

Our Common Emotions



Universal Declaration of Emotional Sustainability Rights

Preamble

Considering

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 with particular reference to:

- Art. 1 which states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that they are endowed with reason and conscience;
- Art. 25, which states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate to the health and wellbeing of himself and his family;
- Art. 26 which states that everyone has the right to education receive education. Education is directed to the full development of the human personality;
- Art. 29 which states everyone has duties to the community, in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible;

The Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959, and in particular the seventh principle, which affirms the child's right to free education which allows him to develop his abilities, his individual judgment and his sense of moral and social responsibility, and to become a useful member of society;

The Ottawa Charter of 1986 to promote health, which is defined as a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, a positive concept emphasising social and personal resources as well as physical capacities and as such is not just the responsibility of the health sector,

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted in 1979 and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979;

The Philadelphia Declaration, adopted in 1944, and in particular the principles affirming the right to achieve the material well being and spiritual development,

whereas

- i. the conditions of public and private life are typified by progressive alienation away from a balanced and harmonious way of feeling with oneself and others;
- ii. the increase of factors which produce malaise/disquiet and negative impacts on health;
- iii. the failure of models of individual and collective life aimed at achieving mere financial profit,

asserting

the right to Emotional Sustainability as

- i. a common right valid in all Nations;
- ii. an essential component of human dignity;
- iii. an essential component of the right to health;
- iv. a tool to stimulate improving individual and collective wellbeing,

therefore proclaims

emotional sustainability as a universal right, fundamental for human progress.

Article 1

Right to emotional sustainability as individual right

The emotional dimension constitutes an essential part of the rational dimension of the individual and as such should be defended, promoted and supported.

Each person has the right to emotional sustainability, which is fundamental for dignity, an essential aspect of the freedom of expression and a constituent component of the right to health.

Emotional sustainability is the way of living, being, thinking and acting resulting from the competence of recognising and regulating one's own emotions in relation to one's self and others.

Article 2

Right to emotional sustainability as collective interest

Emotional sustainability constitutes the fundamental of human sustainability also in its collective, in particular social, environmental and economic aspects.

The right to emotional sustainability represents a tool for human progress and as such should be defended, promoted and supported in collective life.

Article 3

Right to learn techniques of emotional competence

Each individual has the right to learn the techniques which facilitate personal emotional sustainability, with the goal of improving relationship with oneself and with others.

Moreover, learning the techniques which facilitate emotional sustainability represents a collective interest.

Article 4

Right of citizens to emotional sustainability in public policies

Public policies [in partnership with the private sector and civil society] must foster, support and promote, even at the local level, the conditions, which allow each individual to learn the techniques aimed at facilitating the acquisition of adequate emotional competence.

Each individual has the right to receive public services which promote and support emotional competence. Special attention should be paid to the elderly, to people with disabilities and to all minorities.

Article

Right to emotional sustainability in educational systems

Emotional sustainability constitutes the essential condition to allow children to grow in a healthy and normal way and in freedom and dignity.

Children have the right to emotional sustainability. Parents have the right to receive life-long learning services towards emotional competency.

Educational systems, at all levels, must safeguard the feelings and emotions of children and promote learning and awareness of the techniques aimed at facilitating the acquisition of adequate emotional competence.

Article 6

Right to emotional sustainability in the workplace

Emotional sustainability constitutes a right of workers and represents an essential condition for the well-balanced and fruitful performance of work activities.

Emotional sustainability must be guaranteed in public and private workplaces. Each worker has the right to receive continuous training towards emotional competency. The possibility to acquire emotional competence by means of specific training is assured for managers and workers.

Article 7

Right to emotional sustainability in health and care systems

Emotional sustainability is both a preventive tool to achieve the optimal state of health as well as a constituent aspect of health itself.

The emotional dimension must be defended, promoted, and supported in a special way within health/care structures.

Medical personnel must respect and consider the mental state of the patient, supporting and assisting in the development of adequate emotional competence as a fundamental aspect of the therapeutic treatment.

