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# Supporting Children's Self-esteem in Early Childhood Education

A Play Booklet for Kindergarten Teachers

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<p>The purpose of our study was to increase kindergarten teachers' awareness of the importance of supporting children's self-esteem by creating a play booklet.</p> <p>We made a functional thesis that consists of a report and a concrete product, a booklet for kindergarten teachers. The subject was discussed with our working-life partner, Helsinki City's kindergarten, since we wanted to work along their wishes. Based on Michele Borba's self-esteem model we chose five activities that aim to support the different elements of self-esteem of children aged four to five years. When planning the activities we took into consideration this age group's self-esteem, motor and social skills development. To guarantee the functionality of the activities we tested them with our working-life partner. One of the evaluation methods was to gather feedback of the booklet from our working-life partner and one other kindergarten.</p> <p>The idea is that the booklet can be adapted to every kindergarten's daily routines and to the kindergarten teachers' different ways of working. Ideally each of the activities would be organized with the same group of children and the booklet's order of the activities would be followed. This secures the development of self-esteem will be approached holistically.</p> <p>The chosen theoretical framework successfully supports the booklet and its activities. We managed to create a well-functioning booklet that can be applied to kindergarten teachers' various ways of working. With this study we did not evaluate how the activities affect children's self-esteem, and thus it would be meaningful to conduct a further study about it.</p>	
Keywords	self-esteem, Michele Borba, early childhood education

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## 1 Introduction

“Self-esteem and solid character are learned; therefore, you can teach them. By creating environments that engender security and develop strength, educators can help students acquire the feelings needed to build self-esteem and strong character.” (Borba 2003: 2.)

According to Aho & Laine (2004: 7) upbringing and education should put more emphasis on human growth regardless of age. This way children could learn to deal with changes and act in problematical situations encountered in life. Helping them to become autonomous can result in many factors related to good self-esteem, such as belief in oneself, openness to new experiences, and accepting critique (Aho & Laine 2004: 8). According to Santrock (2009: 344-345) children evaluate their own definitions and attributes of themselves, which then creates their self-esteem. With the concept of self-esteem Santrock refers to children’s self-worth. (Santrock 2009: 344-345.)

The feeling of self-worth fluctuates from day to day especially among children. However, a good self-esteem in general lets children to freely be themselves and play without a worry. (Cacciatore, Korteniemi-Poikela, Huovinen 2009: 15, 40.) Different situations in day care centers should be organized so that children can get feelings of success and thus feel they are good at something. It can be highly empowering for the children when they manage to participate in kindergarten's daily routines and take care of small tasks. Nowadays the group sizes in kindergartens seem to get bigger and bigger, and so the individualistic and child-centered ways of working may suffer. The professionals in the day care centers have a great impact on the children's self-esteem and they can help to improve it with little modifications in their working methods.

In our final thesis we wanted to underline the importance of supporting children’s self-esteem already in early childhood education. As a part of our functional thesis we created a concrete product, a play booklet, for kindergarten teachers working in Finland. The booklet consists of a brief introduction to our

theoretical framework and the descriptions for five different activities that are targeted to children aged four to five. Some of the plays already existed, some we modified to suit our needs, and some created by ourselves. The idea is that kindergarten teachers could use the booklet as a small group activity. Due to the sensitiveness of the topic we limited our target group to kindergarten teachers. They have the sufficient educational background and the ability to react to the delicate issues that might come up during the activities.

The need for this kind of booklet came up from our discussions with our working-life partner, a kindergarten located in Pikku Huopalahti. They felt that supporting the children's self-esteem especially in one challenging group would be necessary. What is more, they hoped both to increase the cohesiveness of the group and to approach the children individually.

We studied how children's self-esteem develops before the school age. Our main focus was the children aged four to five. As our theoretical framework we used Michele Borba's self-esteem theory. Her self-esteem model divides self-esteem into five different elements: security, selfhood, affiliation, mission and competence. To take into consideration each of these components we based one activity for each, and thus limited our selection of plays.

To begin with we present our aims and the context of our product, the play booklet. We reason why making a booklet for kindergarten teachers was important and open up the process of choosing them to be our target group. The basic information about our working-life partner and a description about the cooperation with the kindergarten are also included in the second chapter. In the third chapter we discuss self-esteem in general; how does it develop and what does it include. We also take a closer look at the self-esteem of children aged four to five and tell more precisely about the development of self-esteem in these certain ages.

The fourth chapter covers our theoretical framework, Michele Borba's self-esteem theory. After presenting Borba's basic thoughts behind her self-esteem

model, we profoundly discuss every element of the "The five building blocks of self-esteem" and describe how they can affect children's behavior. The fifth chapter depicts the importance of group dynamics and presents the plays and activities that we chose to be included in our booklet. Additionally, we indicate how the chosen plays are connected to Borba's self-esteem theory.

The sixth chapter focuses on explicating the process of compiling our final thesis. The main focus is on explaining the process behind our product. In the seventh chapter we evaluate process and product based on our own aims and feedback we got from a kindergarten. The eighth chapter concentrates on ethical issues that came up while organizing the play sessions and writing the final thesis. In conclusion we discuss the applicability of our product and suggest possible further studies for it.

## 2 The Working-life Orientation of the Final Thesis

The aim of our final thesis is to create practical methods to support and develop children's self-esteem in early childhood education. We focus on children aged four to five in kindergartens. Together with our working-life partner, Päiväkoti Purje, we developed an idea of a self-esteem booklet for kindergarten teachers. The kindergarten showed interest in different plays and activities that would support the different areas of self-esteem. Hence, by using Michele Borba's self-esteem model as a theoretical background, we chose five different plays to be included in the booklet. Each of them is based on one element of self-esteem. Our aim was to cover each aspect of self-esteem and thus have a holistic approach.

Our target group is kindergarten teachers working in Finland. Although other professionals in the field may be able to apply the booklet in their work, we think it is necessary to have the knowledge and education of a kindergarten teacher. The topic of self-esteem is particularly sensitive and it requires careful consideration and preparations when organizing sessions related to it. What is more, the adult organizing the plays has to know how to react on sensitive situations, such as when a child refuses to continue to play or is unable to identify any important people in his life. The children are asked to do this in one of the activities. Thus, we do not encourage other early childhood education professionals to use the booklet on their own.

Since the majority of kindergarten teachers in Finland is Finnish speaking we thought a booklet in Finnish would best serve the needs of our target group. Although the level of English among the teachers is presumably good, we did not want to scare or leave out anyone without adequate language skills. The booklet includes a reference list providing writings both in Finnish and English for the ones interested to get more in-depth information of the theoretical background and the plays' origins.

The idea was that the booklet could be adapted to every kindergarten's daily routines and to the teachers' different ways of working. For this reason we gathered the plays into a concise booklet inside a folder with clear directions, but also gave room for making adaptations. The plays of the booklet are recommended to be divided at least into two different sessions, so the children still have the energy for discussion. Ideally each of the plays would be organized with the same group of children and the booklet's order of the plays would remain the same. This guarantees that each child's each element of self-esteem would be focused on. Additionally, the group dynamics should be given careful consideration by the kindergarten teachers. However, the teachers can again make modifications to the sessions when practicalities and daily routines demand so.

To enhance the functionality and validity of the plays we wanted to test them beforehand. We organized two sessions in Päiväkoti Purje, where there are five groups all together. The group, from where we choose the children to our sessions, consists of twenty-two children and three adults. Finally, the kindergarten could give us feedback on the booklet and whether it would be useful for them.

### 3 Self-esteem

As a concept self-esteem is rather challenging since it is a quality existing only in our minds. Besides, it is in constant change and very hard to measure by any methods. However, it has tremendous meaning for the development of children and later on in our lives as well. Self-esteem can be reflected from our behavior and appearance. (Cacciatore, Korteniemi-Poikela, Huovinen 2009: 12.) Individual's self-esteem indicates whether one knows, appreciates and acknowledges oneself. Knowing one's worth and accepting the strengths and weaknesses as they are can be seen as the most important process of self-esteem. (Aho & Laine 2004: 20.) The positive and negative attitudes, experiences and beliefs we have form a kind of balance, where self-esteem has its basis (Cacciatore, Korteniemi-Poikela, Huovinen 2009: 138). Aho & Laine (2004: 9) present that the creation of children's self always requires interaction with others and the surrounding environment. This way children can get feedback from their subconscious behavior, attitudes and values. After becoming conscious of these processes they can be changed and developed, and thus children's personality can grow. (Aho & Laine 2004: 13.)

#### 3.1 Children Aged Four to Five

The development of self-esteem can be described as follows. When children act, they have certain expectations towards other people's reactions and therefore they keep observing the others. Surrounding people evaluate and draw conclusions on children's behaviour and give them feedback either verbally or non-verbally. Children compare this feedback on their self-image and afterwards depending on the importance and type of information, draw conclusions from it. This helps children to structure and change their self-image and self-esteem. (Aho 2004: 24.) Interaction with other people assists the development of strong self-esteem since children learn to appreciate people who have different value systems and do not feel themselves or their own values threatened (Aho 1996: 26).

