise, upset, worry, and pride.
- ✓ Use Emotional Literacy Activities: Use activities and games that help children understand and express their feelings. This can include role playing, telling stories, drawing or other creative activities.
- ✓ Practice emotional literacy skills regularly: This could include talking about how characters in a book or movie might feel, or talking about your child's own feelings.



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- ✓ Emotional Literacy Model: Show your child how to express their emotions in a healthy way by effectively managing your own emotions. Your child will learn a lot by watching you.
- ✓ Encourage Expression of Feelings: Encourage your child to express its feelings verbally. This could include asking it how it feels about certain situations or encouraging it to talk about their feelings.



Remember, teaching emotional literacy is a gradual process, and it's okay if your child doesn't grasp these concepts right away. The aim is to create an environment where feelings are acknowledged, accepted and discussed openly.

2.8.2. Developing empathy and compassion



Developing empathy and compassion in children is a gradual process that involves several steps:

1. Awareness of self-emotions: The first step is to help children become more aware of emotions using steps such as those developed above.
2. Recognizing the emotions of others: Once children can recognize their own emotions, the next step is to help them recognize the emotions of others. This can be done through observation and discussion.



3. Understanding others' perspectives: Empathy involves understanding that others may have different feelings and perspectives. This can be taught through role-playing or discussing different scenarios.

4. Respond with compassion: Once children understand the feelings of others, they can be taught to respond with compassion. This might include comforting a friend who is upset or helping someone in need.

5. Practice: Like any other skill, empathy and compassion need to be practiced. This can be done through everyday interactions where children are encouraged to consider the feelings of others and respond appropriately.

6. Modeling Behavior: Children learn a lot by observing the adults around them. Therefore, it is important for parents and caregivers to model their own empathic behavior.



!! Remember, we are born connected and with the capacity for empathy, however developing it over the years requires experience and practice. It is also important to remember that empathy is a work in progress during childhood and adolescence and is shaped by a number of factors, including genetics, temperament, context, and environment.

How can I help my child develop social skills?



Helping your child develop social skills involves a combination of teaching, modeling, and



providing opportunities for practice. Here are some strategies:

- Teach basic social skills: Start by teaching your child the basics of good manners and politeness. This includes skills such as collaboration, active listening, and respect for personal space.
- Encourage interaction: Provide opportunities for your child to interact with others. This can be done through play days, group activities or sports etc.
- Role play: Use role play exercises to help your child practice social skills. This can be especially useful for preparing for new situations or dealing with conflicts.
- Model good social skills: Children learn a lot by observing the adults around them. Show your child how to interact positively with others.
- Practice Active Listening: Teach your child to listen to what others are saying and show interest in their conversations.
- Teach Problem Solving: Help your child learn how to resolve conflicts and solve problems in a positive and respectful way.



Don't forget: Developing social skills is a gradual process and each child progresses at their own pace. Be patient, provide frequent encouragement, and celebrate your child's social successes.

2.9. Communication skills

For an essential and effective communication with children, it is important to develop the followings kills:



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- ❖ Active listening: Show that you are engaged with what your child is saying by using gestures such as encouraging smiles and affirming nods. You can even sit low so that your eye level reaches the child's eye level. This will help it feel more secure and connected to you.
- ❖ Reflective listening: Repeat what the child tells you using different words. This leaves space for your child to express their feelings without judgment.
- ❖ Speak clearly: Use language that your child understands and is age-appropriate. Be clear, specific and don't use pejorative words.
- ❖ Avoid bribes: Offering rewards for key behaviors may give you short-term control, but it doesn't allow you to develop clear boundaries and can lead to mistrust.
- ❖ Undivided attention: Give your child your undivided attention when communicating with each other.
- ❖ Body Language: Focus on the child's body language, tone of voice as well as words so you can really understand what your child is trying to express.



Important: every interaction you have with your child is a form of communication. How you communicate with your child not only teaches them how to communicate with others, but shapes their emotional development and teaches them how to build relationships later in life.

