

Newsletter n4

# POSITIVE ACADEMY

January 2024



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# TAKING CARE OF MYSELF, TAKING CARE OF YOU

## Caring profession and inclusion.

Maria Chiara Pavesi,

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***“I care...***

***I will take care of myself...***

***I take care of you.”***

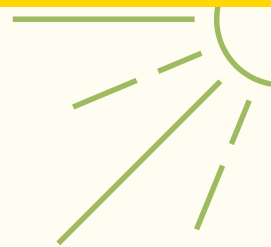
Every day the healthcare profession requires you to enter into a relationship with the Other.

A special relationship develops through the connection formed and the rapport established between the professional and the Other during the caring process. According to Rogers, this is a collaborative and trusting relationship that forms the foundation for an effective well-being promotion treatment, where specific technical skills of the profession will be integrated.

This unique relationship is characterized by empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness from the professional, who creates a setting in which the individual can recognize a safe and non-judgmental space to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This provides an opportunity for the Other to feel understood, accepted, and supported in enhancing self-awareness and promoting their growth.

In this co-constructed path, the relationship becomes a fundamental part that involves both parties and requires both to be promoters and agents during the process. This forms a relationship that demands the professional to be capable of connecting with themselves, then moving beyond themselves to being ready to connect with the other. Thus, the relationship that is formed takes on the characteristics of caring that go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and technical content.





The work of caring both as VET professional and as MHPS professional requires constant self-dialogue that starts with a welcoming look towards oneself to promote well-being in those around us.

Looking at the VET context, VET as agents of change have the task not only to impart knowledge but also to care for students as human beings, contributing to the construction of beautiful souls and adults capable of self-care.

*"When we are able to love ourselves, we are already protecting and nourishing society. When we are able to smile, when we are at peace, there is already a change in the world."*

- Thich Nhat Hanh

The widespread suffering among young people makes the role of teachers in providing support and self-understanding even more crucial. In respecting the ethics of a profession that demands true care for students as individuals beyond the transmission of knowledge, if teachers themselves are fatigued or neglect self-care, it becomes difficult for them to welcome those they encounter and expect in turn that students be happy, believe in dreams, or take care of themselves.

In this regard, knowledge and understanding, including through training opportunities, about how judgment and self-criticism activate automatic defense mechanisms, influencing perceptions and cognitive and physical reactions, and shaping relational mechanisms that are not open to the Other. Exploring the underlying mechanisms of biases and prejudices that hinder accurate perception of reality allows, in the Assagiolian perspective of knowing, possessing, transforming ourselves, and being ready for a relationship with the other.

*"We are living subjects endowed with the power to choose, to build relationships, to make changes in our personality, in others, in circumstances."*

Roberto Assagioli



Starting from an approach like positive psychology that highlights the importance of mindfulness-based practices and self-compassion. Mindfulness helps develop an open and curious perspective towards experience, while self-compassion fosters a loving and gentle attitude towards oneself. The combination of these reflections culminates in an invitation to pause, rediscover the small things, and be amazed by beauty. Investing in education as an act of love, starting with self-care, becomes essential to create a compassionate and inclusive educational environment.

The Artigianelli Pavoniano Institute in Trento, Italy, has wanted to build a system based on these reflections that emphasizes and promotes individual potential and the sharing of know-how aimed at promoting the well-being of the individual within the ecosystem. Here, each person is looked at as an individual in the totality of their functioning, and the deficits or dysfunctional areas of each are related to resources. The vicious circle that creates dependence on the "other-than-me" is broken, and resources are valued through support for recognition and empowerment of one's deeper self.

By doing so, every person (student, teacher, family) is recognized for what they have to offer to others and is allowed to be guided towards promoting their well-being and realizing their potential.

This means for the system and internal professionals to be ready to embrace [self-work] to be able to see the potential even in the most challenging student and recognize them for their areas of strength, providing opportunities to flourish because, as an important Italian singer said:

*"Dai diamanti non nasce niente, dal letame nascono i fiori" - Fabrizio De André*  
(From diamonds nothing springs out, from manure flowers spring)





## National webinars

Over the months of November and December, we celebrated a series of national webinars to present the project results in depth and conduct an introductory training using the materials developed addressed at VET professionals and mental health workers in our respective countries.

