NOTES ON SADNESS IN STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES FROM THE PRINCIPLES OF EMOTIONAL EDUCATION

APONTAMENTOS SOBRE A TRISTEZA EM ESTUDANTES COM DEFICIÊNCIA INTELECTUAL A PARTIR DOS PRINCÍPIOS DA EDUCAÇÃO EMOCIONAL

NOTAS SOBRE LA TRISTEZA EN ESTUDIANTES CON DISCAPACIDAD INTELECTUAL DESDE LOS PRINCIPIOS DE LA EDUCACIÓN EMOCIONAL

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to analyze the experience of the emotion of sadness in students with intellectual disabilities based on the principles of Emotional Education. Reflecting on the stimuli that generate sadness, can lead the subject to self-knowledge and the reframing of these stimuli, especially in individuals who are victims of exclusion and vulnerabilities, as is the case of people with intellectual disabilities. In this sense, the field of Emotional Education emerges as a pedagogical tool that should be included in the school, since it offers the possibility for the subject to be emotionally educated. This research adheres to the qualitative approach and was carried out with 27 students with intellectual disabilities in Youth and Adult Education, based on direct observation and semi-structured interviews. The conclusions of the study point out that the emotion of sadness in students with intellectual disabilities needs to be better worked and developed, through the implementation of pedagogical projects in the area of Emotional Education, since this field enables emotional regulation and a healthy experience of sadness, allowing people with intellectual disabilities to make room for the new and break with the many paralyzing barriers that are socially imposed on them.

KEYWORDS: Intellectual disability. Emotional education. Sadness.

RESUMO: *Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a vivência da emoção da tristeza em estudantes com deficiência intelectual a partir dos princípios da Educação Emocional. Refletir sobre os estímulos geradores da tristeza pode levar o sujeito ao autoconhecimento e à ressignificação desses estímulos, principalmente em indivíduos que são vítimas de exclusão e vulnerabilidades, como é o caso das pessoas com deficiência intelectual. Nesse sentido, o campo da Educação Emocional surge como ferramenta pedagógica que deve ser incluída na escola, uma vez que oferece a possibilidade de o sujeito educar-se emocionalmente. Esta pesquisa adere à abordagem qualitativa e foi realizada com 27 estudantes com deficiência intelectual da Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA), a partir da observação direta e da realização de entrevista semiestruturada. As conclusões do estudo apontam que a emoção da tristeza em estudantes com deficiência intelectual precisa ser mais bem trabalhada e desenvolvida, através da implantação de projetos pedagógicos na área de Educação Emocional, uma vez que este campo possibilita a regulação emocional e uma vivência sadia*

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da tristeza, permitindo que as pessoas com deficiência intelectual abram espaço para o novo e rompam com as inúmeras barreiras paralisantes que lhes são impostas socialmente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Deficiência intelectual. Educação emocional. Tristeza.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la experiencia de la emoción de tristeza en estudiantes con discapacidad intelectual a partir de los principios de la Educación Emocional. Reflexionar sobre los estímulos que generan tristeza puede llevar al sujeto al autoconocimiento y al replanteamiento de estos estímulos, especialmente en individuos que son víctimas de exclusión y vulnerabilidad, como es el caso de las personas con discapacidad intelectual. En este sentido, el campo de la Educación Emocional surge como una herramienta pedagógica que debe incluirse en la escuela, ya que ofrece la posibilidad de que el sujeto sea educado emocionalmente. Esta investigación se adhiere al enfoque cualitativo y se realizó con 27 estudiantes con discapacidad intelectual de Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA), a partir de la observación directa y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Las conclusiones del estudio señalan que la emoción de tristeza en estudiantes con discapacidad intelectual necesita ser mejor trabajada y desarrollada, a través de la implementación de proyectos pedagógicos en el área de Educación Emocional, ya que este campo posibilita la regulación emocional y una sana experiencia de tristeza. Permitir que las personas con discapacidad intelectual dejen espacio para lo nuevo y rompan con las muchas barreras paralizantes que se les imponen socialmente.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Discapacidad intelectual. Educación emocional. Tristeza.*

Introduction

This article aims to analyze the experience of the emotion of sadness in students with intellectual disabilities from the perspective of Emotional Education. The central argument of this study is that reflecting on the stimuli that generate sadness in an individual's life can lead them to self-knowledge and the redefinition of these situations, especially in individuals who live subject to a reality of exclusion, prejudice and vulnerabilities, such as this is the case of people with intellectual disabilities.