Although children become self-conscious between the ages one and two, when they realize that they are able to control and impact on other people and their surroundings, the base for self-esteem is already created as a baby. It happens when children sense and feel the emotional bond with their parents (Aho 1996: 26). How parents treat, appreciate, love and interact with the baby, all have an effect on a baby's self-esteem. At the age of three, children begin to use the personal pronoun "I" when they talk about themselves (Keltinkangas-Järvinen 1996: 105).

According to Aho (1996: 27), children between the ages three and four can already describe and evaluate their psychological qualities but the depictions might still be unrealistic and unstructured. Children start to trust themselves when they are three to four years old, which may lead to the fact that four- and five-year-old children feel that they can do anything. (Aho 1996: 27.) Getting positive but realistic feedback helps them to build their self-esteem based on real skills and strengths.

Aho (1996:28-29) states that self-esteem develops drastically between the ages of five and twelve. This is when children's cognitive skills develop notably and they are able to evaluate themselves and analyse the surrounding world. What is more, children get to know more people when they start day care and are therefore able to compare themselves to peers or other authoritarian adults than parents. The relationship with the kindergarten teacher may rise to be a significant factor in the development of children's self-esteem. Making comparisons is vital to children's development when children are mapping their strengths and weaknesses. Another significant factor is systematic feedback, which adults in kindergarten give them. (Aho 1996: 28-29.)

Since the kindergarten group for three to five-year-old children in Päiväkoti Purje was familiar to us and as our topic is rather sensitive, we chose to implement our play sessions in this group. The kindergarten teacher of the group was cooperative and she suggested some children, who would benefit the most from our sessions. These children were mainly four to five-year-olds. As stated be-

fore, the researches indicate that children at this age start to actively build their self-esteem in interaction with others.

Our play sessions were based on Michele Borba's five self-esteem components and even though the components also apply for younger children, we felt that they are more beneficial for children aged four and five years. First, children become conscious of their bodies but via social interaction, they move towards psychological awareness, which means they observe themselves, the environment and other people (Aho 2004: 25). Our play sessions already required certain level of physical abilities and for example eye-hand coordination. Borba's self-esteem blocks include for instance practising goal-setting and reinforcing accurate self-descriptions, which are important skills to younger children as well but the aim of our games was also to stimulate discussion and get feedback, which succeeded better with older children.

#### **4 Michele Borba's Self-esteem Theory**

We decided to use Michele Borba's self-esteem theory as our theoretical framework, because it represents one of the newest self-esteem models (Aho & Laine 2004: 22). The self-esteem theory of Michele Borba divides self-esteem into five components: security, selfhood, affiliation, mission, and competence. The more a child possesses these elements the better overall self-esteem he has. The Borba's components are based on Robert Reasoner's self-theory. (Borba 2003: 7.) Reasoner states that self-concept is an image that an individual has of himself, whereas self-esteem is a feeling or an evaluation that an individual has of this image. Borba's addition to this is that self-esteem is also affected by other people's observations of an individual. (Aho & Heino 2000: 3.) We considered Borba's model to be clear and yet holistic. As self-esteem is divided into five different elements, we saw this as a great structure for our play booklet. By exploring each of the components separately we wanted to confirm thorough research and take into consideration every aspect of children's self-esteem.

According to Borba (2003: 5), whether an educator can help children to improve their self-esteem is dependable upon how significant the educator is to them. She emphasizes that educators need to gain children's respect and trust, and be genuinely interested and willing to support them. Borba continues that for the self-esteem activities to function properly, the "significant other" is responsible for organizing an environment supportive to the self-esteem building. To provide a few examples, a suitable environment should be encouraging, accepting and caring. (Borba 2003: 5-7.)

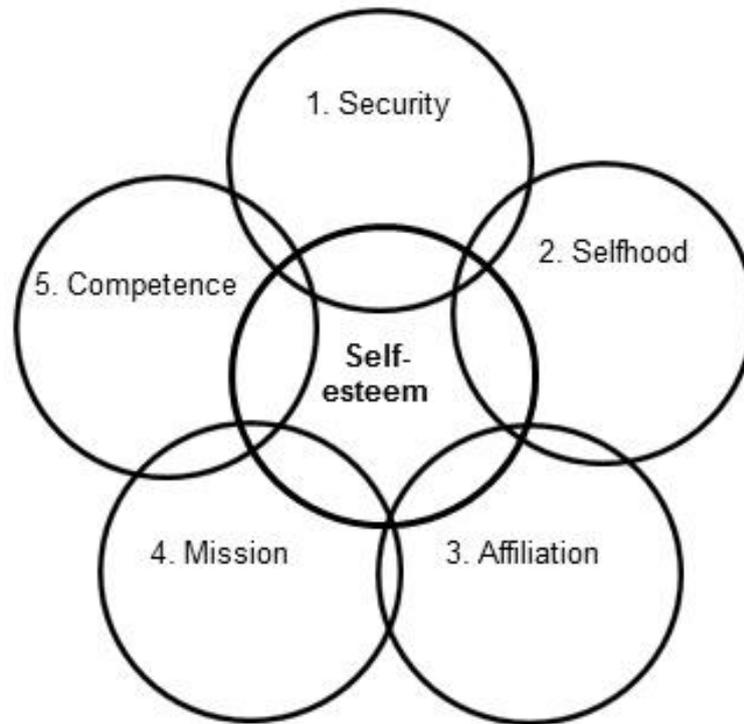


Figure 1. Borba's (1989) modified self-esteem model (Aho & Laine 2004)

#### 4.1 Security

The most important component, security, implies to children's good feeling of themselves, and respecting and confiding in other people (Aho & Laine 2004: 48). The feelings of safety and assuredness are strong, since children are aware of the people they can trust. Additionally, high level of security refers to an ability to deal with changes without too much of worry. Rules and limits are understood and also treated accordingly. (Borba 2003: xix, 8.) Children dare to share their opinions and ideas without a fear of being bullied or belittled (Aho & Laine 2004: 48). Borba also refers to Erik Erikson's and Abraham Maslow's theories, and how they underline the significance of security. The sense of security lays the ground for the development of self-esteem as a whole. (Borba 2003: 8.)

Problems in the area of security can create anxiety and furthermore lead children to depend on different defense mechanisms. The impacts can be either mental or physical. Children with low feeling of security or none at all can have problems in social interaction as well. Thus they tend to avoid social situations

and withdraw from other people. These kinds of children can be afraid of adults and lack trust for others in general. Unexpected situations and physical contact are also often avoided and experienced as unpleasant happenings. Some children can ask for repetition of directions over and over again, whereas some may break rules on purpose. (Aho & Laine 2004: 48-49.)

#### 4.2 Selfhood

The second element, selfhood, refers to self-knowledge. Children with high sense of self-hood have a realistic image of their characteristics and roles. (Borba 2003: 8.) In addition, they are also proud of these qualities (Aho & Laine 2004: 22) and not embarrassed to be different from others (Aho & Heino 2000: 8). Borba also describes self-hood as a strong sense of individuality. With these qualities children feel that they are worth of complimenting and also deserve it. (Borba 2003: 8.)

Fractions in this area can for instance cause children to have a negative image of themselves and a lack of belief in themselves in general. Since children have problems in recognizing their strengths, they do not know how to use them and may feel insecure with different tasks. (Aho & Laine 2004: 51.) Children are also often extensively sensitive to critic. However, when praised they generally feel discomfort and reject the compliments. (Aho & Heino 2000: 8.) Social interaction can be difficult as well. Some try to act and be as they did not exist, while some try to draw attention to themselves as much as possible. Among other defense mechanisms one can rely on bullying others. (Aho & Laine 2004: 51.) What is more, children are often very dependable on adults and behave in a certain way to please them (Aho & Heino 2000: 8).

#### 4.3 Affiliation

The third component, affiliation, has its basis in human interaction (Aho & Laine 2004: 53). A relationship to another person creates a possibility for this kind of belonging. Whether children have positive feeling about their social experiences, they can feel approved of and accepted. (Borba 2003 xix, 8.) In other words,

affiliation depicts how children relate to other people and identify themselves with groups and communities (Aho & Laine 2004: 22, 53). In group situations children learn to interact socially, observe others and compare themselves to them. As a result, children can develop their self-knowledge. (Aho & Heino 2000: 10.) Finally, through friendships children are able to show empathy, share experiences of joy and grief, and relate to others (Borba 2003: 8).

If children have problems with affiliation, it may be difficult to form new friendships and hold on to old ones. Children prefer working alone to groups, and when in a group situation they may feel disrespected and rely on disturbing others as a defense mechanism. (Aho & Laine 2004: 53.) Children might also feel they are not accepted by others and thus not welcome to join their company. With weak feelings of affiliation children rarely support or even draw attention to other people. This can lead to a situation where they prefer playing with objects rather than with people. (Aho & Heino 2000: 10-11.)

