

COLECTION OF THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

HAPPY
HOLIDAYS



This document includes the main theoretical concepts addressed in the book "Happy Holidays". For each of the concepts, an outline is followed that includes definition, characteristics, how it is reflected in the story and bibliography.

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CONCEPT 1: COGNITIVE INFLEXIBILITY: CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPACT IN THE DAILY LIFE

Concept

Cognitive inflexibility means the difficulty to adapt yourself in front of a new information or to understand a different way to approach, to do something different from usual.

This inefficient capacity to switch different style of thinking, changing point of view, adapt and deals with many tasks, has a negative impact on cognitive and interactive performances and involves all the functioning of a person.

Cognitive inflexibility influences the difficulty on changing routines, meeting new people and assuming new roles, cooperating and empathizing with others.

How to observe in the story

In the early scenes of Mateo's story, it becomes evident that he struggles with cognitive inflexibility, finding it challenging to adapt to new information and interrupt his daily routine, such as waking up and going to school. Mateo is not readily prepared to cope with unexpected changes and new activities involving his family. All this has a negative impact on his cognitive and interactive performances.

Even simple tasks like waking up and engaging in activities different from his usual routine, such as preparing for grocery shopping, upset Mateo and disrupt his entire day. These disruptions can be overwhelming for him as he tends to rely on familiar patterns and routines.

Recalling the difficulties from the previous Christmas, Mateo's father recognized the need for a structured approach to help Mateo anticipate and understand what would happen day by day during the holidays, eliminating unexpected surprises. Mateo required sufficient time to process and adapt to the changes in his routine and behaviour that the holiday season would bring.

To mitigate the risk of Mateo feeling embarrassed or overwhelmed in front of his family, his father took proactive measures. He provided Mateo with a personalized introduction, showing him portraits of family members before their actual meetings. This allowed Mateo to connect faces to names and reduced the likelihood of awkward situations, helping him adapt to social interactions in a more comfortable manner.

Additionally, to establish clear boundaries Mateo and his father created a poster featuring illustrated rules and photographs. These visual aids served as cognitive



anchors for Mateo, enabling him to approach upcoming situations with more predictability and gradually adapt to the expected behaviour.

Through these thoughtful measures, Mateo was better equipped to handle the holiday season, gradually adapting himself to new situations and information while minimizing the stress and discomfort associated with cognitive inflexibility.

Bibliography

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CONCEPT 2: SOCIAL SKILLS

Concept

Social skills can be defined as the communication and interactive skills that we use daily. This can be both verbal and non-verbal, including body language, gestures, and personal appearance.

Children need relationships with peers to build social skills. These relationships teach children how to communicate and play well with others, all learning respect for social norms.

But social skills don't always come easy to children. Nevertheless, finding acceptance in a social circle can do wonders for a child's attitude and self-worth.

Anxiety, stress, or other communication barriers might prevent a child from knowing the appropriate action during a social interaction, which doesn't come naturally for some.

Social Skills are enormous today and affect how we interact, perform, and live our lives. Having excellent social skills helps an individual build and maintain many parts of life such as better communication, relationships, personal happiness, and satisfaction.

The evolution of play and shared play

Gaming plays an important role in the development of social skills. Here the principal steps of the evolution of play in children:

SOLITARY PLAY

Solitary play is common among children between the ages of 0 to 1 year old up to 18 months. Children of this age group enjoy playing alone. They demonstrate no interest in reaching out to others. They appreciate having an adult nearby but won't necessarily share their game or toy with him/her.

PARALLEL PLAY

Parallel play is characteristic between the ages of 18 months and 2 years. At this age, children will enjoy the same activity as the child next to them, without interacting with him/her. Children will not communicate; they may give the impression they are enjoying a group activity, but without interaction.

Between the ages of 2 and 3 years old, parallel play continues to be present. However, verbal exchanges will be more and more common among children.



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GROUP PLAY

Group play becomes possible between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. Parallel play is then a thing of the past. As a significant adult for children/caregiver you should focus on group animations and games. Children will love participating.

