The Development of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem through an Experiential Unifying Psychotherapeutic Intervention in Adolescents

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Abstract

Introduction: Adolescence involves the transition from childhood to maturity. It is a period of identity development. Haviland (1994) argued that emotions consolidate separate events through emotional processes or emotional valence. Certain emotions can become elaborated simply because they are associated with other different emotions. Adolescence is full of unprecedented experiences that serve for the first time as emotional triggers. It also brings changes to the types of emotions triggered by those events or to the situations in which emotions are elicited. On the other hand, teenagers are more likely to link their emotions to events related to peers, especially those of the opposite sex.

Objectives: The objectives of this paper emphasize the shaping up of a therapeutic framework for adolescents' personal development, characterized by empathy, unconditional acceptance, congruence, collaboration, facilitated during the sessions by humanistic experiential techniques.

Methods: A 14 weeks personal development group with 17 adolescents, colleagues from the same class, aged 17-19 years, was implemented; the students were also tested before and after the therapeutic intervention with Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Test (adapted by Mihaela Rocco) and Rosenberg Scale, to determine the level of self-esteem.

Results: After 14 weeks of personal development through Experiential Unifying Psychotherapy, self-esteem increased in 7 of the 8 participants of the core group and the level of emotional intelligence increased in 13 of the participants from the whole group.

Conclusions: The results of this pilot research highlighted the importance of the effects of Experiential Unifying Psychotherapy on self-esteem and emotional intelligence in adolescents.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, self-esteem, adolescents, personal development group, P.E.U. Approach (Experiential Unifying Psychotherapy)

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I. Introduction

The importance of the present paper is related to the fact that the topic of emotional intelligence and self-esteem, especially in adolescents, was less approached in the literature. At the same time, improvements at the levels of these traits, in this age category, through Experiential Unifying Psychotherapy were not very often exposed.

Emotions are important because they provide:

• *Survival*. Nature has developed human emotions during a million-year evolution period. As a consequence, human emotions work today as an intimate guidance system, which is delicate and sophisticated. These emotions alert us when the natural impulse is missing.

• *Decision making*. Feelings and emotions are a valuable source of information and help in taking decisions. Research has shown that when nervous centers in the cerebral hemispheres are affected, the person is not able to take the simplest decisions.

• *Setting the limits*. Our feelings help us to get some alarm signals when we are bothered by a person's behavior. If people learn to rely on what they feel and to be firm in expressing this, they can notify the other person that they feel uncomfortable, as soon as they become aware of this phenomenon. This will help in setting borders that are needed to protect our mental and psychological health.

• *Communication*. Feelings help people communicate with each other. The facial expression can show a wide range of feelings.

• *Unity*. The feelings people experience are probably the largest source of unity in all humans. Certainly, religious, political, cultural human conventions do not unite people. The researchers investigated the dimensions of intelligence using adjacent concepts such as social skills, interpersonal competence, psychological maturity and emotional consciousness. Contemplated concepts such as "social development", "social and emotional learning" and "personal intelligence" have been researched, all aimed at "raising the level of social and emotional competence". The close links between emotional intelligence and other leadership phenomena, group performance, individual performance, interpersonal social changes, adaptation to change have been revealed.

The teenager in the 12th grade learns, at this stage, the fact that he will somehow give up the competition with others, passing on to the competition with himself/herself. There is a desire to grow in a multidimensional way, but the belief that these things will happen is faded by the hyper-exigence toward self. Thus, self-analysis becomes profound, systematic and multilateral, it excludes mediocrity and compromise, his/her own lack of experience terrifies the teenager, amplifying his/her pessimism, the dominant way of thinking is through reverie, the previous "lack of measure" is now transferred to the area of the mental projections (especially those made on the long term), which are often utopic. The taste for the abstract becomes obvious, manifesting itself by the preference for the philosophical book, by the pleasure of introspection, by the attraction for conversation, which comes with sophisticated expressions, fragile theories and theorizing, love for beauty. Poetry now manifests itself even in "prosaic natures", indisputable signs of self-control, the taste for adventure are partially replaced by the desire to improve his behavior in order to facilitate integration into the social environment, to improve social relationships in general, especially with adults. New (positive) relationships with the family and educators are restored, the group is only preferred periodically, some teenagers opt for selective, restricted friendships, they more clearly build moral values, and the ideal of life is being shaped.