The most common mistakes parents commit while talking to their children

O They talk too much: When parents go on and on talking, children become disengaged. Research has shown that the human brain can only hold four "chunks" of information or unique ideas in short-



term (working) memory at one time.

O Wait for things to get bad to communicate: Too often, we only communicate when something has gone wrong. Early communication can prevent situations and mitigate negative developments.

O Authoritarian or overly permissive parenting: This is two of the four types of parenting presented above.

CHAPTER 3: WORK-LIFE BALANCE -PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

3.1 Managing professional responsibilities and paternity

Balancing professional responsibilities and fatherhood can be difficult, but it is definitely attainable. Here are some strategies:

1. **Prioritize:** Understand that both roles are important and require your attention. Prioritize both areas and manage your time effectively.

2. **Set boundaries:** Set clear boundaries between work and family time. This could mean setting certain working hours and devoting the rest of your time to your family.

3. **Quality time:** Spend quality time with your children. Don't underestimate the short moments, which can be of great importance in strengthening the bond with your child.

4. **Flexibility:** Be flexible and accept that there will be times when you may need to put one role on hold, giving more weight to the other.

5. **Self-care:** Take care of your physical and mental health. This will not only make you more productive at work but also a better father.

6. **Seek support:** It's perfectly normal to feel down, confused or lost. Don't hesitate to seek support from your partner, family, friends or a professional. Everyone can help you, share your load and provide valuable advice.

7. **Role Model:** Be a positive role model for your children. Show them how to manage stress in



healthy ways and live a physically and psychologically balanced life.



Self-care ideas for dads

- Exercise. Physical exercise is essential for your self-care because it will help you maintain your physical, mental and emotional health.
- Get a massage: If you work a lot, then chances are that your back, neck and legs are always sore. Feel free to treat yourself to a deep tissue massage at the local spa.
- Rest: Don't forget to get enough rest. Get a few extra hours of sleep when you get the chance. Even men need a beautiful sleep!
- Meditation: Meditation is a great way to relax and calm down. Meditation helps the body recognize and deal with stress, nervousness and anxiety.
- Get out with friends: Socializing and maintaining positive relationships is an integral part of self-care, improves mental health, and increases energy and aids physical well-being.
- Make time for a hobby: Having a hobby is a great way to get creative and practice spiritual self-care. A dad can learn new skills and increase his knowledge by spending time doing his favorite hobby.



- Keep a diary. Journaling is a great way to release negative emotions, record your feelings, and deal with life situations.
- Get creative: Creativity feeds heart, soul and mind. It's a great way to practice self-care and connect with your inner self.
- Make something: Using your hands, you can channel your emotions and turn them into something creative and practical.
- Make a skincare routine: A good skincare routine is essential for self-care. Make time for your favorite skincare routine. This can be shaving and moisturizing the face, using a face mask, facial massage, etc.

3.2 Stress management techniques

Managing paternity stress



Feeling stressed about your parenting role is completely normal and human. You are not the only one who feels this way and you don't need to panic but you don't need to ignore its symptoms either. Here are some strategies that can be helpful to keep your stress levels down and deal with a difficult situation with a clear head.



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- ✓ Accept that you can't fix everything – One of the key things to keep in mind is that it's not humanly possible to do everything perfectly. Keep in mind that even difficult situations provide an opportunity to learn something – about your partner, your child and yourself as a parent, so take the time to think about what worked last time and might be useful in the future.
- ✓ Talk to others – Dads can feel in the background or out of the mother-centered picture, especially during childbirth. While women can be very good at talking openly about their experiences, men often struggle. Talking about your experiences with friends and colleagues about the positive and challenging aspects of fatherhood can be beneficial.
- ✓ Take time for yourself – It is a fact that having a baby will affect your free time and some of your activities, however, try to do some things that you have always enjoyed. Taking up a sport can be great for your mental health and well-being and also connects you with others and keeps some continuity in your life.
- ✓ Support your partner – Having a baby puts women at risk of developing depression and anxiety. Early recognition of symptoms is valuable for both parents. Don't forget to remind her that you are there for her. It is also important to seek help as early as possible.
- ✓ Make time for both of you – Often the demands of the baby mean that your partner's focus and attention is now directed towards meeting the needs of your new baby, so it is important that you try to schedule some quality time for both of you.

