



SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE THIRD SESSION IN BRUSSELS ON 6 MARCH 2007 OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE QUALITY OF CHILDHOOD IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

Chairman: Karin Resetarits, MEP for Alde

Third meeting: **‘The Quality of Child-Adult Relationships in Families and Schools’** with the famous Danish family therapist, author and speaker Jesper Juul.

2. PERSPECTIVES FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDHOOD

Mr Christopher Clouder brings forth the following:

- The world of the school and the world of the parents should be connected. Teachers live in their own world and don't enter into the world of the parents. However for children to thrive both these worlds should be connected. Presently there are developments to bring these two worlds closer together. So what is needed is a greater empowerment of parents' competencies by a deeper understanding of the child and their own role.
- At school: don't focus purely on the future career of the child, but instead look at the child as he or she is. This should be a common basis in the link between the home and the school.

THE QUALITY OF CHILD-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

Mr Jesper Juul mentions that all pedagogues ask themselves nowadays the same question:

What to do about the social / personal development of children?

In this connection he remarks that the young parents should reinvent marriage, because our society has changed in a fundamental way during the past 50 years.

Next Jesper Juul treats the various characteristics, that have an impact on the quality of the adult-child relationship:

- Migrate from an object-subject to an subject-subject relationship
- Start to think in terms of relationships
- What does the child bring?
- Be relationally competent
Relational competence is the ability to 'see' the child on its own terms and adjust behaviour in accordance therewith, without giving up the leadership.
- Ethics: with this Jesper Juul means the 'ability and willingness of the adult to take full responsibility for the quality of the relationship'.
- The values:
 - Equal dignity
 - Personal integrity
 - Responsibility
 - Authenticity
- Cooperation versus integrity (if there is a conflict between the two children will give up their integrity and cooperate, and damage themselves in the process);

- Self-confidence and self-esteem. The self-esteem is a basis for a healthy mental development and for self-confidence to grow.
- Social responsibility and personal responsibility. Mr. Juul: personal responsibility comes first. When acquired there is a good basis to attain social responsibility.

In the questions and answers session Jesper Juul raises the following issues:

- It is in the interest of the child when the parents first take care of their own marriage;
- Babies and young toddlers need at least twice 25 minutes per day one-to-one contact with the same adult for a healthy development of their brain;
- At one of the last shooting incidents in Germany the adolescent who had just killed a whole group of teachers and students stated, before he killed himself: 'the message that this school ever gave me was that I am a loser'. Jesper Juul remarks, that we should take the last words of this adolescent very seriously, because it gives us a powerful message about our school system.
- He advocates the introduction of some guidance for all parents regarding their parenting role, and not to limit this to the 5% of the parents that do worst.

THE WORKING GROUP ON THE QUALITY OF CHILDHOOD IS INVITED TO TAKE ACTION

Next Karin Resetarits, the chairman of the meeting, remarks that as Working Group on the Quality of Childhood we can undertake some steps regarding the following:

- Keep an eye on what the European Commission is doing and give an input in this respect;
- The German Presidency is breathing new life into the Constitutional Treaty. Can we give an input to this regarding the Quality of Childhood and present it to the German Presidency?
- On November 20 2007 there will be an International Day of the Child. Can we draft a Charter for this event on the Quality of Childhood?
- various Committees of the European Parliament have been invited to give an input at a hearing on 17 April 2007 within the European Parliament on the subject of Children's Rights. Mrs Resetarits invites the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood to prepare also an input in this respect.

WHAT CAN BE DONE AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

Michiel Matthes states that the European Parliament works on the basis of certain values. The subject 'Quality of Childhood' fits in very well into this context. If the European Parliament would decide to start to pay attention to the subject 'Quality of Childhood', this would already be a major step forward and it would set in motion a gradual process of improvement throughout the European Union and beyond.



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1. OPENING

Mrs Karin Resetarits welcomes all the participants and opens the meeting and invites all persons attending to present themselves.

