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PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN WAR CONDITIONS

Given the current challenging conditions under which education in Ukraine—and early childhood education in particular—is taking place, and the wartime conditions in which we live, stress levels are constantly rising (due to air raid alerts, waiting for family members and loved ones to return from the war, and losses). This has a negative impact on both children and educators, leading to increased levels of stress, anxiety, unease, and fear. Since safety is a basic human need—one that is particularly valuable and a top priority in wartime, alongside other basic needs such as food and sleep.

Scientific and practical research shows that a teacher's psychological and emotional state is one of the key factors in creating a safe educational environment. An emotionally exhausted teacher is limited in their ability to provide supportive interaction with children, which, in turn, negatively affects the children's psychological and emotional state. After all, a teacher in a preschool setting is a close adult with whom a child spends a great deal of time.

According to A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for safety is a basic human need. Safety needs encompass the need for protection from physical, social, economic, legal, psychological, and other dangers posed by the outside world, as well as the assurance that physiological needs will be met in the future. At the core of these needs lies the desire for stability and protection from external threats (we install security systems in our homes, seek stable employment, choose safer places to live, practice social distancing during a pandemic, and so on). A person who feels threatened or lives in constant anticipation of danger changes their value system and outlook on the future, viewing everything that happens to them through the lens of the need for safety. In extreme situations, when the need for survival takes center stage and the pursuit of safety becomes obsessive and chronic, a person no longer thinks about anything else.

Therefore, ensuring safety in preschool educational institutions is a top priority in modern education. According to Ukrainian scholars, a safe educational environment is one in which: safe conditions for upbringing, learning, and work are in place; comfortable interpersonal interactions that promote the emotional well-being of students, educators, and parents exist; there are no instances of violence and sufficient resources are available to prevent it; and the rights and standards of physical, psychological, informational, and social safety of every participant in the educational process are upheld.

A lack of satisfaction with the key characteristics of the interaction process among all participants in the educational environment also poses a threat to psychological well-being, since it is precisely this environment that provides the opportunities and conditions necessary for personal development. Empirical manifestations include

emotional comfort, the ability to express one's opinion, being treated with respect, maintaining one's dignity, the ability to seek help, consideration of personal problems and difficulties, and assistance in making one's own decisions. The criterion for psychological safety in the educational environment is the level of satisfaction with the key characteristics of the interaction process.

For a child, a teacher is a significant adult who not only organizes the educational process but also provides emotional support, regulation, and stability. It is through the teacher's emotional state that a child gains their first experience of safety or danger in a social environment. A teacher who is emotionally or professionally burned out poses a threat to children's psychological safety.

Therefore, in our opinion, it is important to assess the psychological well-being of early childhood education teachers. This assessment can be used to evaluate: the early childhood education teacher's competence in nonviolent communication with children; the teachers' emotional state and risk of emotional burnout; their job satisfaction; and the professional support they receive from psychologists, as we plan to provide psychological support and counseling to early childhood education teachers. We have developed a questionnaire for educators that will assess these aspects.