

Hello everybody!

Thanks to the organisation for having us here, to share our contribution with you!

Now we're going to introduce ourselves:

I'm Chiara Salomoni, I'm 29 years old and I'm working as a social educator at a neurological rehab center in Verona, Italy. My patients are adults average sixtish. They live with an acquired disability, due to stroke, brain hemorrhage. They also suffer from Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis.

He's Andrea Saccani, a social educator who deals with prevention of addictions. He works together with other services, at the department, on the field and with schools. He is also the coordinator of the area plan, a tool that connects all the institutional and third sector entities, and that serves to plan the social and socio-health services of a territory.

Before starting our intervention I'd like to ask you a simple question:

What comes to your mind when I say versatility?

...

Please, tell me an object which has this feature

...

Well, to go deeper about this concept, take a look at this picture... but, why an octopus?

Human beings are provided with two arms and hands, but in Education people would need far more than that, just like an Octopus! ([factotum octopus](#))

Now, let's get started! Remember that after the presentation it will be your turn to put yourself at work!

We're living in a very complex society, crossed by social, cultural and political changes. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman called it "liquid society".

In our fluid society the picture of Octopus is a nice metaphor for a social educator's versatility!

So Versatility means adaptability to changes.

Our profession requires lifelong learning to be able to meet people's needs. For example, think about new behavioural addictions, like social media addiction, hikikomori phenomenon...

Can you think about something else?

We can work in many fields, one different from the other.

We must have two important skills: a multidisciplinary competence and an holistic mindset; it means to use a bio-psycho-social approach, to promote the wellbeing of the person.

So versatility means **multidisciplinary competence** and an **ecological perspective**.

Just like octopus' tentacles stretching in different directions, so social educators keep together all the actors involved. Not only the person, but also the relations with family, territory and services.

We take care of the network.

Versatility is also **being able to work in a team**, looking for new resources, using shared codes, to share information with other professionals.

Last but not least, versatility means **plural identity**. We can work with different patients, ages and needs.

In Italy, ANEP, national association of social educators, identifies six intervention's areas: minor, adults, elderly, disabilities, addictions and mental health.

Our job is very different: it is very different work with a young boy, or an adult. This might appear a weakness compared to other jobs, but in our liquid society plural identity is a strong point to work in times of uncertainty, as Bauman would say.

The tentacles represent the different fields where we operate. But everything is kept together by the **octopus head**, which is the Core of our profession: **intentional attitude**, in a relational frame, where there are educational goals that guide professional intervention.

In my daily work, I meet people whose life-story was split in two: before and after the damage.

The main aim is well-being, while we must focus on helping the social skills, developing communication, facilitating the expression of the new self, and sustaining the patient's strength.

While I work with the patient I must sustain the family, listening to them, helping them accept the changes, and working with other professional figures.

First, the social educator must listen to the person's needs and desires, build an individualized project which lets the person acquire the highest possible degree of autonomy.

Versatility is found on several levels, where the horizon of meaning is the balance and inner rebirth of the person with acquired disability: even when it focuses on the recovery or maintenance of a cognitive ability, the same work also involves the affective and social dimension of the person.

In educational prevention work, the concept of versatility translates into the ability to operate on several levels and with different targets and approaches: depending on the level of prevention, the social educator will find himself relating to the community, to specific subgroups or to the individual.

The social educator must know the territory, detect problematic situations of social and relational degradation. Networking is crucial: connecting institutions with other social workers and with local associations.

The school world, another important field: the social educator meets boys and girls aged 13 to 18, carrying out activities on the use and abuse of psychotropic substances, addiction to smoking, alcohol and gambling.

The main methods used are the experiential approach, peer-education and life-skills training.

In Verona there is a project which works on harm reduction.

It is called "GO SAFE" and provides training to young adults who go to places of entertainment, raising awareness among other youngsters about the risks of alcohol and substances; for example by doing alcohol tests.

Carrying out all these preventive activities, the social educator simultaneously works on the individual and on the group, through active listening, empathy and non-judgment, accompanying the person on his path towards change, increasing his awareness, and self-determination.

Now it's your turn: keep in mind the keyword versatility within the frame of an intentional attitude (remember the head of octopus?)

When intervening in a situation, have you ever exercised versatility?

We will present two possible situations, one for each area of intervention. Please pick the activity you like the most:

ACQUIRED DISABILITY:

You have to conduct an activity with a group of 5 people, each one with a different pathology. All of them have different limitations: cognitive, linguistic, praxic, mnesic deficit.

Your task is to propose a 1-hour activity to activate their residual abilities.

Your goal is the participation of everyone: everyone can feel involved, despite their limitations, and feel highlighted for the person they are, not for their illness.

ADDICTIONS:

You have to design a meeting on the prevention of alcohol/substance abuse and smoking with a class of 18 13-year-old students.

Suggest an activity or working method based on your professional and educational experience.

You have 10 minutes to write your proposals.