Human beings experience, throughout their lives, a whirlwind of emotions that are often experienced unconsciously, which is an unhealthy movement for everyday life. Among the set of emotions, primary emotions are those innate "and present in all cultures, revealing a universal biological response pattern, clearly identified through behavior, body activation and facial expression" (POSSEBON, 2017b, p. 67, our translation). Sadness, the object of study of this research, presents itself as a basic and innate emotion to any human being.

Sadness is defined as an emotion that is related to losses, whether individually or collectively, when the loss affects someone close to the individual. Experiencing sadness in a

healthy way is essential for personal well-being and human evolution, since this emotion has as one of its functions the renewal, in order to provide a break with the past and lead the individual to open up to a new cycle of his life (MARTINS, 2004; POSSEBON, 2017a). In this sense, the emotion of sadness, when experienced in a healthy and appropriate way, can lead the individual to overcome losses and obstacles that paralyze him. On the other hand, if this emotion is experienced in an unregulated way, it can lead to its pathological form, through serious illnesses such as depression and suicide.

Many socially marginalized groups often experience emotions such as sadness. History highlights that it is not new that the experiences of exclusion mark the lives of people with disabilities, who remain in a situation of intense social disadvantage, especially regarding "participation and basic human rights" (NEVES, 2005, p.48). Within this group, people with intellectual disabilities occupy an even greater space of social vulnerability due to all the physical and intellectual stigmas that surround their lives. Furthermore, for a long time these people were prevented from attending regular schools, remaining locked at home, living in the shadow of their parents and/or relatives (DANTAS, 2014).

Despite all the advances and achievements in the rights of people with disabilities, the increase in access to regular schooling and the adoption of the social model of disability (UN, 2006), the perpetuation of barriers that generate a lack of opportunities and a series of restrictions imposed by society (FARIAS, 2011) for this social group, which experiences a whirlwind of emotions that are unnoticed by the school and affect its development and learning.

Traditionally, the educational work of schools has focused on cognitive aspects, prioritizing scientific and technical learning, leaving aside people's knowledge and not bothering to reflect on the feelings and emotions that are at the base of integral development (BISQUERRA, 2014). In the view of Arandiga and Tortosa (2013), the field of emotional education emerges precisely to help break the rigidity and lack of affection present in social spaces. Emotions are now seen as essential to the development of all individuals, especially those who are historically victims of marginalization and social exclusion, such as young people with intellectual disabilities.

This study adheres to the qualitative research approach and is the result of a larger investigation carried out within the scope of the Center for Emotional Education of the Federal University of Paraíba, with a focus on working emotions as a factor in preventing

violence in public schools, in the period of 2016 to 2018[2]. In this article, specifically, the findings concerning the emotion of sadness with students with intellectual disabilities will be presented. The research was carried out in a state school in Paraíba and had 27 young people with intellectual disabilities enrolled in three groups of Youth and Adult Education (YAE) as participants. The data collection instruments used were direct observation and a semi-structured interview script called Diary of Emotions.

The article will be divided into three parts. First, a brief theoretical discussion on the emotion of sadness will be presented, then the research methodology and, finally, the analysis of the main stimuli that cause sadness in young people with intellectual disabilities.

Conceptualizing the emotion of sadness and its interfaces

Sadness is a basic or primary emotion and "is associated with the loss of something, a loved one, or what is valued: goods, health, personal and family situations etc." (GONSALVES, 2015, p. 31, our translation). Sadness can be conceptualized as an energetic reaction usually associated with events of loss or frustration, however, the literature points out (DAMÁSIO, 2013) that sadness cannot be conceived as a negative or inappropriate emotion for human beings, since it has important functions for life, just like any other emotion. Furthermore, the emotional field of sadness can be accompanied by feelings of pain, loneliness, pessimism, apathy, self-pity, discouragement, depression. In the words of Bisquerra (2000, p. 103, our translation):

> Sadness can produce a loss of the feeling of pleasure. You no longer find pleasure in activities that have hitherto been satisfying: good food, interpersonal relationships, entertainment. You lose interest in everything. Sadness is an emotion that does not support types of action because the reduction in activity is its greatest characteristic.