#### 4.4 Mission

Fourth Borba's element, mission, refers to setting realistic goals and taking responsibility of one's action (Aho & Laine 2004: 55). Children know what they want in life and understand what is required to achieve it (Aho & Heino 2000: 13). Since children usually reach their goals and experiences, moments of success, and feelings of motivation and purpose are increased furthermore. What is more, taking risks seems less frightening. Feelings of mission also include taking initiative and evaluating one's behavior and performance. (Borba 2003: xix, 9.) Self-guided children are often curious, determined, and thus finish the tasks they have started (Aho & Laine 2004: 55).

Children with weak mission characteristics tend to lack motivation in tasks, feel helplessness, and have hard time in focusing on one task or play at a time. Furthermore, weak feelings of mission can leave children unable to make decisions and reluctant to take any responsibility. (Aho & Laine 2004: 55.) Due to unrealistic goals children often fail and only experience feelings of failure. They become dependent on others and might belittle and even mock their peers. (Aho &

Heino 2000: 13.) All this can even lead to characteristics of alienation. (Aho & Laine 2004: 55.)

#### 4.5 Competence

The last component of self-esteem, competence, is formed from the feelings of success (Aho & Laine 2004: 57). For these feelings to be meaningful and conclude in competence, the achievements must be worthwhile and significant for the person. Children regard themselves as competent and respected persons, and recognize their strengths and weaknesses and also approve them. (Borba 2003: 9.) Feelings of competence also create sense of empowerment (Aho & Laine 2004: 57). Even failures do not necessarily negatively affect children with strong feelings of competence. On the contrary, failing is seen as a learning experience. (Aho & Heino 2000: 16.)

Children without the feelings of competence are often unable to notice their strengths and moments of success (Aho & Laine 2004: 57). Therefore, they feel unskillful even in tasks and situations where they actually are very competent. Additionally, children can be so afraid of failing that they refuse to even try. (Aho & Heino 2000: 16.) When children with weak feelings of competence are successful in something, they usually belittle it and think it was only a coincidence (Aho & Laine 2004: 57).

## 5 Activities' Connection to the Theoretical Framework

The plays and games that we used were chosen based on Borba's theory of five self-esteem blocks. Five exercises altogether were selected to present the idea of each self-esteem block. Some of the plays already existed but we also created some activities by ourselves since we were not able to find anything ready-made to meet our needs. Our aim was to test these activities for the booklet we made for the kindergarten teachers. Since we target children from four to five years, some fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination were needed in these tasks but all of the plays can be applied for younger or older children as well.

Family and friends map (Sosweb), Feelings and instruments (Toivakka & Mäisola 2011: 76) and Who is? (Mannerheimin lastensuojeluliitto 2004: 12) are already existing activities, which we modified to meet our needs. The original Family and friends map described for example the types of relationships and indicated the genders of the people. To make it as simple as possible for the children, we chose to limit the contents to the names of the characters. For the Feelings and instruments activity we changed the adjectives to better suit our needs and excluded one irrelevant task. We came up with a new name for Who is? play and created new, more appropriate questions.

We planned the Jungle Adventure by ourselves and our goal was to create a pleasant and fun activity, which would be related to one of the self-esteem themes; affiliation. The track and the jungle teams enabled the use of individual activities and the creation of group cohesiveness. The idea for Stop Point came from our working-life partner since they are having a club for five years old children every Friday, where they usually use this Stop Point as their method. We chose to use the same method with different tasks since the children would be familiar with it.

In the first session we reserved half an hour for the warm-up games to get to know the children better and give them a chance to get to know us. In the se-

cond session the time for warm-up games was just about ten minutes. The activities we used are quite simple but the play sessions need to be planned carefully to guarantee that there are no unnecessary breaks and the plays are not too long-lasting.

### 5.1 Group Dynamics

Haapaniemi and Raina (2005: 131) state that children should be allowed to act according to their own developmental stage. When a group consists of different aged children, there is less pressure for individuals to be in the same developmental stage as their peers. Since our targeted age group is children aged four to five, the age scale is not very large but still one year in the child's early years is already significant and gives space for diversity. Individuals act differently in group situations and the strength of the group is based on diversity. Positive crises and conflicts create new chances to develop but in too identical a group such crises will not come into being. (Haapaniemi & Raina 2005: 107.) To further equality it would be ideal that the group consisted of both girls and boys (Haapaniemi & Raina 2005: 132).

When creating the group, it is important to pay attention to the durability. Often short-term groups require a lot of social and interaction skills since in a shorter time period there is not always time for group dynamics process. This may, however, have negative consequences since when there is no time to build trusting relationships; the whole group process may become an uncomfortable experience. (Haapaniemi & Raina 2005: 107-108.)

Since self-esteem is a sensitive topic and it takes time to create permanent results, we recommend that activities connected to self-esteem would be repeated regularly. The atmosphere in a group must be open and trusting before any progress can be expected and therefore group dynamics should be taken into consideration. Self-esteem is learned through interaction with other people. People, who are important to the child, have a huge impact on the child's self-esteem. (Piironen-Malmi & Strömberg 2008: 95.)

The size of the group and the level of the group leaders' education have a great effect on the function of the group. One of the prerequisites for the group is that every child's personality can flourish and develop. Good group relations give space for every child's special features. (Helenius & Korhonen 2008: 57-58.) If it occurs that some of the children's personality causes discord in the group, the other members of the group must stay tolerant towards that child. Social skills can be taught but also when time passes by and the child develops, the situation may get easier. (Haapaniemi & Raina 2005: 109.)

The group leader's significance and the continuity of guiding are important for the development of the child group. Different kinds of ice breaker games are beneficial when beginning a new group since they will help to create an open atmosphere. In these situations the leader also has a chance to observe how children behave in social situations and estimate the level of their social skills. Singing and ring games, where children are searching for a partner, are very useful because then the reclusive children also have a possibility to make friends. The leaders should arrange situations, where children may find new friends. (Helenius & Korhonen 2008: 60-61.)

## 5.2 Family and Friends Map

The first one of Borba's five self-esteem blocks is *security*, which is an imperative prerequisite for all other dimensions (Aho 1996: 59). Security can be boosted by creating confidential relationships with other people (Aho & Laine 2004: 49). Building trusting relationships can begin by talking with children about the following questions: who are important people in your life and who do you feel you are dependent on and why? (Aho & Laine 2004: 50). The prerequisites for confidential relationships are acceptance, mutual respect, realistic approach, and recognition of expectations (Aho 2000: 6). The Family and friends map helps children to see that they have important people around them, to whom they can trust.

It is important that positive atmosphere remains within the group through the whole task because it also has an effect on children's security (Aho & Laine 2004: 51). In a psychologically safe environment, a person can express himself freely and he does not need to be afraid of embarrassment. Neither is he underestimated. It is important to talk about the rules, which everybody needs to obey, before starting the activity. When children agree on rules, they know what the limits and the consequences are, if the rules are not followed. The consequence should not be loss of acceptance or criticism towards a child's personality. A child's perception of himself can sometimes be distorted and only in a safe environment the individual may begin to change his self-image and start to notify new behavioural models. (Aho 2000: 5, 7.) Since a smaller group is usually easier to control, we recommend that these tasks are also done in small groups because then kindergarten teachers have more time to concentrate on working with children. The original model for this task is modified so that it is simple and easy to use with children.

### 5.3 Feelings and Instruments

According to Borba (Aho & Laine 2004: 51) *self-hood* is the next level of self-esteem to be taken care of after security. Self-hood means that the person knows himself and his role, is able to evaluate his features and is not ashamed of his uniqueness (Aho 2000: 8). The idea of this activity called "Feelings and instruments" is to teach children to describe themselves and help them to perceive their qualities. Children's ability to estimate themselves and other people affects their social relationships (Aho & Laine 2004: 51). Children may evaluate themselves in an unrealistic way but they do not necessarily realize that. That is their reality and it has an effect on their behaviour. When a child learns to evaluate himself and accept his uniqueness, he learns to accept that everyone is different and people do not need to be alike. (Aho 2000: 8-9.) Aho and Laine (2004: 51) state that it is easier to start by describing physical and visible qualities first. However, we decided to begin by depicting psychological features right away since we chose to modify Sari Toivakka and Miina Maasola's exercise "Minä ja me soittimin" to be used with children (Maasola & Toivakka 2011:76).

In this exercise children express their feelings with instruments. They will play out different emotions that are given to them and simultaneously they have an opportunity to observe other kids. It is important for children to notice that people express their feelings in many different ways and the same feeling can be expressed in various different ways (Aho & Laine 2004: 52). Some children may have difficulties to express their emotions verbally so this is a good way for them to rehearse self-expression.

#### 5.4 Jungle Adventure

Jungle Adventure consists of different tasks, which enhances *affiliation* within the child group. Affiliation is Borba's third block of "Five blocks of self-esteem". The aim of the Jungle adventure is to provide experiences, which may raise the group spirit, strengthen the sense of belonging, and give children feeling that they are good at something, accepted and appreciated. When a child is part of group, he has an opportunity to observe other children and compare himself to others, which helps the child's self-esteem to develop towards a more realistic way (Aho 2000: 10).