Next she mentions, that various Committees of the European Parliament are working at present on the subject of Children’s Rights in order to give an input into a hearing within the European Parliament on this subject on 17 April next. Mrs Resetarits invites the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood to prepare also an input for this hearing.

2. PERSPECTIVES FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDHOOD

The world of the school and the world of the parents should be connected

Mr Christopher Clouder, Board Member of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group, informs the group, that he comes from a teaching background. From that experience he knows that teachers often live in their own professional environment and don’t enter into the world of the parents so easily. However for children to thrive both these worlds should be connected. The tendency is that the older the children the more these worlds are apart. Presently there are developments to bring these two worlds closer together. If we talk about Quality of Childhood, this is certainly a topic to be looked into. Parents search for answers and sometimes looked for gurus. Currently there are so many books on offer, and it is not always easy to find your way in this respect. So what is needed is a greater empowerment of parents’ competencies by a deeper understanding of the child and their own role.

At school: don’t focus on the future career of the child, but instead look at the child as he or she is

Christopher Clouder continues by stating, that from the perspective of the Alliance for Childhood it is considered of fundamental importance that the child is respected for what he or she is and that teachers or parents should not purely focus on ambitions regarding the career of the child, or his or her future position in society, their future status, or his or her exclusive national identity. We should look at the child as he or she is and work with what they are as children and not as incipient adults.

This should be a common basis in the link between the home and the school. Jesper Juul finds a very healthy balance in his approach towards children, both from the perspective of the home and the school.

Christopher Clouder: 'I raise the above theme not because I know a definite answer, but rather as a topic that needs our greater attention'.

3. THE QUALITY OF CHILD-ADULT RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

Professional background of Jesper Juul

First Jesper Juul explains, that he is not connected to any university. - I have been studying education and later also the history of European ideas. Later I combined the two. I also taught education. Furthermore I have been working for the past 30 years as a family therapist and as the director of the Kempler Institute in Denmark, which is a post graduate institute to train social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and pedagogues. We were one of the first institutions working on the theme of relationships. This is also a very important element for Kindergartens, schools and other pedagogical institutions.

As Kempler Institute (we have 65 employees) we did counselling work and advised on the pedagogical development of these institutions. I have been working in many European countries, including volunteer work for 6 months per year in refugee camps during the war in the former Yugoslavia and I am married with a Croatian woman. The last three years I work on my own, doing what I wanted to do for many years, namely to work on a higher level in the area of psychotherapy and to make it available to the general public. We have been recognized by academia. For this reason I wrote a number of books of which the following two are best known:

- The Competent Child, published in 13 countries
- From Obedience to Responsibility (for professionals, not yet translated into English).

What to do about the social / personal development of children

We discover that all adults dealing with children face the same problem, namely what to do about the social / personal development of children. Furthermore we notice that 'marriage' today is something completely different from marriage during the past 300 years. **We have to reinvent marriage.** New elements of this marriage relationships are:

- Equal dignity, this means something else than equality, because that is a political term.
- Raising children, meaning something else as educating children.

My parents raised me in the then usual way: they never disagreed with each other and they also fully agreed with what the teachers said. Our generation thought that if they did the opposite of their parents, it would be OK. But also that turned out not to be the best approach. **The young parents today are pioneers, that have to discover completely new ways that have not been followed before at any time in history.**

Next Jesper Juul treats the various characteristics, that have an impact on the quality of the adult-child relationship.

a. Subject- subject relationship

In the Kempler Institute we did not have a theory. We wrote down our approach as our experience grew. However, meanwhile the brain science has developed very quickly during the past decades and this science is nowadays confirming the approach, followed by us before. **The new paradigm**, that is emerging is: as soon as children are born they have a subject – subject relationship with their parents, instead of what we have been thinking until recently, that this was a subject (= the parent) – object (= the child) relationship.

It was developed by professor Daniel Stern, an American-Swiss, working in the areas of medicine, psychoanalysis at the University of Geneva.