The teenager compares his/her conduct to the behavior of adults, which is socially validated, and makes a critical assessment of his/her own pattern of behavior. The adaptation process of adolescents to high school life is not a convenient one (for most of them) and does not imply a simple and passive "compliance" with certain conditions and requirements.

Self-knowledge is an important process: on such a fund, in high school, self-perception and relating to "others" is objectively and imperatively imposed in a different manner than in previous stages. In emphasizing the process of self-knowledge, there are other important factors:

• the attitudes and opinions of group members and educators,

• the dynamics of own successes and failures,

• the reference scales provided by group values and rules – at the beginning, imposed from the outside, then by internalization, are relatively stabilized to a certain level.

The adolescence itself falls between 14-18/ 20 years and is characterized by two distinct stages: preadolescence and adolescence (Șchiopu, Verza, 1995, p. 207).

There is more and more individualization, especially on the intellectual and relational level. The reasoning of personal opinions seems to be getting more

and more present capturing the originality of their generation. The desire for personal affirmation in the idea of socialization is more prominent. The requirement of knowledge is less valued than intellectual-emotional pleasure and is engaged at attitudinal level. The affective experience is nuanced and impregnated with values (op. cit., p. 207).

The main scope of the study was the socio-emotional development of adolescents aged between 17 and 19 years, through experiential unifying and counseling techniques, in a development group context, investigating the impact of creative group techniques (drama therapy) in identifying emotional intelligence, highlighting the possibility of activating the creative potential of adapting, at group level and individually, through psychodramatic play and creative meditation.

The secondary objectives were:

- to build a therapeutic framework of intervention for the personal development of adolescents, characterized by empathy, unconditional acceptance, congruence, collaboration, facilitated through humanistic experiential techniques;

- to facilitate a process of self-knowledge in the therapeutic group through art therapy techniques in the drama therapeutic context, for stimulating contact with the emotional sphere, centering the participants to the present moment;

- to identify needs and explore them in a drama therapeutic context, in order to develop the capacity to manage emotions within the therapeutic framework;

- to engage in assertive behavior in order to assimilate emotional expression in the therapeutic setting;

- to identify and assume emotional blockages through drama therapeutic play, by developing the capacity to manage emotions in the therapeutic setting;

- to explore and identify personal shadow contents through dramatic play for the emotional understanding and integration of psychological polarities;

- to build motivation by internal factors such as the need for realization and the need to develop the emotional side;

- to facilitate the understanding of the term empathy and the creation of a context for expressing it in the group of friends;

- to create a context to express emotions in the social environment, highlight emotional contamination and understanding the need for self-control in a family context;

- to identify and manage emotions in couple, in order to harmonize love relationships, highlighting the emotional resources in order to make them available in relation to others.

Hypothesis 1: We assume that dramatic experiential therapeutic techniques improve the level of self-esteem in adolescents.

Hypothesis 2: We assume that experiential techniques improve the level of emotional intelligence in adolescents (along with the four subsequent abilities: emotion perception, use of emotions, understanding emotions and managing emotions).

The theoretical value of the paper refers to the fact that it is important to be known that this development period comes with emotional, social, interrelated deficiencies which can be worked and improved through involvement and by studying the reference papers addressing such topics, by the teenagers themselves but also by parents, teachers who work with them, even by employers who provide jobs. At methodological level, as well as through the general objectives of this paper, I focused on the emotional intelligence and self-esteem of adolescents who, in high school years, require a special care and continuous development to ensure a better functioning of the adolescent, as an individual in his/her family, the society he / she comes from, the relationships he/she engages in with the others. At practical level, the techniques used to address the emotional intelligence of adolescents have many useful directions for all therapists who work with adolescents. The themes approached within the experiential unifying group are some frequently used in working with teenagers, and the creativity, positivism and the way these teenagers have decided to get involved in the role of beneficiaries of a personal development group are also important.

II. Methodology

Participants

The personal development group was originally made up of 17 participants, ultimately remaining only 8 teenagers, as the core group. The age of the participants ranged from 17 years to − 19 years. The sample was extracted from the city of Bucharest and its neighboring villages, concerning the students in the province. The selection method was done randomly and according to the access granted by the high school management during courses time. The selected high school was the Technical Energetic College in Bucharest, the participants in the personal development group being enrolled in the 12th grade.