How to observe in the story

In Mateo's tale, it becomes apparent that his social skills are not well developed, which impacts his personal comfort when playing and interacting with adults and peers.

He often struggles with the confidence to engage in social activities and communicate effectively, both verbally and non-verbally, including body language, gestures, and personal appearance.

When it comes to playing with his cousins, Mateo proactively selected the games to share. This pre-emptive choice helps reassure Mateo and provides him with a sense of control and predictability before engaging in social interactions.

Recalling past Christmas holidays, Mateo's father remembers how Mateo would spend the day in a bad mood, crying, and throwing tantrums. He would withdraw from family gatherings, refusing to talk to anyone and even skipping meals because he disliked the food. This year had to be different, and there wasn't much time left for preparation. Recognizing that Mateo sometimes struggled to communicate appropriately and effectively with others, his father created a poster outlining acceptable and inappropriate behaviours to provide Mateo with a clear framework for interactive exchanges.

Mateo's limited interpersonal and social skills necessitate supervision and encouragement from his primary caregiver, ensuring that he can participate in social activities with confidence and comfort.

With the help of these intelligent aids and supportive strategies, Mateo now feels more at ease and free to enjoy his Christmas holidays in the company of others.

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CONCEPT 3: ANTICIPATION

Concept

Unexpected and unplanned events as meeting new people or facing new situations not always are well perceived in humans; for some children these possibilities could represent very scary situations, hard to handle.

In the daily education and management of children with some kind of developmental difficulties, anticipating and programming day life, included not ordinary events like meeting not well-known people, doing some extraordinary activities like parties, dinner- out, medical visits turns out to be essential.

Anticipators could be images, videos, tales, objects, to-do lists that could help children's performances and to support them to predict the upcoming action of complex actions.

How to observe in the story

In the story of Mateo, one of the most crucial tasks is to assist him in acclimating to unexpected and unfamiliar situations involving both himself and others at home. One essential aspect of this process is helping Mateo anticipate what will happen next, providing him with a sense of security and understanding.

At the outset of our tale, Mateo finds himself uncertain about what to expect during the Christmas holidays, and disruptions to his usual routine prove challenging to manage. To ease this transition, Mateo's father devised some strategies to help him become more accustomed to what lay ahead.

First and foremost, Mateo and his father collaboratively constructed a calendar, meticulously detailing their daily plans. This visual aid not only provided Mateo with a structured overview of their activities but also allowed him to anticipate and mentally prepare for each upcoming event, offering clarity and predictability.

In preparation for the festive Christmas dinner, Mateo's father took the time to describe the types of food that would be served, presenting images of dishes previously unfamiliar to Mateo. By doing so, Mateo could anticipate the meal and reduce any anxiety related to the unknown menu. They extended this approach to lunch by arranging a video call with his grandmother, who enthusiastically shared insights on the dishes to be prepared. This allowed Mateo to anticipate the upcoming meals and connect with the sensory experience.



To introduce Mateo to the extended family he would meet during the Christmas holidays, his father retrieved a photo album, recounting stories and identifying each family member.

This personalized introduction not only helped Mateo connect faces to names but also enabled him to anticipate meeting these family members, making the impending gatherings less intimidating.

For enjoyable interactions with his cousins, Mateo selected games to share in advance. By choosing the games beforehand, Mateo could anticipate the fun activities he would engage in with his cousins, reducing any uncertainty.

To establish clear boundaries and expectations for behaviour during the holidays, Mateo and his father created a poster featuring illustrated rules and photographs. This visual aid helped Mateo understand what was permissible and what was not, enabling him to anticipate the guidelines and ensuring a harmonious atmosphere during the festivities.

Thanks to these thoughtful preparations, Mateo not only had a wonderful time during his Christmas celebration but also developed valuable skills for anticipating and adapting to new experiences. He even applied the same strategies for a successful New Year's celebration, further enhancing his ability to navigate unfamiliar situations with confidence.