As soon as we start to follow this approach when we have to do with children and adolescents very often the difficulties will disappear.

b. Start to think in terms of relationships

THE ADULT



THE RELATIONSHIP



THE CHILD

Another important finding is, that it is very useful to look at the relationship of the adult with the child, instead of the behaviour of the adult or the behaviour of the child. If it is good for the relationship it is both good for the adult and for the child.

c. What does the child bring?

- The reactions of children are always meaningful.
- The child is born with social skills and desires. Traditionally it was and is still one of the main objectives of education to let children become social beings. Recently we discovered that they are social beings from the moment of their birth.
- The child is able to be (personally) responsible. Here the same is true: we thought that we had to teach this to children, but they have this also from the start, even only a few days old. You see this also for instance in families where a parent is an alcoholic. Here children take up too much responsibility.

Jesper Juul cites also a longitudinal study over a 25 years period in which two groups of 60 children each are followed: the children in the first group are free to indicate how much and what they want to eat, the children in the second group were not given this freedom. The result: the children that had the freedom to eat in accordance with their appetite thrived much better and developed less psychosomatic symptoms later on in their lives.

d. Relational competence

Relational competence is the ability to ‘see’ the child on its own terms and adjust behaviour in accordance therewith, without giving up the leadership.

Jesper Juul gives the example of Great Britain, which is looking at from all over Europe by teachers, because so many teachers in Britain have a burn-out. According to Jesper Juul this has to do with the circumstance that they don’t focus enough on the relationship with the child, but instead on the curriculum.

If you want to improve the quality of childhood then don’t give the extra means directly to the children, but instead treat the teachers and the parents better, because then the children will benefit in the most optimal way.

e. Ethics

With this Jesper Juul means the ‘ability and willingness of the adult to take full responsibility for the quality of the relationship’. Children have social skills and can take personal responsibility, but they don’t have the ability to take responsibility for the quality of the relationship between himself or herself and the adult.

If parents or educators don’t take this responsibility the children cannot take over. Then they will lose.

Examples in this area:

- When children thrive it is the work of the adults; if they don't thrive it is fault of the children;
- At many schools that are based on an ideology we also find this phenomenon: when things go wrong they blame the child.
- Recently I had a meeting with the children's ombudspersons from Norway, Sweden and Denmark and in this meeting it was discussed that the number of children that are neglected or abused in these countries by the public institutions is 5 to 6 times higher than the national average among the rest of the population.

I have been teaching teachers to take responsibility for the quality of the relationship. You cannot measure if it is present, but you notice it within 10 seconds after you enter a classroom. In the Nordic countries we don't see any more five year old children that are afraid of adults. This is an achievement and other societies could learn from it. They have become real human beings: they ask respect before they can give respect.

Many teachers don't like this: they want to get their power back.

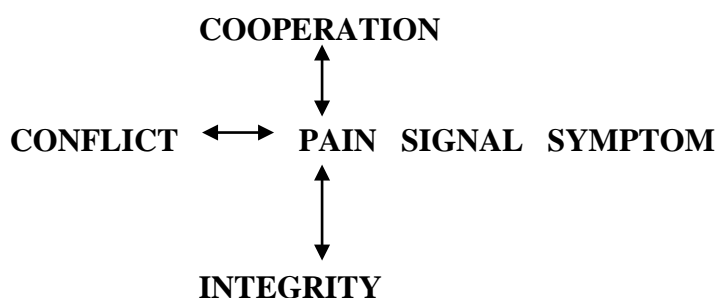
f. The values:

Jesper Juul distinguishes the following values, that are fundamental for the quality of adult-child relationships:

- Equal dignity. This has not to do with equality or democracy. It means that the adult respects the child to the same degree as he or she would respect another adult regarding his/her actions, thoughts, ideas etc.
- Personal integrity (taking care of our personal needs and boundaries and respecting those of the child)
- Responsibility
- Authenticity. Parents try to be perfect parents. In that case the parent tries to be 'the role', but the child is looking for the real person inside, not the role that the parent is playing.

g. Cooperation versus integrity

Jesper Juul shows the following diagram:



During the past three decades many children have learnt both to cooperate and to maintain their own integrity.