One of the most important part of social skills is to encourage and support others. In the community, children need to feel themselves important for the whole group and get approval from other group members. (Aho & Laine 2004: 53.) In the Jungle adventure the idea is that everyone has an opportunity to do one task completely by themselves while others are cheering and encouraging, and then everyone does one task together. Common projects, activities and games increase the group's cohesiveness (Aho 2000: 11).

#### 5.5 Stop Point

Stop Point is based on the element of *mission* and it consists of various tasks. The aim is that children practice decision-making and goal setting, and learn to examine different options that are available (Aho & Laine 2004:55).

Children are able to decide by themselves their starting point. Two children at a time can be doing the same task, and children need to notice that when they are choosing their place. This teaches decision-making and observing available options. There are different models in each point, for example two ribbons with different beads in them. The idea is to have tasks with different levels of difficulty and let the children choose, which one they want to perform. It is easier to commit to the exercise and get motivated, when you have had an effect on decision-making (Aho & Laine 2004: 55).

After the children have done the tasks, there is time to discuss the tasks and also space for self-reflection. As an example, they could be asked whether they feel that they succeeded to accomplish the tasks and whether they chose too easy or too difficult tasks. Good self-reflection skills help the child to succeed better in his tasks since he is able to set more realistic goals and he learns to know his way of doing things (Aho 2000: 15).

#### 5.6 Who is?

Who is? is a game, which deals with the fifth component, *competence*. The aims of this game are to help children to perceive their strengths, and learn how to accept and deal with their weaknesses. When an individual feels himself competent, he believes to be skillful and successful at least on some area of life. These feelings help him to feel precious and important for other people. (Aho 2000: 15.) Self-praise is an important skill, which often seems to be forgotten in Finnish society. However, it is something that children should learn to use. When an individual supports himself, he is internally motivated and self-empowered (Aho 2000: 17).

In this game kindergarten teacher asks different questions from the children, for example "Who is good at drawing?", and they need to touch the person who they think would be the best answer for the question. After that, the adult may ask from the child, who is touched, whether he agrees with his friends. It is important that a child feels that he is good at something. The questions do not need to concern cognitive skills only, but they can also be related for instance to

manners, attitudes or kindness (Aho 1996:82.) The main thing is that everyone can have a feeling that they manage to do something well and the others have noticed it too.

## 6 The Process of the Final Thesis

The process of our final thesis fully started in the beginning of the year 2012. Late 2011 we had already decided that the thesis would be concerned about early childhood education, since we will both become kindergarten teachers. The concept of self-esteem appealed to us the most. Both us were fascinated by doing a functional thesis, since we wanted to do something concrete and really useful for the working-life. Functional thesis should be developed for the needs of the professional field. The idea is to direct and guide practical action, arrange activity or rationalize it. Students are to combine some kind of practical product and a report. The product can be for instance a guide book, video, performance or an activity day. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003: 9.)

It is essential for the functional thesis to be working-life oriented. The product or activity of the thesis is always made to be used by someone. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003: 10, 38.) At the time we were about to start our last work placements in different kindergartens. This gave us a great opportunity for possible working-life partners. We ended up choosing Päiväkoti Purje, since they were interested in our project and its topic. Before going further with our project plans, we wanted to ask if our working-life partner had wishes or suggestions for us. Our mutual conclusion was to focus on exploring and supporting the self-esteem of children aged four to five. The idea was to do this by different activities. However, instead of only organizing play sessions we wanted to gather the self-esteem supporting activities into a play booklet, and thus create a guide for kindergarten teachers.

As any other thesis, also a functional thesis requires theoretical framework for its base. Theories and concepts serve as a tool to explore practical issues in the field and to develop the field. Besides, theories can be used to reason one's decisions in the dissertation. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003: 42.) In addition to the concept of self-esteem we wanted to have a more precise theoretical framework for our thesis. At first, we familiarized ourselves for instance with Maslow's hier-

archy of needs, but finally found Michele Borba's self-esteem model and saw it as more suitable and descriptive for our project.

## 6.1 The Product

Based on our research on Borba's building blocks and different activities and games related to self-esteem, we chose five different plays that would be included in the self-esteem booklet. Borba's own games usually require abilities to write and read (Aho & Heino 2000: 5), and thus we did not choose to use them. However, each activity would have its aim and base on one of the Borba's elements. Since we wanted to be sure how the activities function and the best way to organize them, we asked whether we could carry them out in two separate play sessions in Päiväkoti Purje. This way we could also recognize the difficult areas and possible ethical issues, and furthermore modify the games if needed. We thought this would increase our project's reliability and validity.

We started the preparations for the play sessions by discussing with the kindergarten teacher and chose seven children from the group according to her suggestions. She based her choices on the group functionality and the greatest need for these kinds of activities. In addition, she reasoned that the combination of a bit shyer and livelier children would calm down and encourage each other. The next step was to ask for permissions from the children's parents. Since the other one of us was already working there and familiar to the parents, we decided that she would describe our project and then ask for their approval verbally. We thought this would be the easiest and clearest way for the parents, since it also allowed them to propose further questions about the play sessions. Unfortunately only three children from the first play session were able to participate in the second one. The ideal situation would have been to have the same children for the both sessions, but since it was not possible for the second session we chose two new children who got permission to participate in our project.

To mention few highlights of the activities we want to give brief descriptions of the play sessions. First, in Family and Friends Map parents, some of the children draw several people and some only a few, family and kindergarten friends being the most common ones. One boy explained that he has parents in his family, but they do not need to be included in the map. Although we were little surprised by this, we felt it was really important not to question the children's views or thoughts, but to be encouraging and listen when they wanted to share their ideas and stories. Second, in Feelings and instruments we emphasized that there is no right or wrong way to express one's feelings and in this game one does not need to be a good player. The children surprised us with their creativity when playing out different emotions.

Third, in Jungle adventure cheering and encouraging the friend were first quite challenging for the children, but they got better in it when the activity moved forward. Fourth, Stop Point really proved us it was necessary to test the plays beforehand. After starting it we soon realized that the circulation of places did not function, because there were not enough tasks, and children had to do one thing twice or more. We understood that the amount of seats on the tables needs to be changed so that everyone performs each task only once. Fifth, in the beginning of Who is? the children seemed rather shy with self-praise, but soon got excited and seemed to be proud of themselves.

After modifying some of the plays we wrote instructions for them and collected them into a booklet. Since Borba's self-esteem model is very closely linked to the plays we felt it important to include a short description of it into the booklet. This gives the kindergarten teachers more in depth view of the booklet and the whole topic of self-esteem. For the booklet to be easily accessible we decided to have it on pdf-form online. However, we also wanted to make a concrete version of it by gathering the printouts into a folder, where you can add or remove prints by yourself. This way kindergarten teachers can modify the booklet to best suit their needs and wishes. Due to the lack of resources we cannot produce only but few concrete folders.

## 6.2 Feedback Collection

We wished to get feedback from our target group concerning the self-esteem booklet. This way we could develop it and apply it to better answer the needs of working-life. We created a simple feedback form asking for instance whether the booklet could be used and adapted into the kindergarten's activities and does the theory support the chosen plays. Besides our working-life partner, Päiväkoti Haaga was willing to familiarize themselves with the booklet and give us feedback. The other one of us had her last work placement there.

## 7 Evaluation

According to Robson (2001: 73) there is a group of generally asked questions, which may help to evaluate the project. The idea is not necessarily to use all of them but to choose the ones most beneficial for the project (Robson 2001: 73). In our evaluation the questions help to clarify if there is a real need for the project and whether the project meets the clients' needs, and whether we reached our aims and goals.

Robson (2001: 74-75) states that projects are too often implemented before investigating if there is actually a need for certain activity. This leads to wasting resources and energy. Correspondingly, the need may be found but the question is whether the project reaches the target group. Evaluating the fulfilment of goals and aims seems to be regarded as the most important part of the evaluation. However, the way Robson (2001: 74-75) sees it, many projects connected to social field appear to fail to reach their goals and the evaluations of the projects provide only vague feedback. What comes to the effects of the project, it is worth pondering whether the results were positive, or if there was a huge gap between what was expected and achieved. (Robson 2001: 74-75.)

Robson (2001: 80-81) introduces two different ways to evaluate the project: formative and summative evaluation. They are not completely separate ways but as formative evaluation concentrates on modifying and developing the activity, the summative evaluation's purpose is to give a final statement about the project. (Robson 2001: 80-81.) We see that we have taken influences from both of them to our evaluation.

Our aim was to create a functional play booklet, which is based on Michele Borba's self-esteem theory. Through that we wished to raise kindergarten teachers' awareness about the importance of supporting children's self-esteem in early childhood education. Our purpose is not to evaluate how the games of the booklet influence on children's self-esteem but do the kindergarten teachers find the booklet useful. We thought the best way to evaluate it was to collect feedback from the people working in the kindergartens. Hence, we made a

feedback form, which consists of four different questions. First, we asked if the workers feel they could use the booklet and apply the activities to the kindergarten's daily routines. We also wanted to know if they think that the theory supports the activities and whether the instructions are clear enough. In the fourth question we let the workers freely share their thoughts and developing ideas of the booklet.

