

The path in the ICDP program

Hello, colleagues. I am very pleased to be in a circle today where I am heard, accepted and supported. Being a voice, ICDP Ukraine is an honor for me and my colleagues, with whom we created a space for development and love.

My story with the ICDP program began in 2015, when trainers Sylvia and Alla brought the curriculum to the city of Vinnytsia. From the first practical classes, I felt: this is not just another methodology. This is a discovery that helps to see the child more deeply - both as a teacher and as a mother. At that time, I already had over 10 years of experience in pedagogy, and I was faced with conflicts between children, parents and teachers every day. In addition, my eldest daughter, at that time, had just started first grade, and as a mother I was looking for answers on how to support her gently, with love. The program became my personal discovery and resource.

I was fascinated by how positive communication, empathy and acceptance can not only change relationships, but also affect the cognitive development of a child - their memory, attention, ability to learn. This is not just a "tool" - it is a view of a child as a holistic personality that can be revealed through relationships. My professional journey with the program began when I began to present it in Vinnytsia schools, kindergartens, conveying the importance of ICDP dialogues by teachers, educators, parents. Together with my colleague Svinarchuk Anastasia, we even presented the program on television. Later, while preparing for the status of a facilitator, we conducted groups for parents in my children's center, the Center for the Development of Children and Youth of the Future ALISA. Later, I presented ICDP at a pedagogical college. For two years, I worked with students - future educators. It was a challenge: theoretical knowledge did not match reality, and the program helped them see how else to build contact with children - without pressure, without aggression.

While working with young students who had already started their practice in kindergartens, it became clear that they often witnessed cruel treatment of children, which led to fear of working with children, lack of confidence in their own abilities and demotivation to develop in this direction. The program gave them tools to not get involved in aggression, to maintain humanity and to be a support for themselves and the child.

One of the vivid examples is in the exercise where we played roles, one of the students was given the task of gathering the "children" (classmates) from the games for lunch. The classmate quickly joined the role of the game, but the "teacher" turned to me and began to tell me how she would call the children, what exactly she would do. I asked to do this with the "group of children", but nothing worked, they did not obey. The girl again started telling me what else could be done, again asked to practice, not tell.

Unfortunately, the attempt was unsuccessful and the girl simply burst into tears. Having said that they don't do it on purpose, because they are actually adults. Our work continued and we found a way, first of all, for the students themselves not to be afraid of children and to approach them. Already in the conversation and by supporting others in practical tasks, we increased confidence in professional qualities and self-confidence, but this example for me

was for life that students who are familiar with only theory cannot cope with reality and easily work with different life situations. What can the ICDP program actually help with.

During the same period, I started writing my thesis. In my master's thesis in psychology, I also chose this topic - the impact of the empathy development program on the professional development of facilitators. We conducted research with experimental groups - with parents and students. The results clearly demonstrated: the level of emotional intelligence, empathy and self-awareness increased significantly. The studies showed not only an increase in self-awareness, empathy, but also motivation.

In 2017, a training group was held with trainer Sylvia Bryabin, in which I was a co-trainer and defended the coaching level in 2017

Thanks to Sylvia's support, we were able to expand the team of active facilitators who supported the initiative to present the program in various institutions not only in Vinnytsia. In this group, Larisa Konarska defended the facilitator level, who is now also a trainer. We began to be even more active in our work.

LARISA KONARSKA (experience in icdp -

I am a person who constantly strives for development and self-improvement. I am motivated by the search for new knowledge and experience, especially when my efforts can benefit others. Helping people and at the same time growing personally is my main value and source of inspiration.

The ICDP program interested me primarily as a powerful tool for working with adoptive parents. I saw in it an opportunity not just to transfer knowledge, but to create an environment of support, understanding and emotional connection between adults and children. I believe that it is precisely such approaches that can help adoptive parents better understand the needs of their children and build trusting, healthy relationships with them. This is the direction in which I began to develop in order to be as useful as possible to those who need it.

and more needs. And I was not mistaken, because the results of our joint work spoke for themselves.

Then came a difficult period - during the pandemic. It was a time of uncertainty, emotional tension and social isolation, when people lacked support, live communication and space to express their experiences more than ever. Working as a facilitator in such conditions was a challenge for me, but at the same time - a confirmation of the importance of this role. I learned to be flexible, attentive to the state of others, to maintain dialogue even through a screen, and to see how even small steps in communication can strengthen connections between people.

With the beginning of a full-scale war, my motivation only increased. In the new realities - when fear, loss and forced displacement have become part of the everyday life of many families - facilitation takes on even greater significance. For me, it is not just a job or a skill, but a way to be there, to create a safe space for parents and children, to talk about difficult things, to maintain relationships that provide support. And we began to think about how we could adapt ICDP to the current realities of work. And in fact, during communication with parents, IDPs, and educators, answers to questions were found and a vision was formed.

It is at such times that you understand that emotional presence, humanity, and the ability to listen are not additional skills, but a necessity. And I am grateful that I can develop as a facilitator in this direction - to be useful when words and support really matter.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAM IN UKRAINE

The team of facilitators presented the program in many regions of Ukraine - Vinnytsia region, Mogilev-Podilskyi, Bratslav, Khmelnytskyi.

We participated in all-Ukrainian conferences in Kyiv and Vinnytsia, forums, and seminars. We continued to expand the range of institutions where we presented the program. So it was Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University named after Kotsiubynsky, a branch of the Kyiv Institute "Ukraine", rehabilitation centers "Promin", "Parostok", "Harmony". In the latter, we also conducted a training program for the training of facilitators together with Larisa Konarska.

In 2019, I had the honor of teaching the program at the Institute of Theological Sciences of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where students study, who later become catechists and leaders in their parishes.