With the word integrity Jesper Juul refers to a collective concept, that relates to the wholeness and inviolability of our physical and psychological existence, which are related to issues like identity, limits and personal needs. Children can in fact set their own limits to a great extent, but often they will disregard their own needs if these needs conflict with those of their parents. They then choose to cooperate instead of thinking of themselves.

If people have not learnt to maintain their personal integrity and always try to please others they run the risk of destroying their physical and mental health, which may lead to the burn-out syndrome. It is therefore of vital importance that children are treated in such a way that their integrity is respected. Then they will copy this behaviour themselves and be aware to maintain their integrity.

h. Self-confidence and self-esteem

Self-esteem = who I am and how I feel about me - a more Nordic approach

Self-confidence = what I can do or achieve – a more American approach

Self-esteem is our knowledge about, and experience of, who we are. It addresses the question of how well we know ourselves and how we look upon what we know. Self-esteem can be envisioned as a kind of inner pillar, centre or core. People who have a healthy, well-developed sense of self-esteem feel self-contained and at ease with themselves.

Self-confidence is a measure of what we are capable of, what we are good and clever at, or awkward and inefficient at doing. It refers to what we can achieve.

If one has a healthy self-esteem, then self-confidence is rarely a problem. The opposite, however, is certainly not the case.

Important for children to acquire self-esteem

Jesper Juul explains that it is of vital importance to help children to acquire self-esteem. He gives the example of a mother feeding a toddler. When the child does not want to eat any more the mother can say: Ah, you are full? You don't want any more food? With this approach the child learns the following:

- The mother gives the child a language for the body (there is a word for this feeling and that is 'full')
- It is OK to be full;
- I am respected as I am.

In earlier generations the mother defined when the child was 'full'. Jesper Juul's approach: don't define who your child is, but instead be interested who your child is.

i. Social responsibility and personal responsibility

Jesper Juul distinguishes two forms of responsibility:

- Social responsibility
- Personal responsibility

Social responsibility is the responsibility we have for each other, those in our family, community, society, and the world. It enables larger groups of people to live together. We learn it from our parents and teachers.

Personal responsibility is the responsibility we have for our own lives, our physical, psychological, mental and spiritual health and development. Jesper Juul explains that few of us have been raised to assume this type of responsibility, but it is one of the pillars of a healthy psychological development and consequently of healthy relationships.

For children it is important to live with adults, who

- Safeguard their personal integrity
- Intervene when they sense that children are cooperating to an excessive degree.

The old way: parents take away the personal responsibility of the child until he or she is 12 or 13 and then give it back. Jesper Juul advocates the approach that parents leave the child the personal responsibility as far as possible, but of course they should be present and around and support the child where necessary.

He gives various examples:

- A young girl of three who walks down the staircase. The grandmother wants to hold her hand, but the girl refuses: 'I want to do it myself'. When they are on the ground-floor the girl says: 'I did it myself, but not alone.'
- Attitude to school: at some point children grasp the idea: I don't like school, but in some way it is useful for me and I have to do it. Then they start to take personal responsibility for this.
- In 1989 Jesper Juul worked in Croatia and spoke there about 'personal responsibility'. His audience did not understand what it was because they had lived for so long in a society where the state took all decisions. Jesper Juul concludes from this that building up a democracy requires people that have learnt to be responsible for themselves.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Dr. Joop Berding asks a further clarification about social and personal responsibility. Jesper Juul replies, that children speak in political terms. They say for instance: 'I want to take a decision myself'. In fact they want to say: 'I like to take more responsibility'. The clue is, that they can do it themselves, but they need some help. It is thus our task to be creative in this process and let the child do as much as he or she can, without letting them be in risky situations. Of course, this is a dynamic process, because each day you can give the child more room of manoeuvre.

