

## SOS JOY WANTED

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### SUMMARY

Recent researches, following the pandemic, have shown in people, especially the youngest ones, an increase of suffering, articulated in tiredness and being worried, all feelings linked primarily to the national closure of schools and social meeting... Depressive and languishing mood seem to be the "normal" condition of everyday feeling of each of us, young and adult.

**Key words:** state of mind – emotions - languishing

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The world pandemic we have gone through over the past year has undermined the balance of many aspects of our lives. To stem the emergency, we have had to face many changes, re-evaluating and quickly reorganizing our beliefs, habits and modes of interaction.

All this has led to consequences on the emotions, both on the primary ones, considered biologically innate (Ekman et al. 1992, Addabbo et al. 2018, Keltner et al. 2019), and on the social ones too, which are builded through the relationships created by contact with other people.

In particular, the lack of this direct interaction and its replacement with a contact mediated by technologies, has led to difficulties in everyone's perception of the sensations we used to feel.

It is also essential to understand that, nowadays, we are in a historical era in which the social environment unconsciously leads people to repress emotions, inhibiting the smile and emotionally modulating the tone of voice, resulting in a dull and homologated mood that does not make feelings shine through.

Recent researches, following the pandemic, have shown an increase, during the lockdown period, in people's annoyance at seeing other people's joy, children playing, young people kissing, or people talking physically close to each other.

This period has brought people, especially the youngest ones, to a condition of suffering, articulated in tiredness and being worried, all feelings linked primarily to the national closure of schools and social meeting points.

According to the results of the survey "Young people at the time of Coronavirus", conducted by Save The Children (2021) on teens between 14 and 18 years old, the adjective "tired" is the term they most frequently use to answer the question: "How are you feeling right now?".

Then, it emerges that, all these closures and limitations affect not only the mood, but also the learning, with important negative consequences both in the short and long term. Among these consequences we find difficulties, as a result of the lockdown, in concentration and in the ability to study, both aspects related mainly to

the lack of social interactions and to the new modes of lesson, such as DAD.

This uneasiness not only affects learning, but also the motivation and emotion that everyday events normally provoked us. According to Adam Grant (Grant et al. 2021), this condition is not simply (characterised) as a (burnout?), nor as depression, but it is mostly a lack of joy and purpose in daily life.

According to the authors, this feeling does not have symptoms of a real mental discomfort, but rather of a psychological malaise, a lack of motivation, a mood understood as a noise that empties us.

Corey Keyes defines this feeling clinically, with the name of *languishing* (Wissing et al. 2021): a languor, a sense of stagnation and emptiness, indeed of emptying, an absence of biopsychotic well-being.

(He?) also argues that the most serious factor associated with this situation is that people do not realize that they are suffering and consequently do not ask for help. It is from this awareness that the request "SOS Gioia Cercasi" was born, trying to understand the nature, the nuances, the characteristics of this feeling that, on one hand appears absent in this moment, and on the other seems never enough.

From the research it emerges that people are no longer aware of feeling joy, that they do not know where to look for it and, when they are really living it, it has a strong intensity but short duration.

It is important, therefore, that the goal is educating children in the awareness of joy and its quality in everyday life, through the invitation to metacognitive introspection.

Why are all these emotions and their knowledge so important? Until recently, there was a clear distinction between the rational decision-making thought and the emotion, as if they were two parallel and separated processes. In reality, several studies and reflections have shown that they are closely interconnected.

Damasio, in his Somatic Marker Hypothesis (Damasio et al. 1996), explains how the brain registers, at an unconscious level, the emotional reaction linked to a life experience, prior to the rational decision.

This means that when faced with a future choice, past sensations experienced in similar situations emerge and guide the behaviour. A specific brain area, the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, is also identified as the responsible area for the connection between the first emotional reaction and the subsequent cognitive decision (Hiser & Koenigs 2018). Several studies (Tooley et al. 2017) have also demonstrated the strong connection between the physiological activation for an event (*emotion*) and the psychological processing related to the emotion (*feeling*).

The importance of feeling and of recognising these emotions, especially for young people who are increasingly being asked to make decisions, thus becomes clear. The invitation is to start again to recognise the small moments of joy that characterise our days. Borges, in a beautiful poem, tells us that his biggest regret is that he did not seek joy, which should be the main aim for every man. This is what we must work on now, and we will have to continue working on it for several more years, in order to get out of this feeling of emptiness and start looking for small moments of happiness in our daily lives.

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