



An experience of Animal Assisted Education for emotional literacy of preschool children

Antonio Santaniello¹, Francesca Dicé^{2,3}, Federica Gerardi¹, Lucia Francesca Menna¹, Paolo Valerio².

¹ Department of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Productions, University of Naples Federico II, Italy

² Department of Neurosciences, Reproductive and Dentistry Sciences, University of Naples Federico II, Italy

³ Department of Humanistic Studies, University of Naples Federico II, Italy

Introduction/Background: In the school context the presence of animals promotes, in students, the development of cognitive skills and attentional, which allows them to facilitate the orientation and definition of future goals (1,3). Therefore we proposed intervention in kindergarten to understand how the interaction with the animals can help children to the knowledge of their own emotions and those of others (5, 6). Based on our experiences, we are currently questioning on identifying best practices in the implementation of the EAA; here we discuss, therefore, a methodological proposal through the description of a EAA surgery performed in a primary school in Naples, Italy.

Method/samples: The team was formed by Vet, Psychologist and dog (4). The activities took place during school hours and were addressed to 21 students belonging to a class of third-school (5 years); informed consent signed by both parents was required. The intervention lasted six group meetings on a monthly basis, of which the first meeting was introductory, while the following five have concerned the primary emotions such as joy, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise (2).

Results: The presence of animals has facilitated the structuring of a playful mood, opening the activities with good disposition and interest. During the activity, in fact, the students were able to experience the dynamics of management and contact with emotional aspects elicited by the new situation, learning to reduce the states of concern and to mitigate those expressed in the early moments of over-excitement.



Group interaction with the dog

Discussion/Conclusion: The presence of a multidisciplinary team was functional structuring of the intervention of EEA presented and its development within of school context. The proposed activities will be guided by a playful approach, they can help children recognize and understand their primary emotions, companions and animals; they can help to develop in them, new knowledge and skills related to their relational world.



Structured play with the dog



Reading a tale on emotion treated