Instruments

The clinical and therapeutic methods that have been used in this research are:

The Emotional Intelligence Test. It was developed by Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, published in 1995. The test was adapted by Mihaela Rocco and consists of 10 questions that show some situations (scenarios) which a person may experience. Completing the test implies to ensure as much as possible the individual's transposition into the situation and, on the other hand, to choose one of the four possible answer variants, which represent concrete ways of responding to the indicated situations of questions.

Rosenberg scale to determine the level of self-esteem. This scale was originally developed to measure the overall feeling of personal value and self-acceptance. The scale contains 10 items with 4 possible answers varying between total disagreement (1 point) and total acceptance (4 points). Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are queried.

Draw a Person (Karen Machover, 1949). In the 1920s Florence L. Goodenough wrote *Measuring intelligence through drawing*. She showed how drawings mirrored the child's intellectual development and consequently created a scale measuring children's mental age through drawings.

The works of Bender, Buck, Hammer, Jolles, Levy & Machover broadened the knowledge of the role of the designs as projective tests. Karen Machover published *Personality Projection* in 1949.

Experiential diagnosis. Through expressive-creative methods, the group participant communicates important information about the dynamics at the unconscious level, whether it relates to past experiences or to the collective unconscious. That is why, as other authors have noted (Jung, 2003; Vladislav, 2007), it is important that the psychotherapist understands this symbolism.

Observation and reflective listening. It is a basic method, a method of study underlying any type of experiment. It is the oldest method of research in psychology, used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. Brainster and collaborators (1995) define observation as a follow-up act and systematic description of the behavior and the events that take place in the natural social environment. The first research centered on this method was the anthropological one, for the purpose of understanding other cultures. Etymology: *observation* (Latin): to look, to pay attention to. In the observation there is the recognition and detailed noting of the phenomena, as they are in reality. In the laboratory experiment, the observation is subordinated to its purposes and will seek to obtain additional data to help explain the changes in the dependent variable.

Drama therapy is a form of expressive psychotherapy that uses theatrical-dramatic techniques to accomplish different therapeutic goals: relieving symptoms, psychological and emotional integration, personal development; it is a solution for patients who have such traumatic and painful life experiences that they are hard to verbalize. Interpretation of the role is an expressive way in which the patient confronts more easily the problem he/ she has. The goal of this therapy is to facilitate and provide a sense of security to the client's experiences in order to allow for emotional expression in its entirety. Drama therapy is based on processes that include projective identification − the process by which a person experiences the feelings that the other cannot live − and the dramatic distance − facilitating access to emotional and psychological problems through metaphors.

Guided meditation. Some relaxation techniques – breathing exercises, guided meditation and mind control are accessible to everyone and these skills are essential in a stressed and agitated world. They offer the power to regain and maintain mental and emotional balance, and the ability to create positive states whenever we need. These are a necessary ingredient of the therapeutic process because they help us to be more receptive to change through the modifications occurring both physically and at neurochemical level.

Melotherapy and dance therapy. Melotherapy is a type of expressive psychotherapy and involves the use of music for therapeutic purposes. The distinction between melotherapy and entertainment or musical education is that music therapy pursues the fulfillment of therapeutic goals. This addresses the physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and social needs of people of all ages, regardless of the musical training they have. The therapist addresses the patient's problem directly, through music, or through the relationship developed between the patient and the therapist. Using instrumental and vocal music, the therapist tries to get non-musical changes. Research confirms the effectiveness of treatment in several areas, such as physical and motor recovery, patient motivation to follow the treatment, emotional support offered to the patient and his/ her family, creating the opportunity for venting emotions. The most common problems are those related to stress, anxiety, pain, expressing feelings, communication, aggressive or

agitated behavior, self-awareness, lack of motivation, changing states, emotional intimacy, feeling the lack of control over one's own life. Through musical involvement, the skills and strengths of the patient are transferred to other areas of life.

Centering and body awareness techniques. It refers to the awareness of muscle tension, respiratory and cardiac rhythm, epidermal or internal sensations, mimics and pantomime. All of these are in relation to thoughts, memories and affects. The role of these body awareness exercises is to make the person more conscious of their body and how they can use their body to become more aware of others.