We took the play booklets to our work placement kindergartens, one copy per one kindergarten and left 15-17 feedback forms to be filled. We asked feedback from kindergarten teachers as well as other early childhood education professionals, which means that we had a chance to get approximately 30 filled feedback sheets back. What is more, no names or titles were required in the feedback form since we wanted to keep feedback collection process anonymous. The workers had two weeks to familiarize themselves with the booklet. However, only one person had given us feedback.

According to this person, the play booklet could be applied to kindergarten's daily routines and the approach to the topic through Borba's theory was interesting and supported well the activities. This person also stated that the instructions were clear but there were a lot of them, and so they had to be read twice before really understanding the idea of the activity. In the end, the person wanted to know what our targeted age group is. Based on this feedback we can say we were able to provide new information, since the self-esteem model of Borba was new for the answerer. Additionally, we understand the descriptions of the plays can take time to comprehend them. However, we feel it was necessary to describe the courses of the plays in detail.

Even though our idea first was to target the play booklet for all early childhood education professionals, including kindergarten teachers as well as practical nurses, we realized we had to limit the target group. Therefore we decided that the booklet is only meant for kindergarten teachers. The topic of self-esteem is extremely sensitive and because some children may have confusing feelings and they may behave in unexpected ways, we came into conclusion that kin-

ergarten teacher's qualification is required. The adult responsible for implementing the play booklet activities must know how to react and act in these unexpected situations.

We think that we managed to create a well working play booklet, which includes pleasant theory-based activities for children. Michele Borba's five building blocks for self-esteem are partly overlapped but games and activities in our play booklet have all their own specific goals. There were various plays that we could have applied to this booklet but we are satisfied with our choices and the children seemed to enjoy them as well. The activities are versatile since musical, physical as well as artistic skills are to be used. Children are able to do tasks individually but also in small groups.

We tested the activities in practice with a child group to ensure their functionality. This was very essential because we realized we had to make some changes to the activity called "Stop point" which did not function the way we thought. We did ask feedback from the children after every session and most of them liked the activities and wished to continue with us but some were not interested in joining us for the next time. The unwillingness might have resulted for instance from the children's tiredness after the plays. Thus, we concluded that the play sessions might have lasted for too long. When the kindergarten teacher is familiar with the child group, not so many ice-breaker games are needed, and so the duration of the session is shorter. Another possible solution could be that instead of dividing the plays into two sessions, there could be or three or more shorter sessions.

It seems that we should have promoted the play booklet more since the amount of feedback was scarce. The lack of interest towards our project can result from the relatively high turnover rate of the staff in the other one of the two kindergartens. The people were not familiar with our project, which was implemented last spring, and we did not succeed to grab their attention. We could have distributed the play booklet to many other kindergartens as well but we assumed that we would get enough feedback from these two places, since this is not a large

scale study. However, doing that would have been beneficial for us after all. What is more, we did not limit the target group to be only kindergarten teachers before distributing the play booklets to kindergartens. In our feedback form we asked feedback from all the early childhood education professionals, even though afterwards we decided that the play booklet is only targeted for kindergarten teachers. If there were more returned feedback forms, drawing conclusions could have been difficult since we could not have recognized the feedback forms from the kindergarten teachers. Thus, in the end the feedback would not have been so accurate and valuable for us.

## 8 Ethical Questions and Reliability

There are numerous ethical questions that can come up while we are doing our final thesis. According to the social workers' code of ethics we are to work along the lines of respect for an individual, self-determination, social justice and the interests of the participants. Additionally, the important principles include supporting individuals to take power over their lives. (Banks, S. 2006: 78.) Thus our play sessions should be an empowering experience for the children. However, already when compiling our play session booklet we have to make decisions that create ethical questions. For instance, when choosing a certain play to be included or excluded in the booklet we use our knowledge about early childhood education. Yet, it is clear that our values affect our views as well. Issues we see as important and valuable in supporting children's self-esteem will be thus included in the booklet.

The concept of self-esteem can be a rather sensitive topic for some children in case they are for instance shy or have traumas or fears that come up during our sessions. Children with a very weak self-esteem may experience these kinds of activities stressful and difficult to comprehend. It is important that everyone feels safe, important and being part of the group.

To avoid these ethical risks, we must obtain informed consent from the participants. The contributors have to know the facts about the project and what kind of impacts it can have on them. Most importantly, they have to be aware that they are allowed to stop the activities at any point of the research and are not obligated to participate in anything they wish not to. (Social Research Association 2003: 27-30.) In our project, we have to obtain informed consent both from the children and their parents as well.

The questions of reliability and validity have also to be taken into account. To enhance the reliability of our booklet we felt it important to test the chosen plays in one kindergarten. Through observing the children to participate we could evaluate the activities, see their suitability and make modifications. As Robson

(2002: 311) puts it, observation is often used to explore a situation and thus get an understanding what is happening. We used observation merely as professional observation while participating and leading the play sessions. Thus, it cannot be counted as a real systematic data collection method.

Robson (2002: 313) divides observation into two extreme observational roles, participant and pure observers. “While the pure observer typically uses an instrument of some kind, the participant observer *is* the instrument” (Robson 2002: 313). Since we both participated in the sessions by guiding the activities and observed the children simultaneously, we can be counted as participant observers. When observing the children, discussing with them and asking for feedback, we have to keep in mind that there are several factors that can affect their behavior. Robson (2002: 311) agrees it is one of the greatest challenges in observation to know how much the observer influences the situation. For instance, the children can act in a certain way because they think we expect them to perform like that, or there can be pressure from the group as well.

One of the main aspects we focused on in our observation was how willing the children seemed to be to participate in the activities. We considered this to be a crucial issue, since creating an open and warm atmosphere is highly necessary to self-esteem supporting activities. Related to this we considered their level of excitement, ability to concentrate and follow directions and the required motivating. What is more, we observed the different emotions the children seemed to get during the activities. Their facial expressions, body language and essence in general gave us hints from them. We also concentrated on how well the group worked together, the communication between them, and what kind of roles the children seemed to take.

On each aspect we followed the development of their emotions during the activities and play sessions as a whole. As an example, when first a quiet and nervous child became more talkative and enthusiastic, we knew we had succeeded in creating an encouraging group atmosphere. Lastly, we asked verbal

feedback from the children after the play sessions. This way we could confirm their favorite activities and how they felt about them.

## 9 Conclusions

Our final thesis was aimed to answer the need for supporting children's self-esteem in early childhood education. Based on several researchers' findings, such as Aho and Laine (2004), we learned that early childhood education should put more emphasis on focusing on the self-esteem of children. Additionally, our working life partner, Päiväkoti Purje, held this issue in great value and encouraged us to create practical methods to be adapted in kindergartens' activities.

To approach the issue holistically we chose to use Michele Borba's self-esteem model as a theoretical framework for our project. The theory emphasizes the role of "significant other" in supporting and developing children's self-esteem. This is why we chose kindergarten teachers to be our target group. Besides having appropriate educational background, they are close to the children and have a great meaning in their daily lives. By creating a concrete self-esteem booklet we thought we could raise the kindergarten teachers' awareness of the importance of supporting the children's self-esteem already in early childhood education.

With the booklet we want to introduce the Borba's self-esteem model for the kindergarten teachers and most importantly share the idea of the five different elements that only together make up child's self-esteem. To offer practical methods to get started on with the process, we chose five different activities the kindergarten teachers could organize for a group of children. Each play supports one element of child's self-esteem. The booklet includes simple directions for the activities and leaves room for the kindergarten teachers' own modifications. Since the topic of self-esteem is highly sensitive, we also gave guidelines for instance how the plays should be organized and how the child groups should be formed.

We feel that this self-esteem booklet can serve as a practical and useful tool for kindergarten teachers. What is more, we hope it will encourage them to concen-

trate more on the issue of self-esteem and realize its' significance already in early childhood education. Hopefully they will develop the booklet by creating new activities with the help of Michele Borba's theory. Although the activities of the booklet are targeted at children aged four to five, they can easily be modified to suit older and possibly even little younger children as well.

The booklet can be useful in the school world as well. For instance, by altering the difficulty level of the tasks in "Stop Point", it could be used with elementary school pupils. Class teachers could organize similar activities for the whole class or a special education teacher could focus on certain pupils only. Another field of work we think this booklet could serve is child protection, where the topic of self-esteem can be very delicate and important issue. For example the "Feelings and Instruments" could be helpful when it is hard for a child to express or describe his feelings. Again, we want to emphasize the sensitivity of the issue and the several ethical issues related to it. Used in any field, the activities should be organized by a professional who knows how to react to unexpected and delicate situations.

Further studies could concentrate on evaluating the self-esteem booklet we created. Since we did not have the resources to implement the last version of it, it would be interesting to test its' functionality in different kindergartens. In addition, due to our very limited feedback it would be important to gather it more from kindergarten teachers. One evaluation aspect could also be the children's viewpoint, and how they feel about the activities. A long-term evaluation could also show how the plays affect the children's self-esteem. Finally, further studies could also concentrate on developing the booklet by creating more suitable activities for each self-esteems element – either for the same age group or change it to new one.

