

## CHILDREN AND NEGOTIATION: DO WE NEED TO NEGOTIATE TO EDUCATE?

Negotiation is a practice that is often connected to a professional activity and we usually approach it “classically” by referring to its history, school of thought, methods and techniques. This approach does not make us aware of the fact that all of us carry out a multitude of negotiations every single day. We have to negotiate in many

fields of everyday life, particularly when we are parents. Why do our children have such a strong desire to negotiate? Should we negotiate with our children? If so, to what extent, and is this constructive to their education? Lastly, how can negotiation be the promise of a brighter future?

### NEGOTIATORS IN THE MAKING

Our children are good negotiators because they are audacious! They don't interpret and react in the place of the other. When negotiating, children use a whole panoply of psycho-social skills (empathy, active listening, assertiveness...). These “budding” negotiators spontaneously attempt to obtain more, to find opportunities and to create something... They engage in relationships where they think they can generate something positive. That is why negotiation needs to be encouraged: it shows an appetite for life, curiosity and more generally ambition. It is beneficial to their development, as long as it takes place in a safe environment.

their emotions, words and desires so that we can build, together. In doing so, we demonstrate respect, listening and we encourage our child to behave accordingly. We also give them self-esteem and confidence. It is another way of saying, without words: I love you as you are and you are worthy of being loved, fully, for who you are.

By building together, as both parents and children, we are establishing the roots that make us capable of functioning in the world and managing life. Overtime these roots will make us stronger, calmer and more capable of living a freer life.

### UPSTANDING DEVELOPMENT

To nourish the upstanding development of their personality on a daily basis, we need to guide our children without reinforcing the dependency between our position as a parent and their success. For example, we can replace the standard “I am proud of you” by “you can be proud of yourself,” which allows them to develop a gratifying and rewarding view of themselves, independent of what we, as parents, may think. The value and success of the child's behaviour is no longer associated with the adult's view.

### NEGOTIATING WITH OUR CHILDREN:

- ◇ *Define what is non-negotiable* (safety, hygiene, health...) and never go back on these non-negotiable principles;
- ◇ *On negotiable subjects*: make concessions on the form but not on the substance: "Do you prefer a shower or bath?"
- ◇ *Verbalise what you feel*: "I had a difficult day at work, I'm feeling annoyed, I need you to listen to me."

### THERE IS NO NEGOTIATION WITHOUT RELATION

What negotiation is really about is establishing a connection, so this is really about building a relationship with our children. We are bound to have a connection with our children. It begins as soon as they are born and can be nourished by confidence/trust, listening and consideration. Building a connection is stepping away from the descending relationship (where the adult knows and imposes) towards a relationship where all opinions count. This does not mean we need to be permissive or lax, which can be detrimental for a child – who needs a safe environment to evolve and grow – but rather about being considerate and leaves room for them to express



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