

Session 4: Aggressiveness

“Aggredi” (Latin) means “to approach”, “to go up to” and “to attack”. Aggressiveness *per se* is something existential, and in a constructive sense serves the self-preservation of the individual. Aggressiveness supports self-defence, procurement of joy, the ability to contact other people, identifying rank positions and recognizing one’s own limits, and establishing protection and self-esteem.

Destructive processes, however, are its opponents, where through excessive, disproportionate aggressive actions others, oneself, or objects will be injured or hurt, and thus the definition of the concept of violence is met. There is no clear dividing line between aggressiveness and violence.

Due to the inflationary use of the term “aggressiveness” and the frequent equating with the term “violence”, trainers are advised to carefully differentiate between relevant attributions in order to be able to initiate group-specific, demand-oriented and socially relevant learning. In the context of their gender role socialization boys (in particular) will be confronted with the phenomenon of aggressiveness and have to follow certain behavioural patterns. Under these coping processes psychological support for boys may be helpful in order to allow them a well-balanced and reflected view of their individual powers of self-assertion and demarcation.

The following collection of materials targeting at “aggressiveness” offers five activities with boys (and girls):

1. Coping with anger

The activity called “coping with anger” aims at an assessment of one’s own aggressive potential.

Anger as an emotion is at the centre and will be examined as to its origins and its background. By means of the “anger cake” a kind of self-judgment will be carried out, in order to handle this emotion in a better and more controlled way.

2. Conflict discussion

The activity “conflict discussion” is about communication behaviour, about taking one’s stance, representing different perspectives and about contributing solutions to solving conflicts. Individual conflict issues may be available. This unit has been designed as a teaching guide how to handle mediation talks.

3. Bad language: swearing allowed this time!

The unit “Bad language: swearing allowed this time!” intends to promote the ability of one’s emotions by making use of a reflexive approach. The permission being allowed to swear straightaway is the didactic key to self-perceptions of boys, and to handle aggressive language behaviour. Assisted by animal protagonists, space for a pleasurable analysis of the area will be opened.

4. Self-assertiveness: How do I feel, when...?

There is no successful self-assertiveness without an aggressiveness applied constructively.

The activity “Self-assertiveness: How do I feel, when...?” offers suggestions how to come to decisions in unpleasant and threatening situations and how such decisions can be justified.

At the heart of this offer there is the strengthening of self-care as well as representing individual limits externally and making them visible.

5. The factory

"The factory" deals with the consequences of destructive aggressivity. Discrimination and oppression as expressions of unbalanced power will be specifically addressed and reflected in this activity. Possibilities for a peaceful settlement of disputes will be analysed. Moreover, this unit is also about taking over responsibility for one's own life.