Art therapy. Art therapy is the therapeutic use of artistic creation to improve the emotional state of people confronted with different life difficulties or those who want personal development. Art therapy techniques offer a place of free and creative expression of emotions, ideas, frustrations, anxieties, in shapes and colors, a support and accompaniment in the evolution of each by a specialized psychotherapist who assures a protective place based on trust. Art therapy uses creative techniques such as drawing, painting, modeling, theater, dance, music, or puppets to help each person understand themselves, release themselves from accumulated anxieties, tensions, and facilitate communication and relationship. The basic idea in art therapy is that the creative process helps people develop personal and interpersonal skills (communication, relationship, emotional intelligence), in increasing self-esteem and self-awareness, in managing behavior and reducing stress, in developing cognitive capacities by stimulating attention, imagination and thinking; all of which takes place in the art therapy workshop, under the guidance of a psychotherapist who coordinates the entire activity.

Exploration techniques of the participants' **personal resources** by using (in writing) 5 currently existent resources (on a sticker/ paper roll/ post-it note) and sticking them (the symbolism of the subsequent unification – the last session) on the drawn outline of each person.

Interactional and knowledge building exercise – **"The Unknown Journey"**, adapted according to the technique of PhD prof. Iolanda Mitrofan. Participants are asked to imagine that they are at that time in a train and that they are taking a trip to an unknown destination.

Drama therapy – "The hero auction" adapted following the model of PhD prof. Iolanda Mitrofan. Therapists will be the bidders. Earth is in danger because extraterrestrials threaten to destroy the planet in 2 days. To save the situation, an auction is organized where the heroes of the planet come to be chosen to represent the resistance on Earth. For these heroes to be chosen, the bidders need a presentation of each of them for their better knowledge. Each of the participants will be a hero, a hero with personal and original qualities, with different names and will have a quarter of an hour to choose a name, a number of qualities that they represent, the reason they came to be auctioned, etc.

Dance therapy – based on contact with the self, physical contact with others, personal rhythm.

Role play – to harness and encourage adolescents to experience empathy towards others. The roles are: the best neurosurgeon in the country, a heroin drug addict, an elderly lady with breast cancer, a boy who spends a lot of money from his father, going to clubs and having fun, a divorced mother with 3 children, a homeless woman, a general manager of a multinational, an unemployed person.

"Speaking next" and **"Speaking with hands"** are techniques used by comedians to perform improvisations. They aim at lucid and absurd and emphasize voice-hand coordination.

"What animal are you?", exercise taken from Sabina Manes, being used to understand how others see us in relation to how we see ourselves. The exercise is recommended for groups of people who already know each other.

"Animals in the Forest" exercise taken from Sabina Manes; it is used to help raise awareness of one's own way of dealing with others.

"Express yourself in Discomfort", exercise taken from Palmira Sette in order to facilitate the expression of what we think or feel for people who are important to us.

Procedure

This research has been conducted in the Technical Energetic College with students in the 12th grade, in the classroom during courses, especially during the head teacher's lesson. Consent forms were signed by parents of underage students and by legally adult students; The Rosenberg Scale to determine the level of self-esteem and the Emotional Intelligence Test were individually administered to each student, the instructions being repeated by the therapist before completing the tests. This procedure that involved the two tests was used before supporting the personal development groups and immediately after their completion, to determine the changes that occurred as a

result of the students' participation in the therapeutic group. It should be mentioned that all the participants were present at the pre and post-test, with only 8 participants, 2 girls and 6 boys with permanent presence at all group meetings.

III. Results

The means and standard deviations scores for the Rosenberg Scale and Emotional Intelligence Tests are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Percentiles		
						25th	50th (Median)	75th
Self-esteem pre	17	18.94	4.337	13	24	13.00	20.00	22.50
Self-esteem post	17	24.53	8.217	13	40	19.50	23.00	33.00

Table 2

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Percentiles		
						25th	50th (Median)	75th
IE_PRE	17	74.71	20.802	15	110	65.00	80.00	85.00
IE_POST	17	98.24	40.425	30	180	75.00	8.00	115.00

Table 3 shows the difference between the participants' results in Rosenberg scale before and after the participation in personal development groups. Thus, post-treatment outcomes concerning self-esteem are higher for 7 of the participants and no change was observed for 10 of them.