Due to its peculiar characteristics described above, there is no difficulty in identifying when the subject is experiencing sadness, since there is a reduction in previously common activities. Sadness reconfigures the person's entire experience network, who starts to lose interest in the things they liked to do, begins to feel powerless, without the strength to solve problems, without control of the situation. Culturally, there are some dimensions that are recognized as belonging to sadness, such as: isolation, silence, contained or spilled tears (BRANT; MINAYO-GOMEZ, 2008), among others. Historically expressing sadness in

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public has been seen as a taboo that creates discomfort and may even be considered inappropriate. Therefore, a pedagogical work in the field of Emotional Education is essential to break these paradigms, as it provides opportunities for knowledge about emotions, generating subjective well-being.

Research shows that there are several ways to experience emotions (BISQUERRA; GONZÁLEZ; NAVARRO, 2015; DAMÁSIO, 2013), therefore, it is necessary to know them, how they manifest themselves, and how they can be functional for life. In the case of sadness, if it is experienced in a healthy way for short periods, it can be beneficial to the individual who experiences it. On the other hand, if sadness is experienced for long periods, it can become pathological, as is the case with depression, mutilation and suicide. Studies show (CASASSUS, 2009; POSSEBON, 2017a) that the "post-modern" lifestyle is a major factor for the emergence of some phenomena and diseases, such as depression and anxiety, but the solutions presented so far are for treatment and medicalization, there are few initiatives that seek to prevent these circumstances through working with emotions. In this context, it is highlighted how fundamental it is for the school to invest not only in learning content and techniques, but also to include educational paths that teach students to know themselves and to deal with emotions, so that they have a healthy and successful life in all areas.

Suicide presents itself as the maximum expression of pathological sadness, when it becomes a state of mind. Currently, suicide is considered the second leading cause of hospitalization of adolescents aged 10 to 19 years old in the SUS network (FREITAS; BOTEGA, 2002). Confirming this data, Benincasa and Resende (2006) point out sadness as the main risk factor for suicide among adolescents, not having very relevant differences between those in class "A" and "D". However, the authors highlight the "feeling of helplessness" as a peculiarity of the upper class, and the need for a support group, such as friends, boyfriends and family members.

The biggest protective factor against experiencing sadness in its pathological forms identified in the research groups carried out by Benincasa and Rezende (2006) was having "someone who could be trusted to talk to". This highlights the importance of establishing healthy bonds through emotional education in interpersonal relationships, in order to build the necessary trust and assertiveness between people. "Controlling or denying what you feel can cause a lot of damage, as emotions can remain lodged indefinitely in our body and mind, leaving consequences" (GONSALVES, 2015, p. 49, our translation). In the case of people with intellectual disabilities, this reality is even more aggravated, since they have few friends to talk to and their voices are constantly muted.

It is necessary to prevent the negative experience of sadness, as learning to deal with the circumstances that led to this emotion and expanding moments of vitality can provide subjective well-being to achieve a balanced life. Sadness has important functions in the life cycle, as it interconnects with the parting with a stage and the opening to new paths. After experiencing it in a regulated and beneficial way, there follows a need for rest, like a recovery from a physical injury. And so, it generates a kind of renewal that prepares the individual for another cycle of their history (MARTINS, 2004).

Therefore, it is important that this emotion is not denied or neglected, but experienced and worked on at school and in all spaces that are part of the subject's life. You cannot conceive a world where rationality is so opposed to emotions that you are not allowed to be sad without being considered a sign of weakness. Sadness and the time of pain are necessary for a healthy experience of life with all its cycles and restarts, especially for those who constantly suffer situations of conflict and discrimination, which can be possible stimuli that generate sadness, as occurs with people with intellectual disabilities.

Methodological path

This article emerges within the scope of the Center for Emotional Education of the Federal University of Paraíba, through a broader investigation focused on the study of emotions as a factor in preventing violence in public schools, which was carried out between 2016 and 2018. In this article, specifically, the focus of the analysis is the stimuli that generate the emotion of sadness in students with intellectual disabilities.

The research field was a state school and the subjects participating in this study were 27 young people with intellectual disabilities students of Youth and Adult Education (YAE), 17 females and 10 males, aged between 16 and 35 years old. The criterion for choosing these participants was to be enrolled in the YAE class and be over 15 years old, as it was assumed that these students would have a better perception of themselves and a clearer expression of their feelings.