3.3 Building strong bonds



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Promotion of a strong father – child relationship

Cultivating a strong father-child relationship is vital to child development. Here are some strategies to help strengthen that bond:

- **Start the day your child is born:** To build a positive relationship with your child, start from the day it is born. Be involved in their life from the start by taking an active role in your baby's care.
- **Set a good example:** Sons learn mostly by watching their fathers. A father's influence on their son's personal development is often invisible, but nonetheless real.
- **Spend time together:** Make sure you secure time with your child. This way you let your child know that it is important to you.
- **Develop common interests:** Find a hobby you can do together. Whether that involves collecting memorabilia, building model airplanes, gardening, or restoring an old car, find something that excites you both and do it together.
- **Work together on a project:** Working together on a project can be a great way to strengthen the father-child bond. It could be anything from a handyman at home to a school assignment._



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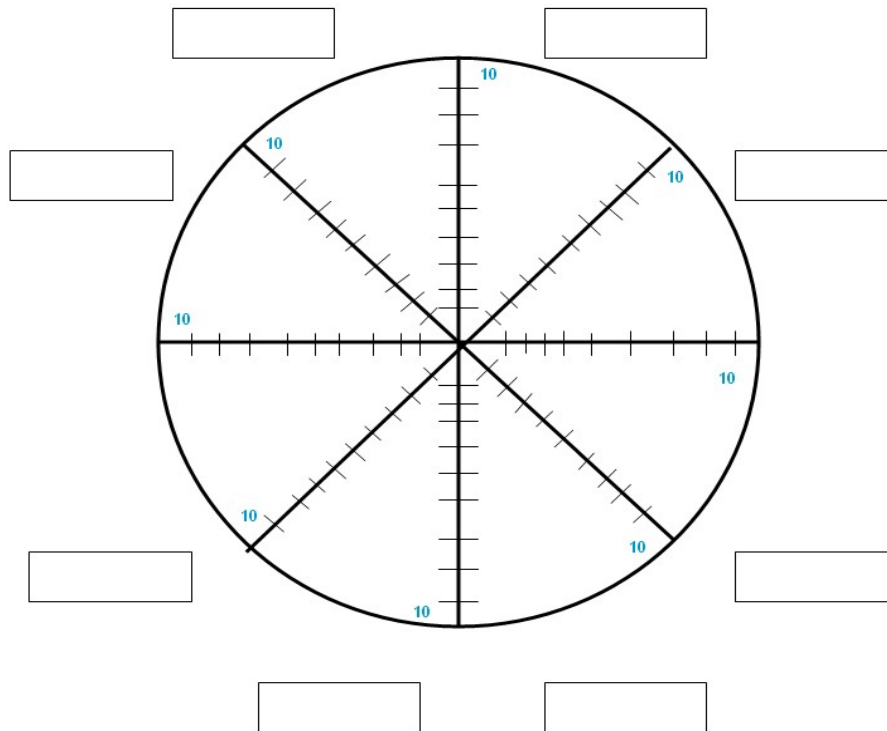
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ANNEXE

1. THE WHEEL OF LIFE



The Wheel is divided into eight sections, which correspond to eight areas of life that are considered important by the majority of people. However, everyone can choose which are the areas they will deal with according to their interests and the circumstances of their life during the specific period. After all, it is a tool that is good to come back to from time to time and not just use it once.