Table 3

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Self-esteem_POST – Self-esteem_PRE	Negative Ranks	0[a]	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	7[b]	4.00	28.00
	Ties	10[c]		
	Total	17		

Table 4 highlights the fact that there is a significant difference between pre and post-therapeutic intervention in terms of self-esteem (p = .018). Hypothesis 1 has been confirmed.

Table 4

	STIMA_POST – STIMA_PRE
Z	-2.371[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.018

Table 5 shows the pre − post-test difference between scores linked to the Emotional Intelligence scale. And, in this case, it is noticeable that the post-therapeutic intervention scores measuring the emotional intelligence are higher for 12 of the participants and remain unchanged for 2 of them.

Table 5

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
IE_POST – IE_PRE	Negative Ranks	3[a]	3.67	11.00
	Positive Ranks	12[b]	9.08	109.00
	Ties	2[c]		
	Total	17		

Table 6 points out that there is a significant difference between pre and post-therapeutic intervention in emotional intelligence (p = .005). Thus hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

Table 6

	IE_POST – IE_PRE
Z	-2.793[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005

IV. Case Study

C. is one of the participants in the personal development group with significant changes at the level of emotional intelligence. As student in the 12th grade, C. is the leader of the class and the best at learning in the class. On his shoulders, as he says, lies the burden of the relationship between his colleagues and teachers as he sees himself as the bond between these two generations.

At the beginning of the personal development group, C. was very skeptical, believing that such "programs" are "rainwater" and affirming that "I will not be able to do much with him and his colleagues". When asked about his motivation to be in the personal development group, his answer was very brief: "because I want to. I want to check you out".

C. comes from a village in Dâmbovița County and is accommodated at the high school dorms where he spends his time. His family unconditionally supports the decisions he wants to follow. After completing high school, C. wants to join the Polytechnic Faculty and become an engineer. He has always been involved in extracurricular activities and, above all, volunteering. This part occupies 50% of his life and the other half refers to high school, graduating high school and promoting the Baccalaureate. Whenever asked by his colleagues in the groups, if he wants a relationship, C. always said "I have time for it later, first take the Baccalaureate".

Within the group, C. acted as the formal leader, the decision maker, the one involved in the administrative-logistical context and the one who facilitated our relationship, as therapists, with his

colleagues, helping us with the multiplication/ distribution of materials, with the presence lists of participants. As an informal leader, however, I noticed H., who had a more special relationship with colleagues than C did.

With regard to the activities and techniques used, C. collated 5 post-it notes in the first session, with the following words: ambition, pride, reasoning, devotion and autonomy, these being his resources in everyday life. After actively engaging in group sessions, C. wrote on the 5 post-it notes the final words: pride, devotion, empathy, emotion, adaptation. This, at psychological level, indicates changes in his consciousness of what was happening with him during this stressful period and of what was happening with the others, with whom he only had a formal connection before the beginning of the group.

It has been noted during the sessions that C. needed: confirmation from people close to him, people with a certain professional status and strength, privacy, security in interpersonal relationships, to confirm things that he thinks, but can verbalize only with difficulty, to adapt (not leave the guard down). The Draw a Person portrait that C. made in session 2 points to several aspects of introversion and closure to himself.