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CONCEPT 4: USE OF SPECIFIC MATERIALS TO SUPPORT COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Concept

Materials such as Traveller Agenda, Journal, Adapted Letter, among others, can be useful tools to support communication and language development in children. These resources can help parents, caregivers or teachers introducing children to new concepts, new experiences or explaining to them about their own life and their surroundings. For example – children can get to see and identify relatives in a photo album before meeting them in person. It becomes easier for them to relate to their relatives and to feel less afraid of establishing communication in person. In the same vein, an agenda can help them understand and adapt to routines or organised activities.

Writing a letter or using images can also help children to express and communicate their ideas or wishes.

How to observe in the story

To help Mateo understand the concept of Christmas and the activities that are traditionally done on this date, his father created a calendar with a schedule of tasks and activities such as shopping – completing the items in the agenda was fun for Mateo.

Additionally, Mateo would meet his cousins and he found it difficult to talk to people and could even say inappropriate things at times, so his father showed him a photo album to introduce him to his cousins. Also, they made a poster of what could be done or not.

This motivated Mateo very much and he was looking forward to playing with them.

Since Mateo is not yet very comfortable with written communication, his father helped him to use journal and magazine pictures to make his letter for Christmas. Mateo's dad created a notebook detailing what they had done each day, so Mateo could talk about it at school.

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CONCEPT 5: SENSORY HYPERSENSITIVITY

Concept

Senses provide humans with a way to view, perceive and understand life and the world around us. What we see, taste, feel, taste and smell, moulds our physical understanding of life – essentially forming our conscious experience. Hypersensitivity refers to having heightened sensitivity to stimulation of the senses. This can apply to any of the five senses – touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste – and may even affect multiple senses for some sufferers.

The difficulty with sensations can make everyday activities overwhelming and unbearable. It causes children to over or under respond to food, noise, light, sounds or textures. It can manifest in children's daily life, for example:

- Hearing – Meltdown in response to loud bangs, fireworks or even loud chewing noises at the dinner table.
- Touch – Problems dealing with fabric textures, clothes labels and tight clothing or sand and grass on bare feet, for example.
- Food – The taste and textures of certain foods, such as mushy banana, can be difficult to deal with.
- Bad reaction to overstimulation from bright lights, in classrooms for instance.

How to observe in the story

Mateo was hyper-sensitive to lights and noises, since they would be going in shops, his father made sure to inform him about everything he might find in each shop they visit. In this way, Mateo was aware of the possibility of bright lights and noises.

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CONCEPT 6: BEHAVIOURAL DISRUPTIONS

Concept

Children sometimes display disruptive behaviour that can impact a child's daily life and its social circle, because within these behaviours, there may be patterns linked to challenging and uncooperative behaviour. Their responses to authority figures range from indifference to hostility. Disruptive behaviour can arise for different reasons: frustration, lack of understanding, age-related tantrums, self-defiance, or maladjusted defiance. These do not necessarily have to be linked to a pathology or disorder. Behavioural disruption in children can be seen in signs such as stubbornness, difficulty, disobedience, and irritability.

Children with oppositional defiant disorder often lose their temper. They are quick to argue with adults over rules or requests.

Within disruptive behaviours we can find different symptoms and different levels of severity or frequency of occurrence (from occasional tantrums that are easy for the adult to deal with, to self-injurious behaviours that put the child's integrity at risk and require more specific help from professionals).

How to observe in the story

In this story, Matteo's behaviour could be considered disruptive (crying, non-cooperation, not following rules, etc.) and could be due to different causes: lack of understanding of the context/environment, difficulties in remembering past events, difficulties in responding to sensory stimuli, etc.