Indicative (but not limiting) areas that may be considered are the following:

- Health
- Entertainment – Free time
- Family
- Contribution
- Friends
- Living environment



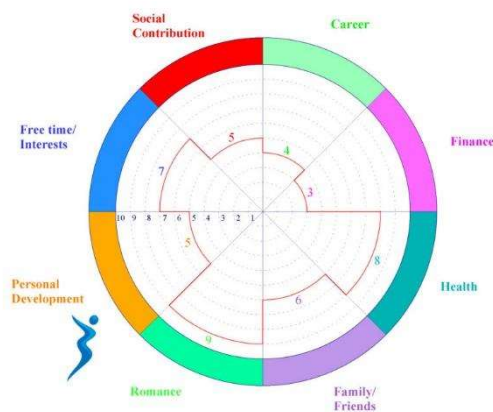
- Finance
- Personal Development - Learning
- Work
- Personal life

1.1 Exercise with the Wheel of Life

1. Choose eight important areas of your life this time and record them in the spaces around each section of the wheel (you can use the blank wheel above or draw it on a page).

2. Take some time and rate how satisfied you are with each area. Score from 1 to 10 (the center of the wheel is zero). You don't have to be precise, it's better to give a spontaneous answer.

The resulting wheel can have a form such as:



3. Time for introspection: Relax and study the wheel. Do you see something that surprises you? Are there any areas you would like/could improve your satisfaction rating? What can you start doing today to improve your chosen areas? Set goals and draw up an action plan.

At this point, additional questions such as:

What goals (if any) do I have regarding the following areas?

- Work (e.g. personal performance/effectiveness, career development, advancement, ability to lead/manage, motivation/fulfillment)
- Lifestyle, (e.g. work-Life Balance/ social Life/ hobbies/ interests)



- Relationships (e.g. partner/family/friends/relatives)
- Personal development (e.g. learning/ life experiences/ formal education)
- Sense of contribution (e.g. at work/ at home/ in the community)
- Health and well-being (e.g. diet and eating habits/ fitness, exercise, relaxation)

The Wheel of Life is an essential tool for developing awareness and getting to know ourselves. It is recommended to use it regularly and of course when a certain condition of our life changes (e.g. having a child, changing jobs, divorce, changing place of residence, retirement, etc.). With the Wheel of Life you can redefine your life and achieve changes you have never imagined.

2. LIFE MAPPING

Life mapping is a creative process that involves visualizing one's life goals, creating a plan, and setting milestones to achieve them. It is a holistic approach that includes various aspects of life such as career, relationships, health, finances and of course personal development.

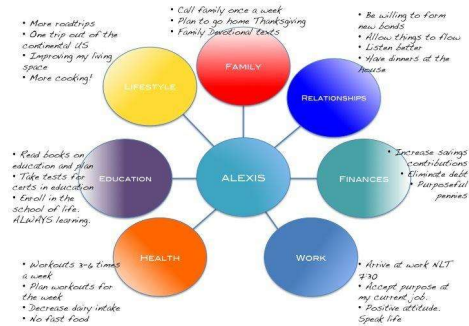
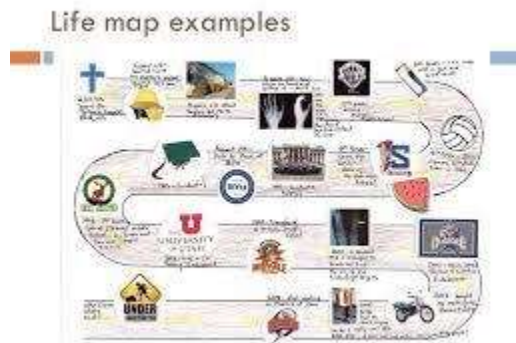
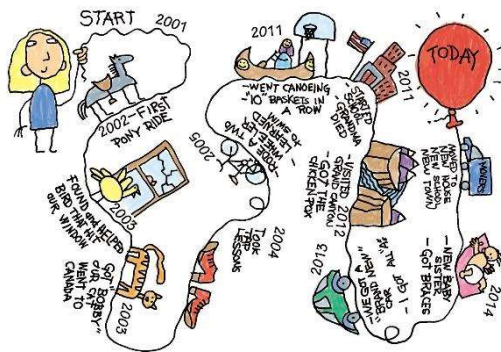
In addition to being a pleasant and easy-to-use tool, life mapping has many benefits for the user. First, it can help us gain clarity about our goals, prioritize them, and focus on specific action steps to achieve them. At the same time, by monitoring our progress and being essentially accountable to ourselves, we become more responsible while achieving each step is a motivation that fuels us to move forward. On the other hand, through the challenges and obstacles that will surely arise, we learn to become resilient, adaptive and flexible in order to redraw the map by updating it according to changing conditions. Life mapping promotes personal growth, boosts our confidence, leverages our knowledge and life experiences, and keeps us focused forward.