Thus, the orientation of the drawing is "normal" left-center, with the use of space between 15% from the top of the sheet and 15% from the base. From the interpretative point of view, placing to the far left of the sheet suggests orientation towards the self, emotional dominance (Jolles), with emphasis on the past (Jolles), tendencies toward impulsivity (Jolles). At the beginning of the group, C. was much focused on himself, on his personal development, to be, as he always said, "adapted". Drawing in the center of the page suggests insecurity and rigidity, the need to maintain careful control (Jolles). If the silhouette of the self-image is large, the subject responds to the pressure of the environment with expansion and aggression. A major body part (nose, hands, and feet) omitted is probably not accidental and can be interpreted in terms of how C. deals with the threat of symbolism of a particular body part in the sense of consciously avoiding of that part. Thus, hand omitting is done by anxious, inappropriate individuals who feel rejected. Eyes (pupils) are often left out by internalized individuals who close themselves to the world. In the head area there are intellectual aspirations and frustrations. Here love is also accepted, rejected, or ignored. Also, the world of other human beings is rejected/ accepted or an attitude towards it is taken. Aspirations to shine can be revealed in facial detail. Despair, hate, or deep aggression can be seen in dark, spirited eyes. Hypersensitivity or even suspicion can be seen in an unusual detailing of the ear. In drawing of the head, the subject unconsciously illustrates elements of intellectual concern: the degree of preoccupation with imagination, rational controls, the concern for interpersonal relationships and self-concept. It is usually the first part that is drawn and, in the case of C., the only part drawn. The big head suggests interest (care) on identity. Big heads, drawn with great care for precision and control, indicate intense intellectual tendencies, considerable imaginary activity, as a source of satisfaction (Jolles) organic concern about the thought process (Jolles; Machover). Especially during the Baccalaureate, C. has repeatedly confessed that he does not have time to feel, but just to think. Omitting eyes or pupils suggests an attempt to retreat from the world. The mouth expresses the emotional states of the subject. The wide open mouth may indicate the dependency needs, or the desire to express verbally as much as possible. The ears are totally non-existent, in contrast to the wide open mouth – "I speak and I do not hear anyone". The neck symbolizes control, being physically located between

the head (ego) and body (pulsations). In C.'s drawing, the neck is the last element created and the only one that highlights C.'s emphasis on ego and not on drives.

The results of the personal development program were significant in C.'s case. The results at the level of emotional intelligence and self-esteem indicate that C.'s involvement in achieving the goals proposed during the activities was greater; he also gained a considerable improvement in taking some long-term decisions and obviously in increasing courage to address change. While at the beginning of the program C. seemed tensed, along the way, the personal development group helped him experience a state of relaxation.

Although he had described himself as a superficial person, at the end of the group, C. began to treat equally both colleagues he had initially considered inferior and superior. His colleagues' comments on this point indicate that there have been significant changes in terms of C.'s inter-human contacts, at a relational level. He finally succeeded to more easily approach others and did teamwork, this aspect making the group dynamic much more homogeneous. In the last sessions of the group, C. started to talk more and more of a "girlfriend", M. Following the debates, C. confirmed that he had started to feel a little more connected to M. and he wanted to be able to empathize more with her about the Baccalaureate issue. Although at the beginning of the sessions, C. affirmed that for him love was unimportant and non-existent, until the end of the group, he managed to discover it. Also, at the beginning of the group sessions, C. claimed that he did not have friends and that everyone around him was a target who could bring benefits. Following discussions with his colleagues, C. claimed he had both acquaintances and friends on which he could rely on.

In conclusion, the personal development group brought significant changes in C.'s emotional intelligence.

V. Discussions

The current personal development group was limited by a number of factors, including: the low number of participants; the fact that all participants were classmates and more or less knew each other; the lack of motivation leading to the absence of half of the teenagers in the group (out of the 15 participants remained a basic group of 8 people who attended the personal development sessions); the sense of duty that the head teacher unconsciously induced them, more specifically, most of the teenagers came to the first sessions out of obligation and respect for the teacher; the

location in which the meetings were held, as all the activities were fulfilled within the Technical Energetic College, where the other teachers carried out their classes with the other students, where there were breaks, implicitly the ringing bell that often defocused the group. The framework was a school-like one (classroom), not leaving participants the feeling that the environment was appropriate for self-awareness.

The hours at which the sessions could take place were during school hours, with participants taking classes before or after the personal development sessions, which led to fatigue in most days, with a low availability, especially towards the end of the meetings. The personal development sessions started in January, therefore implying a long break until resuming meetings, due to mid-semester holidays, which could have slowed down the personal development process. Some sessions were disrupted by colleagues of the participants who did not take part in the personal development process, but had classes after our meetings, and joined the meeting, and so the participants could not feel fully contained or safe enough to continue to share their experiences, their feelings, their thoughts, or could no longer concentrate entirely on the task because they felt judged by the others. The period during which it was possible for students to participate in the personal development group was also an issue, given that they were in a very stressful period related to the Baccalaureate and their focus could not be completely in the direction of the personal development groups.

