

Reducing anxiety to avoid exclusion & violence by developing emotional balance and communication skills

The two-year project focuses on providing innovative and field-tested techniques to develop real integration and authentic equality. The presented techniques and approaches can show that fear and unregulated emotions are often a cause of discrimination and violence i.e. against women, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. It will be argued, that we are not powerless towards fear and emotion. There are efficient methods to deal with them adequately.

Introduction:

Cities are becoming increasingly congested areas and their inhabitants are facing ever-greater challenges. A constantly growing population of diverse religions, worldviews and cultures, migration, diminishing resources and living spaces, declining jobs, excessive stress in all areas of our digitized society are leading to a rise of inner insecurity and fears.

Facing an unknown person or situation, we often do not know how to deal with uncomfortable feelings or associated diffuse anxiety. This often leads to the search for a guilty person or some external cause. These mostly unconscious feelings of insecurity are the breeding ground for increasing discrimination, fundamentalism, populism, hate speech, violence and terrorism..

“Fundamentalism comes about when we feel, we need something definite and solid to protect ourselves from those who are different from us. This arises from the fear of losing control, loosing the ground underneath our feet. But whatever form fear hardens into it, it continues to escalate and results in actions that can do great damage. It escalates into wars, riots, violence and cruelty. It creates an ugly world, which breeds more fear.” (Pema Choedron)

There are a number of innovative and field-tested techniques that can be applied to better deal with one's emotions, fears and insecurities. **These techniques can enable us to realize that “the other” is a mirror of our own feelings but not its direct cause.**

Getting rid of unpleasant feelings by fighting or harassing i.e. women or sexual, ethnical and religious minorities simply will not help. Suppressing fears and emotions or running away from them is not an alternative because it will not solve the problem. It makes much more sense to identify the root causes and use techniques to deal with them appropriately.

A selection of approaches & field-tested techniques

Presented during the April Session 2019

- I. Improving one's communication skills (by Kari Flornes - GERFEC)
- II. Spread the practice of interconvictionnality - a value for our common humanity.
- III. Good practices in what context, urban or hyper-rural? (II. + III. Michel Aguilar, EBU)

To be presented on October 29 during the plenary session 2019

- I. **Recognizing gender based anxiety in religions**, by Dr. Carola Roloff, Visiting Professor at the Academy of World Religions, University of Hamburg.
- II. **Establishing an emotional awareness and the ability to constructively work with emotions**, by Dr. Axel Brintzinger – Mediator
- III. **Begin to deconstruct the enemy**, by Gaudiose V. Luhahe, doctoral researcher in ethics at the University of Strasbourg.

By the April 2020 session, we will prepare a summary of the approaches and techniques presented with a common conclusion and practical proposals and bibliographies. This will become an added, complementary reference for the White Paper on European Cultural Identity of the Education Committee of the INGO Conference.