For data collection, two research instruments were used. The first was the direct observation carried out by the researcher, in which all perceptions and feelings experienced during contact with the young people were recorded in a logbook. The second was a semi-structured interview script, called Diary of Emotions, which contains open questions about which situations could trigger certain basic emotions (fear, anger, joy, sadness, among others),

asking the respondent to describe the event. Each page of the Diary corresponded to an emotion.

The interview script was built and applied by the research project team, consisting of researchers in education, and also validated by peers. The application of the interview was made in person from January to March 2018. All students present in the classroom accepted to participate in the research, with no rejection. Due to the reading and writing difficulties of students with intellectual disabilities, the interview was carried out so that they could answer the questions orally. All scientific and ethical requirements were met, including confidentiality, school and family consent, and research approval by the Ethics Committee.

Before the application of the interview script, experiences in Emotional Education were also carried out to bring greater clarity and awareness about emotions to the research subjects. In the case of the experience of "sadness", resources such as photographs, painting, music, relaxation technique were used, and it was divided into five moments:

1.   Initial contact with the class and presentation of the emotion "sadness" with the use of resources, images of facial expressions and music.

2.   Presentation of a book with photographic images of situations that refer to emotion.

3.   Relaxation technique with the aid of music, after a dialogue with the class and an oral question about the emotion contained in the Diary, in addition to recording the responses collected with the aid of a voice recorder.

4.   After collection, an activity (painting) was proposed.

5.   Finalization of the intervention, with collection of paintings, in addition to thanking the students and teacher.

After collecting information through the experiences and applying the interview script, we then move on to the audio transcription phase and characterization of responses, through the development of information categories. Each page of the Diary of Emotions corresponding to an emotion, which was identified by the initial letter of the emotion and the participant's number: for example, T.08 (sadness emotion, participant number 08); T.02 (sadness emotion, participant number 02). This procedure allowed selecting main categories considering the recurrence of the phenomenon.

Next, we present the analysis of data related to the stimuli that generate the emotion of sadness by young people with disabilities.

The experience of sadness in young people with intellectual disabilities

From the collected data, it was possible to identify the stimuli that generate the emotion of sadness in the lives of young people with intellectual disabilities. Possebon (2017b) states that it is not any situation that has the power to trigger an emotion, because, for the situation to be emotive, it needs to be a Competent Emotional Stimulus – CES. This term was created by António Damásio (2013) to designate a relevant event or an emotional activator capable of generating a response in the body based on the person's assessment of the situation. Regarding competent emotional stimuli, Martins (2004, p. 65, our translation) enriches the understanding by stating that "at first emotions are provoked by concrete situations and objectives [...] later, symbolic, psychological and social activators are added to the concrete".

In this research, it was possible to list as one of the main triggers of sadness in young people with intellectual disabilities, the longing, mainly reflected by the memories of those who are no longer with the subject or the death of loved ones. This data indicates that sadness, in addition to being related to material and human losses, is directly linked to attachment through family affective ties (POSSEBON, 2017b), as shown in the following statements:

> *"...I miss my late grandfather, he was very important to me"* (T.02);
> *"I'm alone at home, then I remember my mother, God rest her soul, she's already gone, then I get sad"* (T.10);
> *"...what makes me sad is that I lost my uncle. I loved him."* (T.23, our translation).

The family experience constitutes the first nucleus through which young people (with or without disability) experience conflicts and experience their emotions, being, therefore, fundamental for the biopsychosocial development of individuals and determinant for the structuring of emotional regulation processes (PRATTA; SANTOS, 2017). According to Retana-Franco and Sánchez-Aragón (2008), "emotional regulation refers to the ways of modulating, inhibiting, intensifying or diminishing the way of reacting to situations eliciting emotion" (p. 180, our translation), and this process starts from the first days of life in the family, improving during the period of adolescence and youth.

The longing expressed in the testimonies of the young people above became a trigger for the emotion of sadness, as in all the statements, the longing is related to someone very close, part of the young person's family support network. As Possebon (2017a, p. 33, our translation) states, "to feel sad about the death or absence of someone, that someone must have an emotional bond with the person who is sad" and have a direct influence on their well-

being. It is worth noting that family losses were also identified as a strong trigger of sadness in adolescents without disabilities in the research carried out by Gonsalves (2015), noting that this is a universal factor that generates sadness in individuals of all ages, cultures, social classes, gender etc.