Participating in the personal development groups of teenagers, especially in disadvantaged areas, in the outskirts of the cities or in the countryside is beneficial for the entire social environment of Romania, which seems, in the last years, to have had little interest in the perception, management and encouragement of the use of emotions, therefore those who have been teenagers throughout this period have come to experience psychological trauma, the inability to accept certain emotional states, and have repeatedly felt discriminated by more mature generations.

During the personal development meetings with teenagers from the Technical Energetic College, on discussing with them about the lack of examples in their lives, I thought about preparing a short list of artistic activities: films, books, songs specific to adolescent age:

Books:
- Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone – J. K. Rowling

- Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets – J. K. Rowling
- Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban – J. K. Rowling
- Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire – J. K. Rowling
- Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix – J. K. Rowling
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince – J. K. Rowling
- Harry Potter and the death Hollows – J. K. Rowling
- Hunger games – Suzanne Collins
- Defiance – Suzanne Collins
- Revolt – Suzanne Collins
- Romanul adolescentului miop/ Diary of a short-sighted adolescent – Mircea Eliade
- Great Expectations – Charles Dickens
- Jane Eyre – Charlotte Bronte
- Wuthering Heights – Emily Bronte
- Book thief – Markus Zusak
- The Divergent series: Insurgent – Veronica Roth
- The Hobbit and Lord of the rings – J.R.R. Tolkien;
- Fellowship of the ring – J.R.R. Tolkien;
- The two towers – J.R.R. Tolkien;
- The return of the king – J.R.R. Tolkien
- The perks of being a wallflower – Stephen Chbosky
- The catcher in the rye – J.D. Salinger
- Lord of the flies – William Golding
- To kill a mockingbird – Harper Lee
- Maitreyi – Mircea Eliade
- The fault in our stars – John Green
- The three musketeers – Alexandre Dumas
- Nine stories – J.D. Salinger
- La Medeleni/ At Medeleni – Ionel Teodoreanu
- Lorelei – Ionel Teodoreanu
- South of the border, west of the sun – Haruki Murakami
- The old capital – Yasunari Kawabata
- Elevul Dima dintr-a șaptea/ Student Dima in the 7th grade – Mihail Drumeș
- Invitație la vals/ Invitation to waltz – Mihail Drumeș
- Scrisoare de dragoste/ Love letter – Mihail Drumeș
- Jules Verne
- A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court – Mark Twain
- Gone with the wind – Margaret Mitchell
- Lolita – Vladimir Nabokov
- Looking for Alaska – John Green
- An Abundance of Katherine – John Green
- The last of the Mohicans – J. F. Cooper
- Agatha Christie series

Movies:
- Thirteen (2003)
- 10 Things I hate about you (1999)
- A walk to remember (2002)
- Boys and Girls (2000)
- Freaky Friday (2003)
- Raise Your Voice (2004)
- Greta (2009)
- Wild Child (2008)
- LOL (Laughing Out Loud) (2008)
- Wild Cherry (2009)
- Liceenii/ the High school Students (1987)
- Liceenii Rock'n'Roll/ Rock'n'roll High school Students (1992)
- 17 Again (2009)
- Never Been Kissed (1999)
- Juno (2007)
- The Last Song (2010)
- John Tucker Must Die (2006)
- Remember Me (2010)
- Chasing Liberty (2004)
- Penelope (2006)
- Abduction (2011)
- Glee (2009)
- The First Time (2012)
- The Carrie Diaries (2013)
- That '70s Show (TV Series 1998–2006)
- Rebel in California (2003-2007)
- West Side Story (1961)
- Splendor in the grass (1961)
- Rebel without a cause (1955)
- The Gift (2015)
- We Need to Talk About Kevin (2011)
- Biutiful (2010)
- Womb (2010)
- Before I Go to Sleep (2014)
- The Black Balloon (2008)
- Seven Pounds (2008)
- Side Effects (2013)
- Stoker (2013)
- The Silence of the Lambs (1991)
- 12 angry men (1957)
- Dangerous Minds (1995)

Music:
- Nirvana – Smells Like Teen Spirit
- B.U.G. Mafia – Nimic Mai Presus/ Nothing above
- Panic! At the Disco – Teenage Hearts Beating Faster
- Vescan – Păsări Călătoare/ Migratory birds