How to create a Life Map

A life map can take many forms and, as a general rule, there is no right or wrong way to create



one. It can be used to gain self-awareness, set personal goals, or just for fun. We can use paper and pencil, paints, stickers, collages, prints or even work on a ready-made template that we will find on the Internet. Indicative examples of different forms of mapping are the following:





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(The pictures have been downloaded from the Internet)

In any case it is good if we are not familiar with the particular tool to start without a clear plan in mind.

Life Mapping Steps

1. Think about your life

Before you start, take some time to think about your life. Consider your values, strengths, weaknesses, and past experiences. What are your long-term goals? Understanding these elements will form the basis of your life map.

2. Set SMART goals

Define your goals using the SMART model. This will ensure that your goals are clear, realistic and achievable.

3. 'Break' your goals into small pieces

Break your long-term goals into smaller, more manageable ones. In this way, they will seem more achievable to you while at the same time you will not lose your momentum.

4. Anticipate potential challenges and obstacles

Think about potential obstacles you might encounter and think of strategies to overcome them. In this way, you'll be better prepared to deal with them and stay on track.

5. Visualize

Using the information you have gathered, create a visual representation of your life map (as in the images above). This is also the most creative part and you can choose or create a format that suits and pleases you while allowing you to easily update and modify your map whenever needed.

6. Review and update

Check your life map regularly to track your progress, celebrate your achievements and identify areas for improvement. Update your map as needed with new targets if conditions change to keep it current and useful.



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EXERCISE

Get a pen and enough post-its. Take a deep breath and relax. Turn your mind to your life. Wait for thoughts to come to you. As they come, write each word or phrase on a post-it. Tape it to a large piece of paper or table. Keep writing as the ideas come to you. You might think about things like work, money, marriage, your dream car, problems with family, your pet, fears and worries, vacations you've wanted to take, hobbies – anything. Don't censor any of it. Just keep writing until you run out of ideas. Then observe the notes. Do you see a pattern? Are they goals, dreams, fear, regrets? Do they involve other people or just yourself? Do they come from a particular feeling, belief or desire? If possible, group the post-its by area of your life (e.g. health, work, family, relationships, money, leisure, etc.) or in any other way that makes sense to you. Then make your life map in whatever format and materials suit you. When you are done with your basic life map, look at it and answer the following questions:

- Do you like what it shows about you and your life?
- Is there anything you would like to remove or add to it? Why;
- What is most important to you on the life map?
- What makes you happiest?
- Which persons support you?
- Can you see yourself fulfilling the dreams and aspirations depicted on the map?

If you are honest to yourself, the chances are that you will see things on your life map that you are not happy with. You may also be surprised by things that you never thought were so important in your life, but appear on the map. At this stage the Life Mapping tool has already provided you with a lot of information about yourself and your goals for the future.

When working with the life map it is important to be honest to ourselves about our goals, strengths, weaknesses and limitations. At the same time it is important to be flexible as life is unpredictable and we are often called upon to adapt to new circumstances.



We do not forget that achieving our goals requires time, effort, patience and perseverance. As progress is often slow and incremental, we make sure to celebrate our small victories along the way and maintain a positive mental attitude. Finally, as in any endeavor, in working with the life map, we will have better results if we do not work alone. We can seek support from friends, family or professionals. Discussing our life map and sharing it with others can provide valuable insights, encouragement, well-being and positive emotions.

3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE – EMPATHY



EXERCISE

Strengthening our internal resources

Think of something that bothers you and how it makes you feel. Then imagine that a friend comes to you with the same problem. How will you talk to him? With this exercise, you will probably notice the gap between the kindness we give to people and the kindness (or lack thereof) we show to ourselves – there may be a significant difference, offering more patience, generosity and forgiveness to the friend and more cruelty and strictness to you.