Despite all the political-legal advances related to the rights of people with disabilities, including those regarding protection mechanisms against exclusionary attitudes, people with disabilities, and more precisely those with intellectual disabilities, continue to suffer from various forms of discrimination in their lives. In this research, the existence of conflicting and prejudiced relationships practiced by family members and acquaintances emerges as another competent emotional stimulus of sadness that can be registered in the speeches of the young people:

> *"The driver where I live doesn't like me or my mother, just because I have a disability"* (T.07);
> *"My aunt, she says bad things to me that make me very sad"* (T.15);
> *"What makes me want to cry the most is the girls from the community, who are all the time messing with me, making fun of my face"* (T.06, our translation).

These statements reveal aggressive behaviors translated into symbolic violence through words of rejection, since, at this stage of life, group acceptance starts to play an extremely important role. This factor is present in the emotional field of sadness of young people with or without disabilities, according to a study by Mooij (2011), where 80,770 students reported being victims of verbal violence and pointed out as the main reasons for discrimination: physical appearance, individual behavior, level school performance, *physical or intellectual disability*, religious aspects, gender issues and sexual orientation.

Williams (2003) defines a violent act as "any action that is characterized by inertia, passivity, and silence, so that when the activity and speech of another are impeded or canceled, there is violence" (p. 23, our translation). In the case of people with intellectual disabilities, this symbolic violence is even more present, since the invisibility of this social group is at the root of their vulnerability to violence, whether verbal, physical, psychological or sexual (FERREIRA, 2008). On the other hand, aggressive rejection behaviors are traditionally admitted as natural within the school and the community in general, and are usually ignored or not valued, both by teachers, parents and friends.

In addition to rejection, abandonment was also pointed out in this research as a stimulus that generates the emotion of sadness in young people with intellectual disabilities. The abandonment of children with disabilities has historically been carried out in several

cultures that tolerate these practices, since disability was seen for a long time from the perspective of the medical-pathological conception as a disease or a "karma" that families could "get rid of" (MAZZOTA, 2005; MELETTI; BUENO, 2011). Even in the face of the concept of human rights being defended since the last century with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (ONU, 1948) and with the consolidation of the social model of disability (ONU, 2006), which opened a new perspective on disability under the perspective of human diversity, unfounded beliefs about the development and capacity of people with intellectual disabilities continue to be perpetuated, also leading to veiled practices of abandonment.

The authors Fonseca, Santos and Dias (2009) analyzed the reasons that lead fathers and mothers to abandon children with disabilities, placing them under the responsibility of other institutions or other family members, concluding that in addition to the barriers related to disability that weigh on the abandonment of these minors, "generally, it is about fathers and mothers who carry with them their own history of need and abandonment" (p. 303), not having the psychological and social conditions to take on that child. The young participants in this study express this reality by stating:

> *"my mother abandoned me because she was alone and she was no longer able to raise me, in addition to being very sad about life"* (T.23)*;*
> *"My father abandoned me when I was two years old because he lost his job and he didn't know how to raise me"* (T.18, our translation).

Luterman (1987) emphasizes that fathers, as well as mothers, seem to experience anguish, anxiety and emotional decompensation when receiving the diagnosis of their children's disability. All these feelings inherent in the process of accepting disability, if not experienced properly and at the right time, can lead to the abandonment of children and adolescents with disabilities. The statements above point to this reality, which the fathers and/or mothers of the young participants went through and did not knew how to overcome it, culminating in stories of abandonment. In this context, emotional education can be a way to help these fathers and mothers to strengthen their emotions and reframe the sadness and despair they are feeling, since, as Casassus argues (2009, p. 42, our translation): "most problems of individuals today are emotional and not cognitive".

Another factor pointed out in this research as a trigger for sadness in young people with intellectual disabilities is being deprived of attending school. It is known that for a long time this group was prohibited from attending regular schools, remaining locked at home and having their lives restricted to family life, "[...] which made these people unable to face and learn to manage life in society" (GODOY, 2002, p. 33, our translation). Such social

invisibility and the omission of political leaders in enforcing their rights generated a lack of opportunities and lack of access to education (FARIAS, 2011; DANTAS, 2011). Today there are still social and psychological remnants of this period of deprivation and the discourse of young people confirms the fact that not going to school makes them very sad:

> *"When there is no bus to come to school I get very sad because it is the only place I have to go"* (T.10);
> *"When I don't come to school I cry a lot because I don't meet my friends and I stay at home doing nothing, just watching television"* (T.27, our translation).

