OSNOVNA ŠOLA MILOJKE ŠTRUKELJ
NOVA GORICA, SLOVENIA

MENTAL HEALTH AND COVID – 19

"Mental health is a state of well- being in which an realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."(WHO)

We all need good mental health for healthy development, take care of ourselves and interact with others, so it is vital to not only address the needs of people with defined mental disorders but also to protect and promote the mental health of all people and recognise its intrinsic value.

All of this is true until an emergency like COVID-19 arises.

The state closed the school. The students remained locked up in their own homes. They were not allowed to socialize. Outdoor games with peers were banned. They were not allowed to hang out with each other.

The care for the mental health of the students of the elementary school Milojka Štrukelj Nova ,Gorica, Slovenia, was carried out in several ways. One of them is volunteering at a distance. Volunteer work was carried out by pupils of our elementary school, pupils of secondary school and students. It was performed by a computer through varios channels: Zoom konference, Skype, WhatsApp, Viber.

First we found out that not all pupils have a computer. This was reported to the volunteere mentor who provided the computers. The second step was, to teach pupils how to use the computer programs, which they needed for home schooling, because many of them have never used above-mentioned programs.

Once all this was sorted out, they started talking about fears. They talked about various questions: When will I see friends?   Are they healthy? How many people will die? How will I get a good grade? Who will help me to understand the school material?

Volunters also helped them with, understanding the school material, solving tasks and learning. They also talked to parents of pupils and gave them the contact number of their mentor.Therefore, parents had a chance to talk with her about: infection, financial distress, lose cash income, insecurity, lack of space, about education, how to react in varius situations at home that were not there before and how let them taje care of themselves after all. When they saw, that they were not only ones having problems, it was easier for them.

Volunteering has been of great importance for community. They cared for individuals who were in distress, disadvantaged and sometimes excluded.

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Lilijana Sulič, team leader of healthy school, May 2020.