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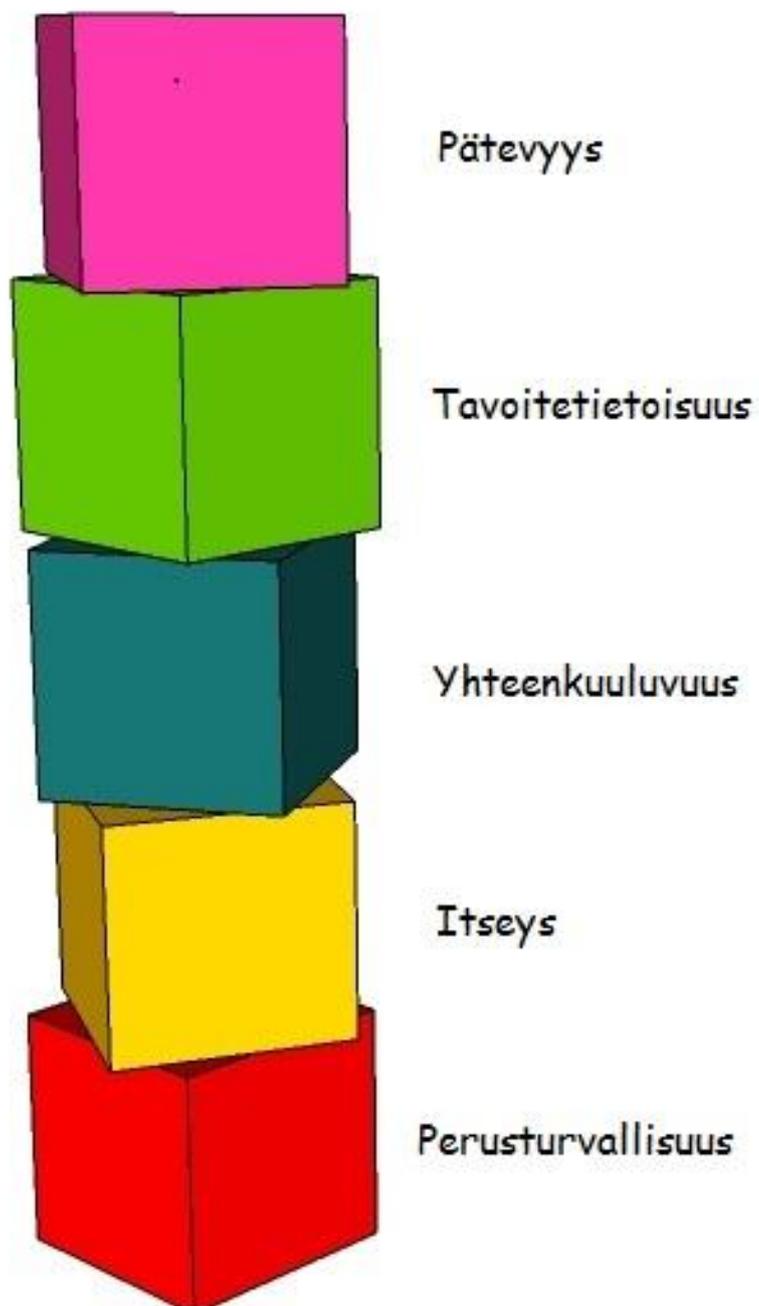
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# Leikkiopas lastentarhanopettajille

## Itsetunnon rakennuspalikat



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## Johdanto

Tämä opas on rakennettu avuksi tukemaan ja kehittämään lasten itsetuntoa varhaiskasvatuksessa. Opas on suunnattu lastentarhanopettajille. Olemme koonneet oppaaseen viisi itsetuntoa tukevaa leikkiä, jotka pohjautuvat Michele Borban itsetuntomalliin. Suunnitellessamme ja kokeillessamme leikkejä yhdessä Helsingin kaupungin päiväkodeista kohderyhmänämme olivat neljä- ja viisivuotiaat lapset. Leikit ovat kuitenkin sovellettavissa myös eri-ikäisten lasten kanssa. Leikit on hyvä jakaa kahteen tai useampaan leikkisessioon, jotta aikaa ja energiaa jää vielä keskusteluun lasten kanssa.

Hyödyllisintä olisi, että jokainen leikki käytäisiin läpi annetussa järjestyksessä. Tällöin jokainen itsetunnon aspekti otetaan huomioon itsetuntomallin mukaisesti. Ideaalitulanteessa leikit suoritettaisiin pienryhmätoimintana suljetussa ryhmässä, jolloin kaikki ryhmän lapset pääsisivät osallistumaan jokaiseen leikkiin. Lastentarhanopettaja kokoaa ryhmän kuudesta lapsesta. Lapsia valitessa on tärkeää miettiä, miten ryhmäkoheesio saavutettaisiin parhaiten ja miten lapset tukisivat toisiaan. Leikkejä voi myös soveltaa muihin ryhmäkokoihin, mutta haluamme painottaa pienen ryhmäkoon etuja.

Opas on osa opinnäytetyötämme, ja haluamme kiittää yhteistyöstä Päiväkoti Purjetta. Toivomme tämän oppaan herättelevän lastentarhanopettajia pohtimaan itsetunnon käsitettä ja sen merkitystä lapsen varhaiskasvatuksessa. Opas tarjoaa viisi valmista leikkiä, jotka voidaan räätälöidä jokaisen päiväkodin arkeen sopiviksi.

Terveisin,

Marianna Anttila & Pinja Saikkonen Metropolian Ammattikorkeakoulusta

## Michele Borban itsetunnon rakennuspalikat

Borban itsetunnomalli jakaa itsetunnon viiteen osaan: perusturvallisuus, itseys, yhteenkuuluminen, tehtävätietoisuus ja pätevyys. Nämä elementit ovat osittain päällekkäisiä, mutta vasta kokonaisuutena ne muodostavat lapsen itsetunnon. Borban keskeinen ajatus on, että itsetunnon muodostumiseen vaikuttavat lapsen oman minäkuvan lisäksi lasta ympäröivät ihmiset. Lapsi tarkkailee muiden antamaa verbaalista ja non-verbaalista palautetta ja arvioi itseään niiden pohjalta.

1. **Perusturvallisuus** on välttämätön edellytys muille itsetunnon osille. Turvallisuuden tunteen omaava lapsi pystyy luottamaan muihin ihmisiin, kunnioittaa heitä ja tuntee olonsa hyväksi. Ilman näitä tunteita lapsi usein kokee olonsa uhatuksi, välttelee sosiaalisia tilanteita ja epäilee muita ihmisiä.
2. **Itseys** määrittelee, kuinka hyvin lapsi tuntee ominaisuutensa ja erilaiset roolinsa. Itsensä heikosti tiedostava lapsi saattaa hävetä erilaisuuttaan ja olla yliherkkä kritiikille. Hän usein myös kuvaa itseään negatiivisesti.
3. **Yhteenkuuluvuus** kattaa lapsen suhtautumisen muihin ihmisiin ja heihin samaistumisen. Voimakkaat yhteenkuuluvuuden tunteet saavat lapsen tuntemaan itsensä hyväksytyksi, kun taas heikot tunteet voivat johtaa sosiaalisten taitojen puuttumiseen, ryhmästä vetäytymiseen tai muiden häiriköintiin.
4. **Tehtävä- eli tavoitetietoisuus** tarkoittaa vastuun ottamista, realististen tavoitteiden asettamista sekä omien suoritusten arviointia. Jos lapsella on tällä alueella vaikeuksia, hän lannistuu usein nopeasti, tuntee itsensä avuttomaksi eikä motivoitu suorittamaan yhtä toimintaa loppuun.
5. **Pätevyys** koostuu lapsen onnistumisen kokemuksista. Lapsi kokee olevansa tärkeä muille ihmisille ja pitää itseään taitavana. Heikot pätevyiden tunteet aiheuttavat usein epäonnistumisen pelkoa, omien suoritusten vähättelyä sekä kelvottomuuden tunnetta.

## 1. Perhekartta

*Ensimmäinen tehtävä, perhekartta, liittyy perusturvallisuuden saavuttamiseen ja kokemiseen. Perhekartan tarkoitus on auttaa lasta ymmärtämään, että hänen ympärillään on ihmisiä, joille hän on tärkeä ja joihin hän voi luottaa.*

Lapset jaetaan pöytäryhmiin istumaan ja toivottavaa olisi, että jokaisessa pöydässä olisi aikuinen ohjaamassa ja tukemassa lasten työskentelyä. Tehtävä voidaan aloittaa keskustelemalla lasten kanssa seuraavista kysymyksistä: Ketkä ovat tärkeitä ihmisiä sinulle ja keihin luotat? Ohjaaja jakaa paperit ja värikynät jokaisella lapselle, jonka jälkeen annetaan ohjeet perhekartan kokoamiseen.

