



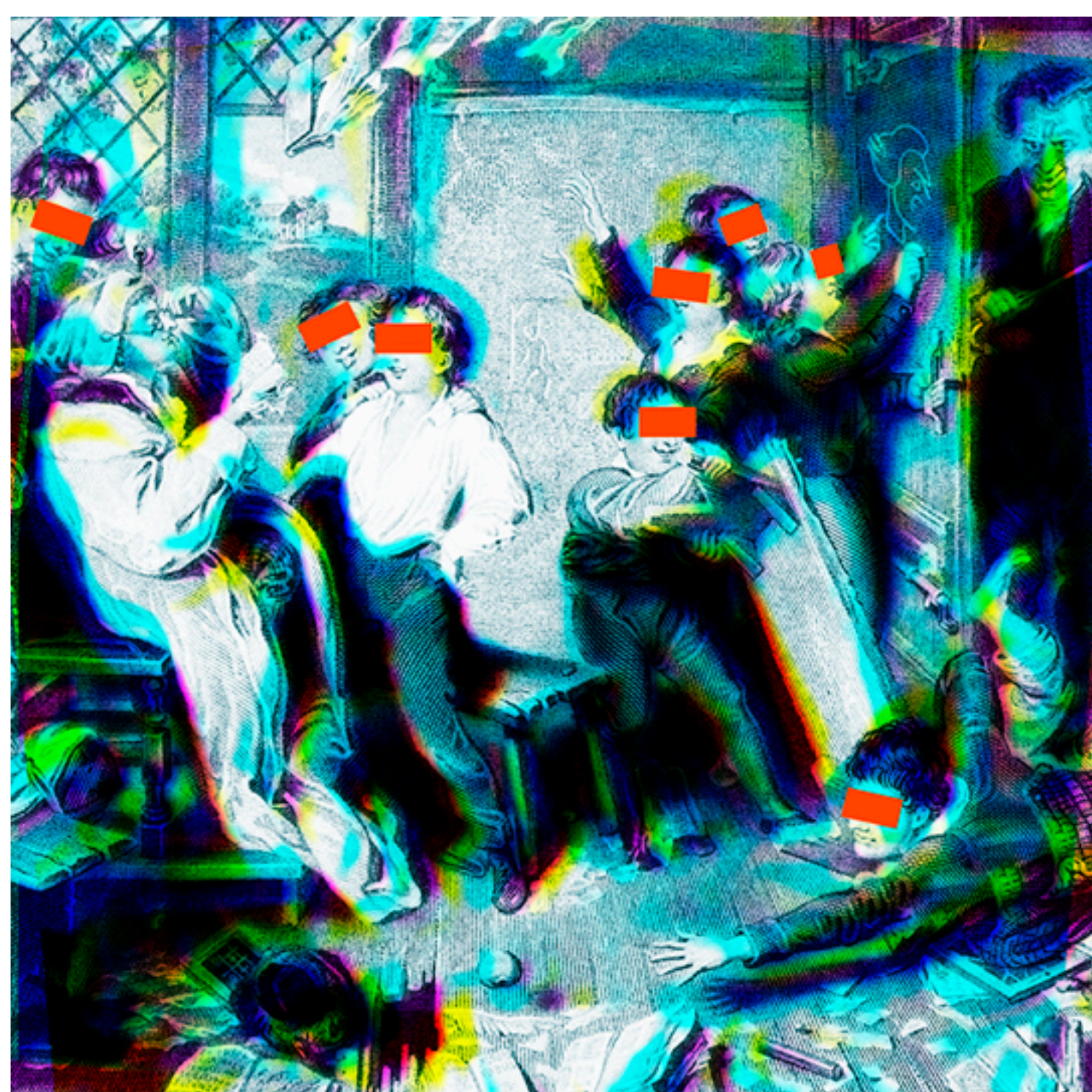
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Aggressive Behaviours at School

What educational tools can help a teacher deal with a child's aggressive behaviour? It is not easy to handle violent situations within a class, but it is essential to remain calm. Children who communicate through violent and aggressive acts need to be confronted by adults who are able to "stay" in the moment, help to contain and manage aggression, and limit violent escalation, excluding the most violent situations. One can address the problem by trying to divide the issue of violent behaviour into sub-dimensions.

Aggressive children and violent children: Are they the same thing?

Aggressive children and their behaviours often worry adults, who sometimes react aggressively; this is not a good solution. To effectively manage children's aggression, it is best first to understand where it comes from and maintain a calm and welcoming attitude.



The term violence implies a conscious intent to cause harm or distress. The term aggression may indicate the child's inability to recognise and manage their emotions and thus subconsciously produce aggressive behaviour. Aggression can express itself through hetero-directed as well as auto-directed behaviour. In whichever case, it is necessary to remain calm and act decisively. Firmness exercised by the referring adult, which in the school context is the teacher, helps a child to find containment and calm.

What tools can help?

Establishing a bond of trust and adopting open communication skills can help a teacher to deal with violent and aggressive situations. The use of 'punishment' could create low self-esteem in a child and consolidate thoughts of them being a 'bad child'. This premise could be detrimental to their future psycho-evolutionary and behavioural development.

Communication should not be ambivalent: shouting at a class to shut up or loudly scolding a child who engages in aggressive behaviour may result in reaffirming aggressive modes of action.

Organising physical spaces can help alleviate children's stresses and anxieties. Clear daily routines also assist.

The purpose of communication is to accompany a child toward a positive solution to their problem (aggressive behaviour) and create more effective ways to relate. It doesn't require long-winded explanations, which a child often does not understand. A few simple and effective words that help them stop and feel welcomed during their discomfort usually suffice. A phrase like 'I can see that you are angry, but if you hit me, you will hurt me, and that's why I can't let you do it' can be effective. If the child's aggression stems from never knowing what will happen next or changes in their life, establishing daily habits may help.

Primary School and Secondary School: What are the differences?

It is common to encounter aggressive children in primary school; classes without a 'biter' or 'hair puller' are rare. To a certain level, aggression can be understood as a step through which psycho-developmental development passes because of the need to experiment with behaviour modes and to learn empathy. Controlling impulsiveness is, therefore, more difficult in a young child. When one child's behaviour affects another, it is essential to care for both; the goal must remain to draw a marked line between permissible and impermissible behaviours.

As children grow, they acquire language, relationship, and cognitive skills, increasingly favouring verbal over physical channels. In secondary school, adult intervention may not always be helpful. A child must learn to 'argue well' to acquire tools for conflict management without resorting to aggression. When a child is disruptive in the classroom it is vital to talk to their parents (or main caregivers) to gain a deeper understanding of their child's history. The child's behaviour may have been caused by something traumatic like a loved one's death, separation, or another event.

Cooperative learning

This approach involves children collaborating to achieve a common goal. Cooperative work enables each child to be valued for their resources. Cooperation develops positive relationships between children because it makes them aware of the importance of each other's contributions to joint projects. At the same time, cooperative learning helps children generate a sense of self-esteem and endure stressful situations.

Provision of a facilitating environment

Organising physical spaces can help alleviate children's stresses and anxieties. Clear daily routines also assist.

Acknowledging success is key

It is always important to emphasise successes and not failures; to do so would risk confirming a pattern of inadequacy in a child. Give a child tasks they are capable of completing, allowing them to experience success and prefer cooperation to competitive work. Cooperative games are those in which there is no winner: everyone works together with a shared purpose.