The paradigm of inclusive education is a product of this time and was consolidated with the Declaration of Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994), from which it was questioned the lack of access to formal education and school dropout of all students who have special educational needs because they are people with disabilities, gifted, homeless, cultural minority or any group that is marginalized in society. From this achievement, as shown in the statements of the young people above, the school became a place of appropriation for them, of identity, of personal development and construction of a support network and friends.

This reality differs from what was analyzed by the research carried out by Coutinho, Carneiro and Salgueiro (2018) regarding the voices of children and adolescents without disabilities about the school, which revealed that most children and adolescents do not maintain a good relationship with the school, nor do they find an affective and well-being space in it. School is considered, in the perception of adolescents without disabilities, a source of sadness, especially when they feel like failures for not achieving the school result they want and report feeling even sadder when they feel charged for something they cannot give, not finding anyone in the school environment who can help and welcome them.

In the case of people with disabilities, in addition to the normative character of the right to education, it is through educational processes that take place at school (and also outside of it) that these people learn about their identities (WOODWARD, 2000) and develop the necessary skills and competences to have an independent life. In this sense, the school as a social space must include in its objectives to offer quality education for people with disabilities and also understand the importance of its role as an agent to protect the invisibility and vulnerability of this social group, as confirmed by Ferreira (2009, p. 50, our translation): "educators must commit to removing situations that generate vulnerability, while ensuring their education under egalitarian conditions".

This research shows that despite all the challenges and barriers that still exist in regular schools to ensure quality education for people with intellectual disabilities, the school represents for them a welcoming environment that triggers joy. All young participants in this research identified the school as a place of good relationships and did not reveal reasons for sadness within the school, but rather in its absence. On the other hand, the research carried out by Maia and Medrado (2020) showed that young people with intellectual disabilities can also feel unprotected at school and be stigmatized for not fitting into the established learning pattern.

Pletsch and Glat (2012) confirm this reality by identifying that the school, while collaborating with the social and integral development of students with disabilities, can often also contribute to the "[...] crystallization of disability, whether by its limiting view of people with intellectual disabilities, whether because of its model of overvaluation of cognitive skills, making these people ineligible for learning, in the educators' conception" (p. 12, our translation). Thus, the school can also be an instrument of collaboration for the low self-esteem of young people with disabilities, which is one of the major obstacles that this group faces in achieving autonomy.

This research points out as another stimulus that generates sadness in young people with intellectual disabilities, being discredited and the negative perception of themselves, these two factors being recurrent in different situations in the daily lives of these young people, whether in the family, school or in the circle of friends:

> *"When my teacher and some friends don't believe me, I get hurt";* (T.10)
> *"My body is ugly, I don't think it's beautiful, I don't like it".* (T.24)
> *"I have an aunt who takes care of me and she never lets me cook because she thinks I can't"* (T.05, our translation).

The voices of young people reflect the absorption of the negative discourse that their peers, family members and teachers have about them and the reflection of this reality in the formation of their identity. All the mechanisms of coercion and segregation to which young people with intellectual disabilities are submitted have consequences in the formation of their identity, in the socialization process and in the affective relationships with the environment (SHIMONO, 2008). In this regard, Mantoan (2008) states that when people with intellectual disabilities perceive the limiting image that others have about them in the sense of believing that academic and professional success is beyond their reach, this negative perception will inhibit the use of means to overcome such barriers.

Most of the challenges related to self-image and self-esteem are rooted in the way the

process of dealing with emotions unfolds (MARTINS, 2004), so that if subjects are not aware of their real image, they remain doubly vulnerable because they are young people and because they are people with disabilities and without self-confidence, conditions that impose limits on the possibilities of social participation. On the other hand, Worrell (2010) argues that the first step to break this state is to acquire self-esteem and self-confidence, so that the individual breaks with the belief in the "incapacity" caused by the disability and starts to have a new self-reference. This is the basis for having an autonomous life, as by having confidence in themselves and in their abilities, the individual gains strength to resist the power relations to which one is subjected.