Lapsi piirtää paperin keskelle ympyrän ja joko kirjoittaa tai piirtää nimensä ympyrän sisälle. Tämän jälkeen lapsi piirtää ympyrän ympärille ihmisiä ja eläimiä, jotka ovat tärkeitä hänelle. Ne henkilöt, jotka lapsi tuntee kaikista tärkeimmiksi itselleen, on tarkoitus piirtää lähimmäksi ympyrää. Kun lapsi on saanut perhekartan valmiiksi, ohjaaja ja lapsi keskustelevalt valmiista piirustuksesta ja käyvät läpi kartalla olevat henkilöt. Ohjaaja voi kirjoittaa henkilöiden nimet paperiin, jos lapsi ei vielä itse osaa.

Kaikkien lasten saatua tehtävän valmiiksi, annetaan jokaiselle mahdollisuus kertoa omasta perhekartastaan muille. Tarvittaessa ohjaaja voi kysellä lapselta piirustuksen henkilöistä, jos lapsi ei itse rohkaistu kertomaan tärkeistä ihmisistään. On tärkeää, että positiivinen ilmapiiri säilyy koko tehtävän ajan, koska sillä on jo sinänsä suuri vaikutus lapsen turvallisuuden tunteeseen.

## 2. Minä ja Me soittimin

*Minä ja Me soittimin pohjautuu itsetuntomallin toiseen ulottuvuuteen, itseyyteen. Tässä tehtävässä lapset pääsevät sekä ilmaisemaan omia tunteitaan soittimien avulla, että tarkkailemaan muita lapsia. Tällöin he huomaavat, että samat tunteet voidaan ilmaista monella eri tapaa. Tehtävän tarkoituksena on opettaa lasta kuvailemaan itseään ja omia tunteitaan sekä ilmaisemaan niitä.*

Tehtävä on hyvä suorittaa paikassa, jossa lapset pääsevät istumaan ja keskelle jää tilaa soittimille. Ensimmäiseksi ohjaaja asettaa tehtävässä käytettävät vapaavalintaiset soittimet lasten eteen. Yksitellen lapset saavat valita soittimen itselleen. Ohjaajan päätöksestä niitä voidaan myös vaihdella leikin kuluessa. Tärkeää on korostaa, että soittotaitoa tai musikaalista lahjakkuutta ei tässä tehtävässä tarvita.

Ohjaaja antaa erilaisia tunnesanoja, joita lasten on soittamalla tarkoitus ilmaista. Näitä voivat olla muun muassa iloinen, surullinen, suuttunut, onnellinen, pelokas ja väsynyt. Ohjaaja voi myös pyytää lapsia sulkemaan silmät soittamisen ajaksi, jotta he voivat paremmin keskittyä soittamiseen ja muiden soiton kuuntelemiseen.

Kaikkien lasten ensin soitettua yhdessä, on hyvä jakaa ryhmä puoliksi. Tällöin ryhmät voivat soittaa niin sanottuja vastapareja. Ohjaaja pyytää esimerkiksi ryhmä A:ta soittamaan rohkeasti, jolloin ryhmä B ei soita ollenkaan, vaan keskittyy pelkästään kuuntelemaan. Tämän jälkeen on ryhmä B:n vuoro soittaa vastakohta sanalle "rohkeasti", jolloin he soittavat pelokkaasti. Tällöin vuorostaan ryhmä A kuuntelee hiljaa. Leikin lomassa ohjaaja voi esittää lapsille tunteisiin liittyviä kysymyksiä, kuten: Mitkä tunteet ovat mukavia ja mitkä kurjia? Milloin sinusta tuntuu (esimerkiksi) surulliselta? Miten tunteiden vastaparien soitot erosivat toisistaan?

Soittamisen jälkeen ohjaaja ja lapset keskustelevat leikistä ja soittamisen tuomista tunteista. Mikä oli helppoa ja mikä vaikeaa? Miltä tuntui kuunnella muiden soittoa? Leikin loppuksi ohjaaja voi vielä pyytää lapsia kuvaamaan heidän sen hetkisiä tunteitaan soittimilla.

### 3. Viidakkoseikkailu

*Leikin tarkoitus on edistää yhteenkuuluvuutta, joka on kolmas ulottuvuus Borban itsetuntemallisuudessa. Leikki tarjoaa lapsille ryhmähenkeä nostattavia kokemuksia, lisää kuuluvuuden tunnetta ja antaa mahdollisuuden kokea onnistumisen tunteita.*

Koska tehtävät vaativat jonkin verran tilaa, on tämä leikki hyvä suorittaa esimerkiksi jumppasalissa tai isossa huoneessa. Leikki aloitetaan jakamalla lapset kahteen eri ryhmään. Ohjaaja on jo ennen leikin aloitusta leikannut kartongista punaisia ympyröitä ja sinisiä kolmioita, jotka hän kiinnittää teipillä lasten selkiin. Lasten tehtävänä on löytää samoilla merkeillä varustetut kaverit. Tiimityö korostuu jo tässä vaiheessa, sillä lapsi tarvitsee muiden apua tietääkseen oman merkkinsä. Tämän jälkeen lapset keksivät nimet omille joukkueilleen. Leikistä saa mielenkiintoisemman lisäämällä siihen kehyskertomuksen viidakkoseikkailusta.

Kummallakin joukkueella on oma "kotipesänsä", johon ohjaaja on ripustanut kartongin. Kartongi kuvastaa joukkueen taulua ja siihen kirjoitetaan joukkueen nimi. Kotipesistä lapset lähtevät suorittamaan tehtäviään. Kaikkia lapsia rohkaistaan kannustamaan joukkueovereitaan heidän suorittaessa yksilötehtäviä.

Ensimmäisessä tehtävässä molemmista joukkueista yhden lapsista tulee kävellä numeroituja hernepusseja pitkin. Nämä voivat olla esimerkiksi kiviä, joita pitkin lapsen täytyy hyppiä välttääkseen rämeikössä kuhisevat krokotiilit. Muut joukkueen jäsenet pääsevät seuraavalle tehtäväpaikalla mielikuvitusveneellä, jota ohjaaja tai joku lapsista soutaa. Toisessa tehtävässä yhden lapsista tulee koota värikkäistä puupalikoista mallinmukainen rakennelma. Tämä rakennelma voi esittää nuotiopaikkaa, jossa viidakkoseikkailijat lämmittelevät hetken nuotion äärellä. Kolmannessa tehtävässä yksi lapsista hakee huoneen toisessa päässä sijaitsevan ilmapallon, jonka kyydissä kaikki lapset pääsevät takaisin kotiin. Viimeinen tehtävä onkin yhteistehtävä, jossa molempien joukkueiden tulee kuljettaa ilmapallo pallottelemalla takaisin kotipesäänsä.

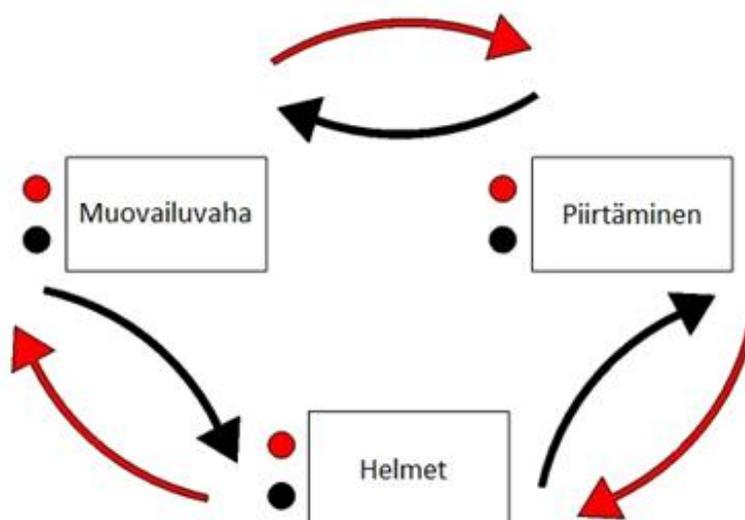
Kun kaikki tehtävät on suoritettu, lasten merkit irrotetaan selistä ja kiinnitetään oman joukkueen tauluun. Tämän jälkeen jokainen viidakkoseikkailija pääsee kastamaan sormensa sormiväriin ja painamaan sormenjälkensä tauluun merkiksi hyvin suoritetusta tehtävästä.