In this context Jesper Juul stresses that we should distinguish two things:

- we are educating the child, and
- at the same time we have to look where the child is at this moment.

Parent should take up his/her personal responsibility

Mrs Rosmarie Bluder: 'what you say is that you should always be ready for your children, even cook meals in the middle of the afternoon?'. Response of Jesper Juul: no, this is not what I mean. The parent should also take care of his/her own integrity and own personal responsibility. In such a case you can reply: 'at this moment I have other things to do'.

It is in the interest of the child when you take first care of your marriage.

Next Jesper Juul gives an example of a successful woman with a good career and a stay-at-home father. When the mother comes home the three year old child wants to see the mother, but the father wants also to speak with his wife. The woman gives priority to the child and the father feels frustrated. The advice of Jesper Juul to the woman: when you come home you greet the child, but then you have a drink with your husband. **It is in the interest of the child when you take first care of your marriage.**

Minimum requirement for a healthy development of the brain of a baby: twice per day 25 minutes attention by the same adult

Next Jesper Juul tells the group about the work of Emmi Pikler of Hungary who found out in the orphanage where she worked that the minimum requirement of a young child is to have one-to-one contact with the same adult for twice 25 minutes per day. That is what they need for a healthy mental and brain development. It is important that you love the child, but it is the behaviour of the adult that counts.

Jesper Juul then mentions the shootings that occur regularly in the USA, but nowadays also in Europe. At one of the last incidents in Germany the adolescent who had just killed a whole group of teachers and students stated, before he killed himself: **'the message that this school ever gave me was that I am a loser'**. Jesper Juul remarks, that we should take the last words

of this adolescent very seriously, because it gives us a powerful message about our school system. The pedagogy of the school system violates in a structural way the integrity of the student.

Closing remark: parents are eager to learn about parenting. Provide assistance in this area for all parents

Jesper Juul finishes with the following remarks:

- He advocates the introduction of some guidance for all parents regarding their parenting role, and not to limit this to the 5% of the parents that do worst. Nobody has the answer but all parents are eager to learn in this respect. It is important to find the right methodology for this.
- On 25 and 26 May Jesper Juul holds an international symposium in Stockholm with the title: The Meeting, the Moment, the Brain and the Family. Speakers a.o. Daniel Stern and Gerald Hüther. More information at www.famlab.se.

The Working Group on the Quality of Childhood is invited to take action

Next Karin Resetarits, the chairman of the meeting, remarks that as Working Group on the Quality of Childhood we can undertake some steps regarding the following:

- Keep an eye on what the European Commission is doing and give an input in this respect;
- The German Presidency is breathing new life into the Constitutional Treaty. Can we give an input to this regarding the Quality of Childhood and present it to the German Presidency;
- On November 20 2007 there will be an International Day of the Child. Can we draft a Charter for this event on the Quality of Childhood?
- various Committees of the European Parliament have been invited to give an input at a hearing on 17 April 2007 within the European Parliament on the subject of Children's Rights. Mrs Resetarits invites the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood to prepare also an input in this respect.

4. WHAT CAN BE DONE AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL IN THIS RESPECT

Next Michiel Matthes, Secretary General of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group, presents the above mentioned subject:

The European Institutions have been created, and act, on the basis of the following values:

- respect for other human beings
- human dignity and human rights
- cooperation among fellow human beings
- support for those that are in a weaker position
- not acting out of fear, but instead out of compassion
- sustainability

When we talk about the **quality of child-adult relationships** we do this in the context of our work to improve the quality of childhood in general.

What can be done at the European level:

If the European Parliament would decide to start to pay attention to the subject 'Quality of Childhood', this would already be a major step forward and it would set in motion a gradual process of improvement throughout the European Union and beyond.

The subject 'Quality of Childhood' fits in very well into the list of the values of the European Institutions.

