

T-HAP IN-Fusion 27/04/2023

Workshop:

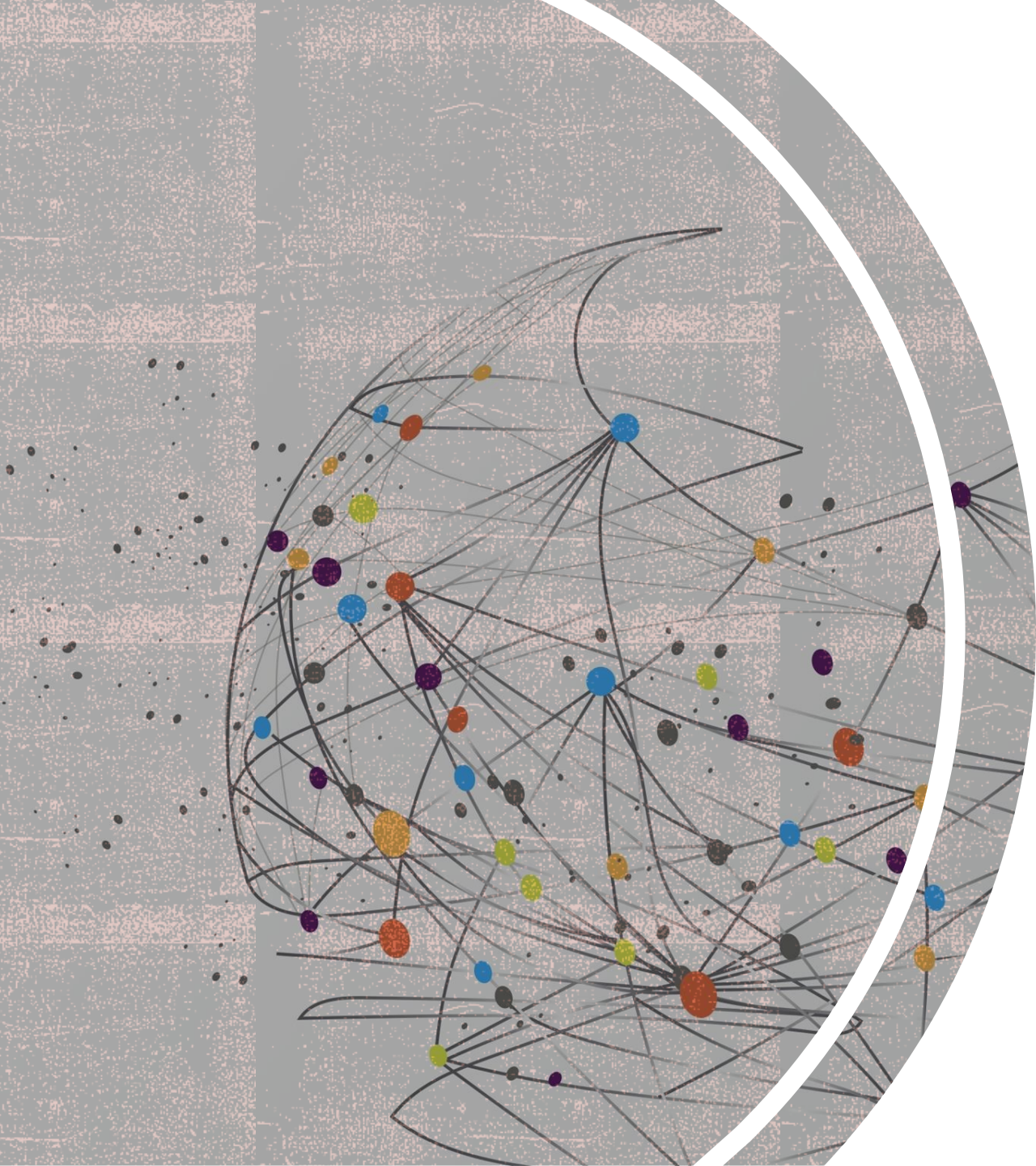
«Adolescents, Schools and the ZeitGeist:
Is prevention possible?»

Adolescents, families, substance use and abuse

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Thinking about prevention, effective interventions for adolescents cannot be separated from understanding the socio-cultural aspects that characterize our historical period

**Understanding
adolescents'
behaviours**





THE CONTEXT: POST-MODERN WESTERN SOCIETY

▪ **Features:**

- Lack of strong and stable values (liquid modernity– Bauman, relativism)
- Lack of ideologies
- Discontinuation of passage rituals
- Social networks and the Internet are increasingly becoming a central part of everyday life
- Recent critical socio-political events: economic crisis, terrorism, covid, war

....