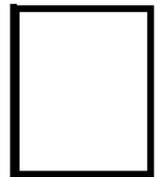
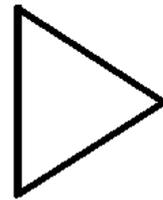
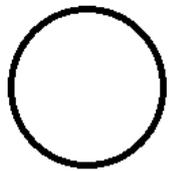
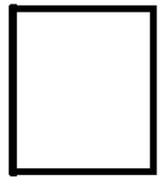
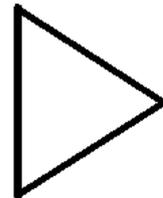
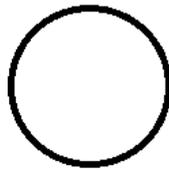
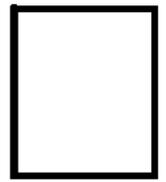
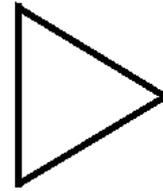
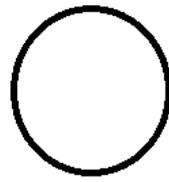
## 4. Pysäkkitoiminta

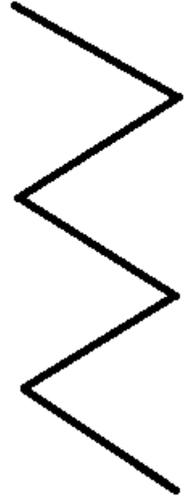
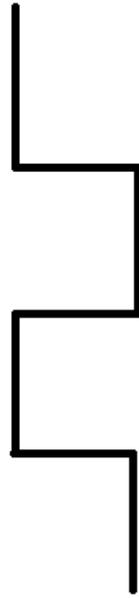
*Pysäkkitoiminta perustuu Borban itsetuntomallin neljanteen elementtiin, tehtävä- eli toiminta-tietoisuuteen. Leikin tarkoituksena on harjoitella päätöksen tekoa, tavoitteiden asettamista sekä oppia havaitsemaan erilaisia tarjolla olevia vaihtoehtoja.*

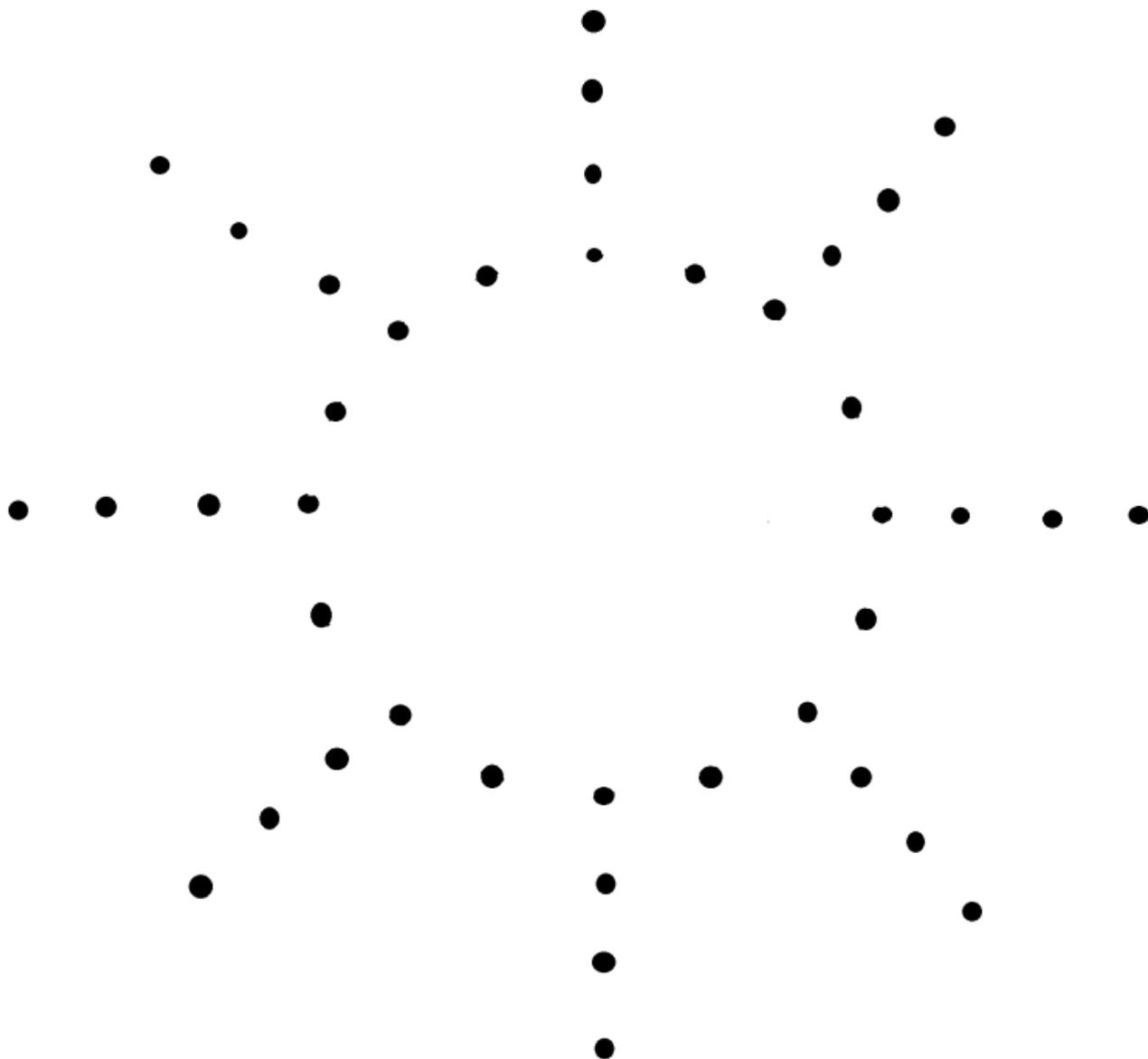
Leikki koostuu kolmesta erilaisesta tehtäväpisteestä: helmien pujottelusta, muovailuvahalla muovailusta ja erilaisista piirustustehtävistä. Ohjaaja valmistelee pöydät ennen leikin aloitusta ja asettaa tarvikkeet valmiiksi. Erilaisia helminauhahalleja on hyvä tehdä muutama eri vaikeus-tasoinen. Muovailuvahasta voi tehdä muutaman erilaisen mallin lapsille, kuten suoran madon, mutkikkaan madon ja kolmen pallon tornin. Seuraavilla sivuilla olevista piirustustehtävistä voi tehdä lisää kopioita tai keksiä itse lisää erilaisia.

Jokaiselle pisteelle mahtuu kaksi lasta kerrallaan. Leikin alussa lapset saavat vuorotellen valita aloituspaikkansa, mutta heidän tulee huomioida, missä pöydässä on vielä tilaa. Ohjaaja antaa lapsille luvan aloittaa tehtävät ja ilmoittaa, kun on aika viimeistellä tehtävä ennen seuraavalle tehtäväpisteelle siirtymistä. Ohjaaja voi esimerkiksi kumauttaa rumpuun merkiksi tehtävän vaihtumisesta. Osa lapsista kiertää tehtäväpisteitä myötäpäivään ja osa vastapäivään alla ole- van kuvan osoittamalla tavalla. Tällä tavoin taataan, että lapsilla on mahdollisuus työskennellä useamman eri lapsen kanssa. Jokaisella tehtäväpisteellä on eritasoisia tehtäviä, joista lapset saavat itse valita mieluisensa ja arvioida oman tasonsa.









## 5. Kuka on?

*Tämä leikki käsittelee viidettä Borban itsetunomallin ulottuvuutta, pätevyyttä. Leikin ideana on auttaa lapsia ymmärtämään heidän vahvuutensa ja opettaa, kuinka hyväksyä ja käsitellä omia heikkouksia. Leikin kautta päästään myös harjoittelemaan itsensä kehumista.*

Leikki alkaa lasten seistessä vapaamuotoisessa rykelmässä. Ohjaaja selittää lapsille leikin kulun ja aloittaa esittämällä kysymyksen, kuten "Kuka on hyvä piirtämään?" tai "Kuka osaa käyttäytyä ruokapöydässä?". Lasten tulee koskettaa sitä henkilöä, jonka he uskovat olevan sopivin vastaus kysymykseen. Tämän jälkeen ohjaaja kysyy kosketetulta lapselta, onko hän samaa mieltä kaverinsa kanssa. Ohjaaja voi vielä pyytää lasta toistamaan "Olen hyvä piirtämään" tai "Minä osaan käyttäytyä ruokapöydässä." Leikki jatkuu ohjaajan esittäessä lisää kysymyksiä lapsille.

Kysymysten ei tarvitse ainostaan koskea kognitiivisia taitoja, vaan ne voivat liittyä tapoihin, asenteisiin ja hyväntahtoisuuteen. Pääasia on, että jokainen saa tuntea olevansa hyvä jossain ja huomata, että myös muut ajattelevat niin. Leikkiä onkin hyvä jatkaa niin kauan kuin jokainen lapsi tulee valituksi ainakin kerran, tai pidempään lasten jaksamisen ja mielenkiinnon mukaisesti.

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## **Leikkiopas lastentarhanopettajille – Itsetunnon rakennuspalikat**

Toivottavasti teillä on hetki aikaa tutustua opinnäytetyöhöemme kuuluvaan oppaaseen. Otamme mielellämme vastaan palautetta, jotta voimme kehittää opasta ja sen soveltuvuutta työelämään. Vaikka opas on suunnattu lastentarhanopettajille, voivat myös muut alan ammattilaiset sitä käyttää.

Terveisin Marianna Anttila & Pinja Saikkonen Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulusta

1. Koetko voitavasi käyttää opasta ja soveltaa sen leikkejä päiväkotinne arkeen?
2. Tukeeko teoria mielestäsi leikkejä?
3. Millaiseksi koet leikkien ohjeistuksen?
4. Muita ajatuksia ja ideoita?