Students of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary were from different cities - Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Khmelnytskyi. I remember their feedback after the first module: "Something is very simple, it is impossible that just such topics can change relationships so much." Later, after conducting the first groups of their own, the facilitators talked about how the program changed not only their professional activities, but also their personal lives. With shining eyes, they told the first positive feedback from parents, participants in their groups, when they were able to cope with conflicts, thanks to simple support and love, and later, the students shared, acute conflict situations in families disappeared.

The work with the employees of the "Harmony" rehabilitation center was special. People who have to work with parents of children with disabilities and with children with disabilities. With all the care that parents and educators show to help the child on a physical level, plus bureaucratic problems with documents are completely exhausting and there is no time left for emotional, positive, full-fledged communication. Such centers have various supporting programs, but working with ICDP, training as a facilitator, developing empathy, sensitivity, and at the same time structuredness, gave us many positive moments both during training in the group itself and to the participants in working with their groups of parents.

PROGRAM PRESENTATION ON VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS

We started presenting ICDP also on international platforms: a conference in Bulgaria, which was dedicated to education, in Turkey - Istanbul University, Department of Pedagogy, a conference in Istanbul at the Department of Mental Health, Ankara - Sound Therapy Center - a wonderful family that created its own methodology, Italy - IAGP conference, Switzerland - IAGP congress. Presentations were both online and offline. One of the last presentations took place in 2023 at the trauma conference in Antalya, where together with trainers Larisa Konarskaya and Victoria Sidorenko we presented ICDP to participants from over 26 countries of the world in the light of ICDP in times of war.

SUPPORT for FACILITATORS

In addition, as the coordinator of facilitators of Vinnytsia Oblast (about 100 specialists), at that time, we created conferences for facilitators, conducted seminars, supported colleagues in structuring and translating materials into Ukrainian. During the pandemic, with the support of Maryana and the permission of Nicoleta, we created an adapted online version of ICDP and organized an online marathon of 12 meetings — support that became vital in times of isolation. A team of 10 facilitators worked with psychologists, social workers, parents, people with disabilities — it was a large and meaningful work, in which more than 100 participants took part. The pandemic brought new meanings to the use of the program, but The war has definitely brought too much pain, loss, emotions and experiences that are difficult to cope with.

Dialogues during war.

We are not just talking about communication with a child. We are talking about three types of dialogue that become vital in times of war. These are emotional, mediating and regulatory dialogues.

These dialogues are like a support, like an inner light that guides a child through the darkness of the unknown.

Emotional dialogue: a home under a parent's wing

When there is war around, there is nothing more healing for a child than love.

Emotional dialogue is not only about self-regulation. It is about tenderness, acceptance, about the fact that a child feels important, even when the world is falling apart.

This is a dialogue in which an adult does not correct emotions, does not deny fear or anger.

He confirms: I see you. I am there. And I love you in any state.

📌 At such moments, it is important not to say: “Don’t cry!”, but to say: “I see that you are scared. And I am with you. We are together. I am holding you”.

📌 Do not demand: “Calm down already!” but ask: “What will help you now - a hug, a fairy tale, silence? Choose, I am there”.

This is emotional safety, it is like returning home, even when you are in hiding.

Mediation dialogue: joint cognition and connection

From safety comes the desire to understand.

Mediation dialogue is about how a child learns to make sense of the world together with us.

This is not a lecture, not control. This is a dialogue in which we invite the child to think, analyze, draw conclusions.

But also - we remain in emotional contact.

📌 When a child has a fight with a friend - we do not say: “Never mind”.

We ask: “What exactly hurt you? Why do you think he did that? How can you fix it?”

📌 When something doesn’t work out, we don’t repeat: “I told you so!”

We ask: “What did you notice in your decision? What would have worked better?”

In times of war, it’s difficult to remain optimistic.

But through dialogue, we can help children see logic, build meaning, and expand their experience.


And no less important is to support those who support them: parents, teachers, and educators. It's hard for them too. But they are the leaders. Let's not close ourselves off. Let's go out to meet each other.

Regulatory dialogue: wings in chaos

When it's impossible to plan something, when the rules seem meaningless, a child often reacts with aggression or indifference.

But that's when they need boundaries. They need structure. They need participation.

Regulatory dialogue is not about giving orders. This is about an invitation to action, about joint planning, about developing self-motivation and self-regulation.

 Instead of "Go and do your homework!" —

we ask: "When is it more convenient for you to work — now or after a snack? How is it easier for you to distribute your time?"

This helps the child not to break down, but to grow, even in stress.

Because then he learns: I influence my life. I have the strength. I can choose.

Three dialogues — emotional, mediating and regulatory — are three pillars:

1. Love and acceptance.
2. Shared thinking and trust.
3. Structure and freedom of action.

We do not have to be perfect. We have to be alive, open, sincere.

Because every time we choose dialogue instead of control — we are not just educating.

We are building a bridge between the child and his future.

Thank you for being the adults with whom you can not be afraid.

ICDP PROGRAM DURING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

ICDP PROGRAM DURING THE WAR FOR UKRAINIANS BEYOND UKRAINE

I also had experience working with ATO families, with mothers and children in difficult life circumstances. With the beginning of the full-scale invasion, I left Ukraine, but continued working with children abroad. We Ukrainians created a Ukrainian school, I was again close to the children, supporting them through play, communication, development. The program remained with me as a support, as a compass, as a tool of humanity.

10. CONCLUSION

Today, looking back on these years, I say with deep gratitude: ICDP is not just a program. It is a path. A path that changes teachers, parents, and most importantly, the lives of children. And I am happy to be part of this transformation.