THE EFFECTS ON PEOPLE

- Low predictability: the world seems changeable, unstable and threatening
- Absence of cultural and normative reference points
- Prevalence of personal ideologies
- Uncertainty about the future
- Mass narcissism



HOW CHILDREN ARE REGARDED

Children are «**very precious goods**» in which to take refuge and invest for parent's self-esteem

Children are encouraged to stay at home and not «on the street», to live the virtual rather than the concrete life, so as to reassure parents that they will not "**break into pieces**" and will not abandon them

In this way, they become increasingly **fragile** and **inconclusive**



NEGATIVE FAMILY REACTIONS TO CHILDREN'S ATTEMPTS TO GAIN AUTONOMY

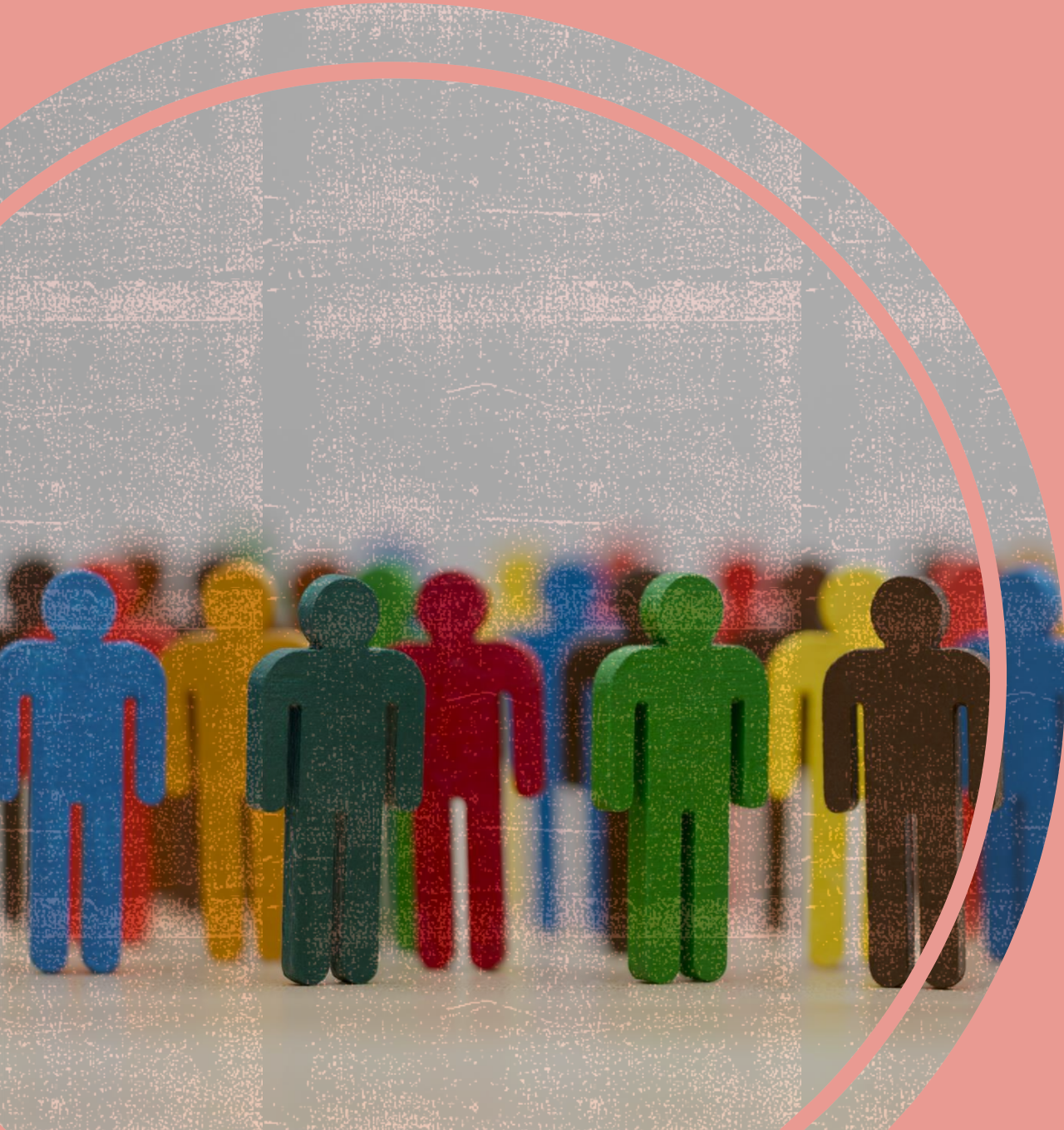
- **REPRESSION:** the children's attempts to gain more autonomy are actively and frontally opposed with repressive actions of blaming, disqualification, expulsion, condemnation. The aim is to prevent adolescents from acting behaviors of autonomy and adopting attitudes of rebellion against family values.
- **SEDUCTION:** parents may engage in «seductive» behavior aiming at indirectly discourage their children's achievement of autonomy by proposing comforts, eases and vices that make family life particularly 'comfortable' at parents' dependencies.