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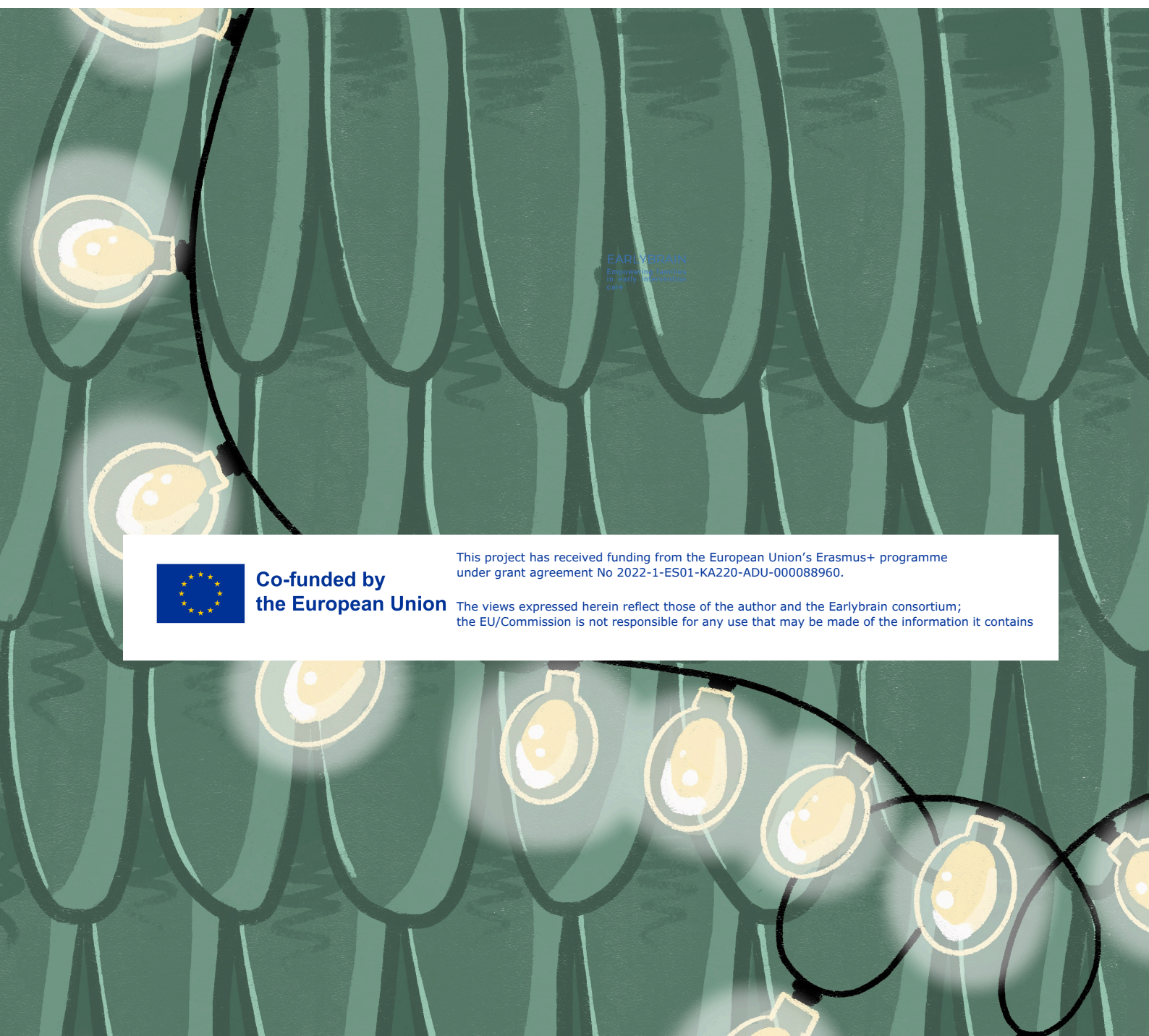
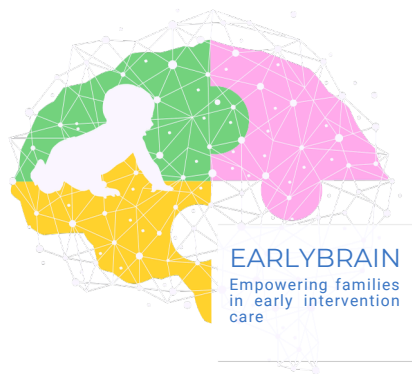
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