### **HAPPSY, Greece**

The Hellenic Association of Positive Psychology (HAPPSY) delivered a national webinar on the 25th of November 2023 to a group of Greek mental health professionals and VETs. The webinar was divided into two parts, where at first the mental health professionals were introduced to the theoretical concept of the project, the aims and long-term goals. In the second part, the volunteers were split into two groups together with the trainers and had the opportunity to explore individually the Academy's interactive platform and familiarize themselves with the Serious Game. Interaction between the participants was achieved by experiencing one community-based activity in which each professional reflected and shared one gratitude statement about their role position.

The National Webinar (R2/A3) and Serious Game Local demonstration (R3/A3) lasted 3 ½ hours and in total 25 participants were engaged.

The webinar concluded with a positive memory of the event in which each participant selected one object in vivo that will be used as a positive recollection of the training.

### **IoD, Cyprus**

IoD successfully piloted the Positive Academy e-Kit and Serious Game during the online national webinar that was organised in Cyprus at the end of November 2023. The webinar was attended by mental health professionals, psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, as well as coaches and VET trainers. The trainers engaged the participants to take an active part in the webinar by facilitating a practical and interactive programme which left the participants overall satisfied and impressed by the Positive Academy project and its outcomes. To quote one of the participants themselves: "The welcome we received from the facilitators of the webinar was very positive, full of energy and eagerness to welcome us to the world of Positive Psychology. The steps we followed were quite educational, and helpful in helping us to relax and better integrate into the atmosphere of the exercises. I believe that their objectives were achieved, as there was active participation from the participants."



## CPIP, Romania

Educators, trainers, psychologists, and representatives from Vocational Education and Training (VET) were in attendance at the Positive Academy's Romanian Webinar. Participants provided positive evaluations, emphasizing that the incorporation of the serious game allowed them to both play and learn about psychological resilience in a relaxed and accessible manner. One participant noted, "The scenarios were realistic, representing real-life situations and offering multiple options for scenario answers." The feedback reflects the success of the event in delivering an engaging and effective learning experience on the nuances of psychological resilience.

## IASIS, Greece

The recent national webinar in the framework of "Positive Academy" project, held on November 30th in Greece and hosted by renowned trainers Eleni Spyropoulou, Elena Egglezou, and Anna Klonari, was a triumph in interactive learning. Attended by 25 mental health professionals, the three-hour session featured dynamic exercises and engaging breakout discussions, earning high praise for its practical, real-world applicability. Participants lauded the webinar for its expertly delivered content, which was both informative and directly relevant to their professional practices. The innovative use of networking tools and digital platforms not only enhanced the learning experience but also fostered valuable professional connections. This webinar set a new standard in digital learning, blending expert knowledge with interactive, hands-on sessions that left attendees enriched and better equipped in their fields.





## IINTRAS, Spain

The approach of the webinar organized by INTRAS Foundation on December 20th was eminently practical. We introduced each training unit followed by a sample exercise adapted from the activities contained in the respective modules. We divided the group into 3 break rooms, each led by a Positive Academy Project trainer, so that every participant who wished to talk and share their thoughts and reflections could do this. The delivery was eminently interactive and participative in order to keep the participants engaged in the process.

Attendees expressed positive views on the overall relevance and usefulness of the webinar. They found the format attractive and appreciated the design of the sessions. The orientation of the training, focusing on internal reflection, mindfulness, and self-compassion, was well-received. Additionally, they noted the positive approach towards workplace well-being and the emphasis on positive emotions. Participants also valued the clarity and ease of use of the training platform and found it accessible. They acknowledged the interactive and practical nature of the webinar and valued the opportunity to share their opinions after the entire process.

## SCF, Italy

The piloting of the Positive Academy Platform took place online on the 15th of December 2023 and involved 25 participants and 4 trainers. The participants came from SCF's associated VET schools and from the Artigianelli Ecosystem network.

VET and MHP professionals, unified by their roles as caring professionals, attended the webinar. The participants showed interest in the platform and the toolbox developed.

The event provided an opportunity for discussion and enrichment on the topic of stress and burnout in caregiving (both MPHs and VETs) professions: after an introductory training, three different exercises were introduced, selected from three Modules of the E-kit, followed by the experimentation of the platform and of the Serious Game. A data collection was included as well.

The feedback from the participants was constantly collected during the piloting.

Although many participants report to delve deeper into the modules in the future, the most aspects appreciated aspect was related to the practice and concrete experience of the modules.





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