HOW DO THE CHILDREN REACT?

- **EXTREME AND «EXTERNALISING» BEHAVIOURS**

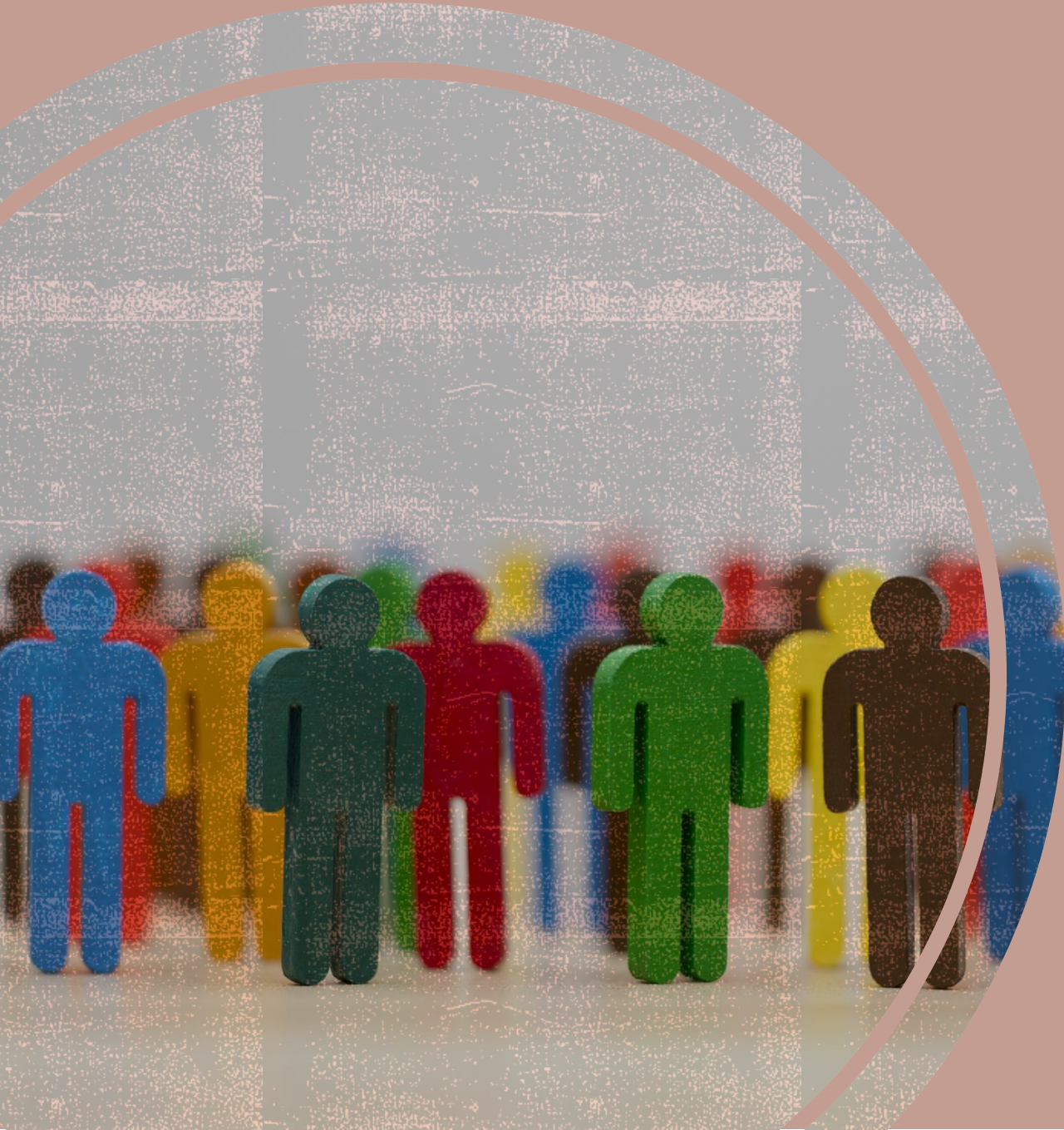
- Psychoactive substance consumption
- Dangerous driving
- Aggressive behaviors
- Deviance
- Sensation seeking
- Aggressiveness and violence
- Etc...

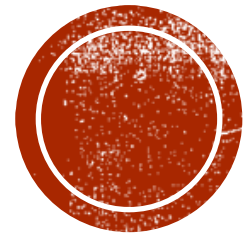


HOW DO THE CHILDREN REACT?