Each individual has the right to be cared for with emotional competence. Medical and care services personnel have the right receive training regarding emotional competence.

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Comments on each article

Article 1

Just as the mind cannot be separated from the body, so emotions cannot be separated from reason and thus they constitute an essential part of the decision making process of the individual. This awareness is supported by ample scientific evidence, and leads to the belief that emotional sustainability constitutes an essential aspect not only for human dignity, but also in the personality of each individual and of his/her right to express this in a free and conscious way. Safeguarding it is an integral part of safeguarding the health of the individual, to be understood as also including the psychological wellbeing of the person. Emotional sustainability depends on emotional competence as the link between means and end. Emotional competence is a set of knowledge, capability and attitudes that allows individuals to recognise and regulate their own emotions in the relation with themselves and others.

Article 2

Rational analysis of facts is associated with the emotional awareness of the individual and collective responsibility, in such a way as to ensure that those emotions which can nurture our decisions regarding our future and the future of mankind can be recognised. Thus reading and managing one's own emotional awareness is imperative and an essential condition for sustainable development of human perspectives (health), social perspectives (economy and institutions) and global perspectives (pollution, climate change, biodiversity). Not only do emotions play a determinant, even if frequently unconscious role, in decision making processes but in a period of significant change for mankind which we are currently experiencing, it is important that this occurs obviously provided such emotions are positive.

By safeguarding emotional sustainability and promoting the techniques aimed at enhancing positive emotions society will take care of itself and all its members who aspire to attaining happiness. It can thus be understood why the Declaration considers education towards self-awareness and the ways in which the brain and mind functions, both an individual right and collective interest.

It constitutes a powerful tool for empowerment. As is well known, the scientific community has acknowledged that humanity has gone beyond the point of “no return” based on data on carbon dioxide, the toxic gases emitted by industry and transport systems, greenhouse gases, climate change, energy use, and non-renewable resources and the loss of biodiversity. Faced with these changes in the physical, atmospheric and environmental systems western populations still maintain a lifestyle typified by unbridled consumption and businesses continue to pursue objectives of “business as usual”.

People perceive these changes as very distant from their personal reality or, while being aware of them, consider that the problem should be solved by others, such as the political system or international institutions or they feel powerless when faced with the global dimension of the changes. Emotional sustainability education can contribute to the development of awareness of every human being towards a change in their lifestyle, their consumption and production patterns to set mankind on the path to economic, environmental and social recovery.

Article 3

The Declaration assumes competence in emotional sustainability is fundamental to progress in all fields. Such competence, however, is not innate, although it can be acquired by means of introspective techniques which enable one to reach a greater awareness and thus a state of inner balance, susceptible to improving relationship with oneself and with others. One technique, gaining greater acceptance with the scientific community is Mindfulness. This technique presupposes the control of breathing, which connects daily like and emotional life and which thus brings mind and body together. Mindfulness facilitates the ability to be aware moment-by-moment of our thoughts and with the world around us, allowing us to overcome the automatic responses which guide our daily actions, as a result it increases us abilities to choose how to act. This term is the English translation of the Sanskrit words Sati in Pali and Smriti, which equal an awareness of one's own emotions and the relationship which exists between emotions and decisions and it dates back to the dialogues between the monk Nagasena and the Prince Menander the First, during the reign of Alexander the Great (when the Prince asked Nagasena the meaning of Mindfulness, he obtained this reply: it is the call of the mind to observe emotions and to cultivating the mind to observe them).

Article 4

Local authorities are one of the providers of care services, particularly for the young, the elderly and in general for minorities. The more vulnerable populations demonstrate a need for emotional sustainability, so they have the right to be taught emotional competences. A local community which is distinguished for its balanced and sustainable relations and social interaction represents the premise for local economic prosperity. To attain the objective of safeguarding the right to emotional sustainability, local authorities should include the teaching of emotional competences in their care services, and build up an emotional sustainability network similar to that of Sustainable cities for children or Sustainable cities launched by the European Commission in 1993.

Learning emotional competence also aims to empower disadvantaged children.