- Adda – Îți arăt că pot/ I show you I can
- Fun – We Are Young
- Katy Perry – Teenage Dream
- One Republic – Good Life
- Wiz Khalifa – Young, Wild, and Free
- Jay-Z – Young Forever
- Boys Like Girls – The Great Escape
- Natasha Bedingfield – Unwritten
- The Naked and Famous – Young Blood
- Travie McCoy – We'll Be Alright
- Taylor Swift – Fifteen
- Queen – Don't stop me now
- The Cure – Lovesong
- Eminem – Cleaning out my closet
- Hilary Duff – Sweet Sixteen
- Colbie Caillat – Falling for You
- Bomshel – 19 and Crazy
- Wheatus – Teenage Dirtbag
- Tynisha Keli – My First Love
- Pink Floyd – Another brick in the wall
- Coolio ft. L.V – Gangsta's Paradise

VI. Conclusions

After participating in personal development groups through Experiential Unifying techniques, teenagers have a clear, more realistic feeling about their own emotions, thoughts, behaviors, hold fewer inner contradictions. As for the concept of emotional intelligence, most of them are now able to identify and better define their emotions, thoughts, behaviors, as well as those of others. Also, teenagers who took part in the personal development group through experiential methods can express their opinions, personal ideas, activate resources more easily. At interpersonal level, adolescents increased the realism of perceiving people and the degree of adaptability and efficiency in interpersonal relationships. They are more interested in building positive social relationships compared to those focused on domination and aggression. In the final self-assessments, most teenagers appreciate that following their participation in the personal development group they gained better knowledge and self-esteem and improved their interpersonal relationships. Feelings and emotions are more important in emotional intelligence in girls than in boys. Most girls in the personal development group (100%) describe their emotions when referring to themselves. Instead, in the researched boys' group, the references to emotions only have an intermediate role, based more on loyalty towards the group of friends and very rarely when referring to a

relationship with an opposite sex peer. The emotions described by girls when writing about themselves fall in the dysphoric register: suffering, fear, insecurity, distrust, unhappiness, sadness and irritation, disappointment. Many refer to the fact that everything makes them suffer, that boys do not understand their feelings, as "they live inside their heads".

Girls tend to express directly what they feel, vaguely making a connection between their feelings and what triggers them, whom or what their emotions refer to. Few of them talk about how they feel about certain people. They seldom expressed the feeling of love towards certain people, children, and animals. In two participants from the personal development group, talking about loved ones occurred after a long series of meetings in which they did not discuss their deep and strong feelings, especially for the boys in their lives. And the emotions boys refer to are from the same register as the girls': fear, sadness, insecurity, annoyance, disappointment. Content analysis highlights the fact that boys tend, more often than girls, to talk about emotions that are triggered by relationships with others, especially family members and friends.

Girls have a confused self-identity, besides being centered on the emotional side that has a dysphoric registry. They told me, from the beginning of the sessions, that they would have wanted to be born boys because they thought that boys' life was not as complicated as girls'. Girls seem to rigidly play the victim role. In the personal development group, very few aspirations related to the professional role or desires for a future family have been expressed. Mostly they expressed their desire to change, to be different, in order to better integrate in the collective, even to be appreciated as important people or to escape a very unpleasant situation. They feel more caught in a painful past. All aspects of their present lives: interests, activities, roles, are rather less expressed. They talk very little about their personal opinions.

In boys the same confusion of identity and unconsciousness in self-knowledge can be noted. They are less inclined to use the rigid victim role and live disturbing emotions. If the girls have wider, more nuanced references to the emotions they experience, the boys' self-descriptions contain more ideological references, all of them painfully sincere. It would seem that the girls are living their worries, anxieties, fears at imaginative level, but boys have a greater inclination towards philosophy, seem to rationalize more than girls and tend to describe themselves with different impersonal labels. There is a lower tendency to focus on

the past compared to girls and they are more aware that they have adaptive strategies, although they are more passive than active when faced with a problem. C. said throughout the sessions that he was aware of his potential but just had a "feeling" that prevented him from expressing this potential. Boys do not have a good focus on their present reality. Teenagers in the personal development group talked much less about their aspirations, interests and roles. They also did not refer to future professional roles, or the desired family, but rather to the wish to change and to get rid of problems, especially family problems.

* * *

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