In a concrete way the following actions can be taken:

- Our Working Group can scrutinize what Jesper Juul is saying and we can ask ourselves the question: 'Is Jesper Juul right?' Our Working Group can play a role regarding '**Validation**'.
- A European survey could be made regarding the 'Quality of Relationships', using Jesper Juul's seven characteristics (**Best Practice**).
- Develop a **language** regarding the Quality of Child-Adult Relationships (example of Boris Cyrulnik who speaks of atrophy of the child's brain).
- Develop **structures and institutions**, as has been done in the field of the environment, and/ or amend the **mission** of existing institutions
- Develop procedures and laws, for instance laws to forbid an adult to beat a child (at present a.o. in Sweden and the Netherlands).
- Upgrade the own institutions in accordance with the above, also regarding adult-adult or superior-subordinate relationships.
- Monitor the European Commission with regard to the promises it made to the European Parliament in its Communication 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child' of 4 July 2006.

5. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Mrs Resetarits thanks all persons for their contribution, especially Jesper Juul, and closes the meeting.

Next session in Brussels on 15 May 2007:

The next session will be on 15 May and the theme will be:

The Child: his Networks and Neighbourhood with key-note speakers René Diekstra from the Netherlands and John Bennett of the OECD in Paris.

The report was drafted by Michiel Matthes.

ACTION LIST 6 MARCH 2007

WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1. Organise next session	Mrs Resetarits, Mrs Pfeifer, Mr Matthes, Mr Clouder	15.5.07
2. monitor the European Commission	all	ongoing
3. input Constitutional Treaty	Mrs Resetarits, Mrs Pfeifer, Mr Matthes, Mr Clouder	Before 1.5.07
4. Charter on the Quality of Childhood	Mrs Resetarits, Mrs Pfeifer, Mr Matthes, Mr Clouder	20.11.07
5. hearing European Parliament	Mrs Resetarits, Mrs Pfeifer, Mr Matthes, Mr Clouder	17.4.07

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INVITATION FOR ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE WORLD OF OUR
YOUNGEST

hosted by
MEP Karin Resetarits

Working Group of the European Parliament on the Quality of Childhood

Third session: **‘The Quality of Child-Adult Relationships in Families and Schools’** with the famous Danish family therapist, author and speaker **Jesper Juul**.

Time: Tuesday, 6 March 2007 from 13.00 until 14.30 hours

Location: European Parliament, Rue Wiertz, Entrance Spinelli, Room X (room to be reserved).

This program was developed in cooperation with the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group, whose members are:

The Linkedness Project, Belgium	Gie Deboutte
Project Experiential Education, Belgium	Ludo Heylen
The Kempler Institute, Denmark	Annelise Dalsgaard
	Claes Solborg Petersen
Legambiente, Italy	Vittoria Cogliati Dezza
	Lorenzo Vicario
Universal Education Foundation (NL)	Marijke Sluijter
Korczak Foundation, The Netherlands	Theo Cappon
University for Professional Education (NL)	René Diekstra
Verein mit Kindern Wachsen, Germany	Lienhard Valentin
	Sabine Heggemann
University of Cordoba, Spain	Rosario Ortega Ruiz
International Association for Steiner / Waldorf	
Early Childhood Education (Sweden)	Geseke Lundren
European Council for Steiner	
Waldorf Education, Brussels	Christopher Clouder
Ecology of the Child, Brussels	Michiel Matthes

One of the main factors that determines the quality of childhood is the quality of the relationships that the child has with his/ her parents and his/her teachers. For this reason we will focus on this topic in the third session of the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood

Usually people will think, that a relationship is either good or bad, and that if the relationship is bad we cannot do much to improve it. However this is not the case and the famous Danish family therapist, author and speaker **Jesper Juul**, who has been studying and working on the subject during the past 30 years, will tell us, what we can set about such changes.