Another triggering factor of sadness in this research was loneliness, where a significant number of young people with intellectual disabilities say that they feel alone and are unable to establish bonds of friendship:

> *"I don't have any friends to go out with and I feel sad about it"* (T.02)
> *"I wanted my mom to talk to me more, about my dreams to life"* (T.11)
> *"Something that makes me very sad is not having many friends, I'm alone all the time"* (T.25)
> *"I wish I could go out to the mall and talk more with friends. I only have my grandmother"* (T.18, our translation)

In the statements above, there is a significant recurrence of a set of situations that lead to social isolation of young people, such as lack of attention, the absence of friends, exclusion itself, depriving them of coexistence with others, as if they were invisible. Historically, people with disabilities have built their lives more restricted to socializing in the family environment, and activities that are common for adolescents and young people without disabilities, such as going out with friends to have fun, end up being something rare for this social group.

The study by Fernández-Abascal *et al.* (2015) shows that the establishment of at least one adequate social bond can protect adolescents and young people from depressive behavior, since the absence of available and reliable people to listen to them causes other feelings, such as: abandonment, rejection and emptiness. This reality can contribute to the elaboration of ruminant, destructive and pessimistic thoughts, which are related to the emotion of "sadness" and can lead to depression (POSSEBON, 2017b). Prevention mechanisms need to be created, as it is estimated that the risk of depression increases with adolescence, with its prevalence estimated at around 2% in children and at 4-8% in adolescents. Regarding teenage girls, they have twice the risk of developing depression than boys of the same age (RESENDE *et al.*, 2013).

Schooling based on the principles of emotional education is an effective way to deal with sadness in the lives of young people and adolescents with intellectual disabilities, so that this emotion does not manifest itself in its pathological forms. In this sense, the school cannot prioritize only the scientific and technical contents, leaving aside the affective and emotional aspects that affect the developing subject. In the words of Arándiga (2015, p. 3, our transaltion), the school must have "a curriculum that defines the development of emotional contents with their corresponding curricular elements: objectives, activities, methodology and evaluation criteria", so that emotions of students with and without disabilities are worked.

Especially for young people who are victims of situations of vulnerability and exclusion, such as people with intellectual disabilities, emotional education emerges as a means of preventing risk factors, since the lack of knowledge about how emotions influence learning and in the conduct of life, it does not allow the subject to break the barriers that paralyze him. The school, then, needs to have methodologies that lead students to experience a process of self-knowledge and awareness of their emotions, so that they do not act unaware of the effects that emotions have on them.

In this sense, by becoming aware of the stimuli that make them feel the emotion of sadness, young people with intellectual disabilities can assess, understand and reframe how to deal with this emotion. This process can contribute to facing difficult situations and provide an opportunity to leave a state of vulnerability to a state of autonomy and independence in life.

Final considerations

This research aimed to analyze the main stimuli that generate the emotion of sadness in students with intellectual disabilities, based on the principles of Emotional Education. The data from this study show that the main factors that can lead adolescents and young people with intellectual disabilities to experience the emotion of sadness are: missing loved ones; attitudes and words of rejection; abandonment; absence from school; being discredited and having a negative perception of yourself; loneliness, mainly reflected in the absence of trusted friends and people to listen to them.

This study pointed out, through the voices of the young participants, that the condition of disability arises in various situations of exclusion, prejudice and social invisibility that constitute obstacles for people with disabilities to build their lives independently based on established concepts of self-esteem and positive self-acceptance. In the case of the emotion of

sadness, which is so often experienced from these situations, if people with disabilities go through a process of emotional education and learn to experience it in a healthy way, the sadness will be momentary and will become a stronghold for overcoming such barriers. Sadness, therefore, is an emotion that has among its important functions the renewal of cycles and the breaking of conditions that paralyze and bring suffering to the subjects.

It is essential, therefore, that Emotional Education as a field of knowledge is included in the school, as the teaching-learning process must establish in its curriculum not only the cognitive aspects, but also include the affective and emotional dimensions that are part of the integral development of the subjects. The experience of a process of awareness of emotions leads to a healthier experience of them, as it enables the development of socio-emotional skills aligned with the construction of their own identity, so important for people with intellectual disabilities to recognize themselves as subjects of rights and full value.

Further investigations and pedagogical interventions are needed to bring the discussion of Emotional Education to the school, aiming to break the rigidity of curricular content, bringing a more sensitive look in relation to diversity and all the issues involved in it. Therefore, it is essential that in the school space there is more accurate work directed to the emotions of students, especially those who have a disability or are victims of situations of prejudice and various exclusions. The importance of work in emotional education that is extended to the entire family of students is also highlighted, since the family environment constitutes the initial environment in which emotional experiences take place.

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