Article 5

If every person has the right to emotional sustainability, then this is even more pressing regarding children, whose personality is being formed. Therefore their emotions and state of mind demand particular consideration. On the other hand, emotional sustainability is neither spontaneous nor automatic, rather it represents the result of the use of emotional competences in daily life and as such demands specific training which results in the habitual use of healthy emotions.

For this reason education is the first field for application: and emotional competences should be developed from the very early school years and should be consolidated in educational syllabuses. Every child has the right to learn emotional sustainability. And at the same time it is a functional right of parents to promote and strengthen their educational role. *al tempo* Thus emotional sustainability should occupy fundamental position in educational systems.

Article 6

Stress inducing situations are continually increasing in working life, due to organizational, interpersonal, environmental (toxicity of the air we breathe in certain plants) or contractual problems. The word “stress” indicates the mental and physical response to an adverse situation which alerts the emergency resources of the body by releasing an enormous quantity of hormones enabling us to face the danger. A stressful life, in general, causes an increase in the pressure in the arteries, irritability, anxiety, depression and above all it reduces the effectiveness of the immune system. Research has shown that the factors causing pathologies differ from those prolonging it. In both cases techniques for emotional competence, most notably Mindfulness, have proved useful to contrast both the causes which produce the illness and those which lead to it becoming chronic. For these reasons, the right to emotional sustainability in the workplace ranks with other workplace rights and the adoption of company initiatives for the development of emotional competence becomes a primary investment to ensure both the health of the workforce and to improve the success and profitability of the company.

Article 7

Traditionally little attention is paid to trying to attain a mind-body balance as a preventive action aimed at reaching the optimal state of health. Medicine and science in the west have made considerable advances for the most part in diagnostics and cure, while progress in prevention remains limited. Emotional competence is important for preventive actions, in that it is an effective tool in reaching an optimal state of health.

In addition, emotional competence constitutes an essential condition of the very concept of health itself. The widely accepted definition of health provided by the WHO states that health does not consist simply in the absence of illness, but rather encompasses the physical and mental wellbeing of the individual. It is further understood that rather

than being a “state” health is a dynamic condition, which is expressed by the individual’s ability to interact with his environment in such a way as to reach his balance irrespective of the changing occurring outside this. If this is the case, emotional competence represents a fundamental aspect of health and implementing it is a crucial step in the recovery process. The medical profession in the west is still somewhat distant from the development of feelings such as compassion, calm, inner serenity, empathy and they are left to the individual sensitivity of the health care professionals. The fact that medicine does not deal with emotional competences, which is rather entrusted to the teaching in Psychology departments is food for thought. Yet, the ability to observe the emotions of the patient, to recognise them and pay heed to them is of vital importance to the outcome of the treatment. Only recently and with considerable effort are movements, known under the common heading of *medical humanities*, beginning to place value on the personal rapport of health professionals with their patients. In this direction too a noteworthy contribution has been made from neurosciences, which at an abstract level, have noted that the traditional dualism prevalent in the west between body and mind is being overcome. On a concrete level, they have shown that doctor-patient relationship is just as significant as the use of drugs and that the state of mind plays a fundamental role in the recovery process. Drawing on teaching experience from the east, where many years are needed to develop compassionate competences; Jon Kabat Zinn has introduced the teaching of meditation in a lay and understandable way into western universities. The goal is for the medical profession to develop compassion, empathy, humility and serenity. The meditation techniques taught at the University of Massachusetts Medical School show that the development of emotional competence is essential for therapeutic goals. As well as being preventive, this is also important in attaining an optimal state of health as wellbeing. Obviously the emotional sustainability of the patient presupposes that not only have the medical professionals acquired specific training but also, and first of all, that the patient himself is aware of the techniques of emotional sustainability. The importance of medical professionals acquiring this competence must not be underestimated for the health of the doctors themselves since as a category they are subject to considerable stress as demonstrated by their use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. Meditation and Mindfulness thus constitute important tools to teach medical professionals the ability to listen to themselves and thus establish a holistic approach with the patient, where body and mind lie in the relational system with themselves and the world.

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