▪ «INTERNALISING» BEHAVIORS:

- Social withdrawal and social isolation
- Feelings of anxiety
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Etc...





DRUG ABUSE



- Adolescent drug-abuse is a **growing phenomenon**
- It leads to **important repercussions on family dynamics**
- It conveys (directly or indirectly) **a message adults**
- Carries out specific functions





MAIN FUNCTIONS

SELF-CARE

**SOCIALIZATION, GROWTH,
RECREATIONAL**

**RELATIONAL: RELEASE OR
RECALL CONDUCTS**



SELF-CARE FUNCTION

Substance use is an attempt to relieve psychological pain resulting from difficulties of various kinds (adaptation, relational, personal, identity, etc.).



SOCIALISING, GROWTH AND RECREATIONAL FUNCTION

The use of substances is a 'means' that promotes:

- Socialisation, contact with others, communication
- Provides the feeling of being «big», competent and «brave»
- It is a modality of «recreation», of entertainment, a pastime, an alternative to boredom



RELATIONAL FUNCTION: RELEASE AND RECALL CONDUCTS

Substance use also includes a communicative component addressed to the family.

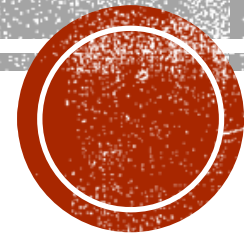
The messages addressed to the family relate to:

- Request for release from dependency and family dynamics
- Function of recall of significant persons
 - To draw attention to oneself
 - To backon relatives centred outside into the family
 - To distract some family members from conflicts with other family members



STATISTICAL DATA HBSC ITALY - 2022

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children



Use of substances – Children aged 11 to 15



- **CIGARETTE SMOKE**: higher in females (29%vs 20%), with highest consumption at 15 and very low consumption at 13 (dati 2018-2022);
- **ALCOHOL**: equal between males and females at both 13 and 15 years of age.
 - More than half of the adolescents had drunk alcohol in the days preceding the interview (between 50 and 60%).
 - 16% of boys and 21% of girls claim to have been drunk several times during their lives.
- **CANNABIS**:
 - in 2018 consumed 16% of males and 11% of females
 - in 2022 there is a decrease, with 11% of males and 10% of females;
- **GAMBLING**: mainly males (47% vs. 21%), in decrease from 2018 (62% males).
 - Problematic gambling affects 4.5% of males and 1.8% of females.



Psychological state of the children



- **LEVEL OF «HIGH PERCEIVED WELL-BEING»:** girls perceive less well-being than boys do.
 - This discomfort increases with increasing age (females 11 yy= 91%; 13 yy= 85%, 15 yy= 75%). Males are stable between 93% and 89%.
 - The level of «average» well-being is also worse in females: at age 15 32% vs. 64% of males. This trend was also valid in 2018, although in 2022 the level of discomfort appears to have increased (COVID? Economic crisis? War?);
- **LEVEL OF PERCEIVED HEALTH :** males stable between 2018 and 2022, females decreasing (at 15 years from 90% to 75%);
- **MEDICATION INTAKE :** stable values between 2018 and 2022 (No increase with COVID). Girls (in 76% of cases) have taken medication in the last few days (usually for psychosomatic symptoms). Males are at 53%;
- **«HIGH LIFE SATISFACTION»:** this scale remains stable for males from 2018 to nowadays, and values are around 85%, while it is decreasing for females, with values of 67% at 15 years.
 - NB: Economic status is a variable that influences a lot, especially with age: the higher the economic level, the greater the satisfaction.



Other relevant data- 1



- **WHO CONSUMES DRUGS ALSO CONSUMES OTHER THINGS**, such as alcohol or junk food, and **leads an unhealthy life** (little sport, little exercise)
- In regard to 15-year-old adolescents in Italy, it can be observed that 30% are healthy and do not consume, 40% do not consume but are sedentary, 13% consume but play sport and 14% consume and lead an unhealthy life;



Other relevant data- 2



- **FAMILY COMMUNICATION:** it is better with the mother than with the father. In the families of young people who smoke drugs there is worse communication, and consumption is higher in families where positive parental figures or reliable parental substitutes are missing.



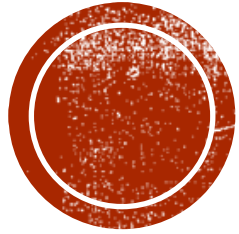
Other relevant data- 3



- **THE “OPTIMAL FAMILY SITUATION”** involves balance, the presence of non-excessive goals, 'eudaimonic' (goal-related) well-being and motivation towards adolescents.
- The goals must be present (otherwise boredom), but not excessive (otherwise anxiety).



THANKS.



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