(The exercise is by Psychology Professor Jamil Zaki and comes from ideas.ted.com/5-exercises-to-help-you-build-more-empathy)



EXERCISE 2

Analyze your energy levels and your daily health-related habits. Decide to improve your health and fitness by asking the following questions

What more should I do?

What should I do less of?

Eliminate any activity from your life that has negative effects on your fitness, health and energy



levels.

4. CULTIVATING WELL BEING AND SELF- CARE



Answer the following questions:

- What do you need (physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally) to be yourself at your best?

Be as detailed as you can. Use reflection to discover more information about yourself (self-awareness).

- What steps can you take this month to make self-care your priority?

Make an action plan.

5. STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

5.1 Body Scan

It concerns the development of the ability to recognize how our body reacts to stressful situations in our lives. The body through muscle pressure informs us that we are in a state of stress. Awareness of what is happening in the body is the first step in combating the painful symptoms of stress. Body scan techniques include exercises such as stress detection through mental scanning of the body,



alternating observation of external and internal stimuli, keeping a stress awareness diary, etc.

5.2. Breathing

Breathing, which is a basic condition for someone to remain alive, is considered by the majority of us as something given and self-evident. However, "poor" breathing habits prevent the adequate inflow of oxygen and elimination of carbon dioxide from the body and make it more difficult to deal with stressful situations. Adopting and using specific breathing patterns can help fight anxiety, panic attacks, tension, headaches and fatigue. As we learn to be aware of our breath and train in breathing techniques our mind can calm down and the body relaxes. Breath awareness and good breathing habits enhance psychological and physical well-being. The multitude of breathing techniques suggested by the literature include diaphragmatic or abdominal breathing, counting breathing, abdominal breathing using imagination, alternate nostril breathing, etc. The exercises can be done in a standing, sitting or lying position and are recommended to be performed on a daily basis.

Abdominal breathing **4-7-8:**

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds.

Box breathing:

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, before inhaling again.

Alternate nostril breathing:

Exhale and close the right nostril with the thumb - inhale from the left nostril - close the left nostril with the little finger and middle finger - open the right and exhale - inhale from the right - close the right - open the left - exhale. Continue for 5 minutes.



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EXERCISE

Find some time away from outside interference. Find a quiet room away from street noise and other distractions. Sit quietly on the floor or in a chair with a straight back and close your eyes. Breathe normally but as you exhale and inhale gradually begin to focus your attention to the breathing process without trying to control it. Become aware of the ebb and flow of the breath. If you notice your breathing going slower, faster or even stopping completely for a moment just be an observer without resisting. Allow the breath to stabilize on its own. If your thoughts wander or you lose focus don't resist, just let it return naturally to the breath. Continue meditating for 15 minutes. Then continue to sit with your eyes closed and allow a few minutes to return to your everyday awareness.

As you become more and more adept at this technique you will find that your thoughts become more and more quiet, your mind can become completely quiet allowing you to approach a state of peace and pure relaxation. Experiencing this on a regular basis will have huge benefits in reducing stress and fatigue.

6. INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness, like meditation, has its roots in Buddhism. Having entered Western psychology, it is used as an approach to increase awareness and skillful response to mental processes that contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive behavior.

Simply put, mindfulness is the ability to focus my full attention on something, fully noticing what is happening. Its regular practice can lead to the calmness of body and mind in their alignment and above all, greater self-awareness.

Among the mindfulness practices we find breathing exercises (as described above), the practice of active listening, as well as the conscious concentration in every theoretically simple daily activity with the participation of all the senses. E.g. walking, driving, eating, personal hygiene, housework, etc. In all of the above activities make sure to fully focus on what you are doing: body movements, taste, touch, smell, images, sound, etc. and then gently bring your attention back to the sensation of the breath.



Practicing mindfulness regularly and incorporating it into your daily lives can be beneficial in maintaining calmness and mental well-being, improving brain functions (such as creativity and imagination) and improving our physical well-being._

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