Jesper Juul distinguishes the following key characteristics with regards to the quality of relationships:

- equal dignity (Gleichwürdigkeit)
- integrity
- authenticity
- responsibility
- self-esteem and self-confidence
- migration from a subject-object relationship to a subject-subject relationship
- the process of the growth of a relationship.

Key characteristics with regards to the quality of relationships:

1. Equal dignity

Relationships between adults and children have been improving decisively and qualitatively in the past twenty-five years, as the concept of equal dignity within family life has emerged. This change is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the fact that children and young people are now able to function in the world with a much greater sense of naturalness and self-awareness. They are no longer automatically programmed to tolerate infringements and violations inflicted by parents and other adults that earlier generations were forced to accept. At the same time, however, both the family and society still fail to fulfil a crucial need of children and young people: to see them, and encourage them to see themselves, as valid members of the community.

2. Integrity

With the word integrity Jesper Juul refers to a collective concept, that relates to the wholeness and inviolability of our physical and psychological existence, which are related to issues like identity, limits and personal needs. Children can in fact set their own limits to a great extent, but often they will disregard their own needs if these needs conflict with those of their parents. They then choose to cooperate instead of thinking of themselves.

3. Authenticity

Jesper Juul explains that one of the basic ingredients for a healthy relationship between an adult and a child is the attribute of authenticity. A person who is authentic is reliable, trustworthy, genuine and true to his inner self. Jesper Juul mentions in his book *Vom Gehorsam zur Verantwortung* (page 116, *From Obedience to Responsibility*) the example of a teacher who feels uncertain. He explains that there is nothing wrong with feeling uncertain. However the teacher has the choice how to behave when feeling uncertain. If he lets it be, he behaves in an authentic way. If he tries to hide it, he is unauthentic. The first way is better and children will relate to it. The latter behaviour creates a distance between the teacher and the children and the quality of the relationship will suffer as a consequence.

4. Responsibility

Jesper Juul distinguishes two forms of responsibility:

- Social responsibility
- Personal responsibility

Social responsibility is the responsibility we have for each other, those in our family, community, society, and the world. It enables larger groups of people to live together. We learn it from our parents and teachers.

Personal responsibility is the responsibility we have for our own lives, our physical, psychological, mental and spiritual health and development. Jesper Juul explains in his books that few of us have been raised to assume this type of responsibility, but it is one of the pillars of a healthy psychological development and consequently of healthy relationships.

For children it is important to live with adults, who

- Safeguard their personal integrity
- Intervene when they sense that children are cooperating to an excessive degree.

5. Self-esteem and self-confidence

Self-esteem is our knowledge about, and experience of, who we are. It addresses the question of how well we know ourselves and how we look upon what we know. Self-esteem can be envisioned as a kind of inner pillar, centre or core. People who have a healthy, well-developed sense of self-esteem feel self-contained and at ease with themselves.

Self-confidence is a measure of what we are capable of, what we are good and clever at, or awkward and inefficient at doing. It refers to what we can achieve.

If one has a healthy self-esteem, then self-confidence is rarely a problem. The opposite, however, is certainly not the case.

6. Migration from a subject-object relationship to a subject-subject relationship

One of the major themes in the books of Jesper Juul is the new understanding, that we should not treat children as objects, but instead as subjects. This means that we define the relationship between the adult and the child as a relationship between two human beings instead of defining ourselves as the parent or the teacher and the child as a pupil, who must obey, learn, fill in tests, be nice, be clever, adapt himself / herself to our wishes etc.

7. The process of the growth of a relationship

Jesper Juul explains in the book *Aus Erziehung wird Beziehung, Authentische Eltern, Kompetente Kinder* (From Upbringing to Relationship, Authentic Parents, Competent Children), that we should raise our children in such a way that the child is respected as a fellow human being, who wants to be who he or she is and to develop his / her inner potential. If we treat a child in that way we enable the child to discover him or herself and to develop deep and healthy relationships with the parents and the teachers and any other person.

Conclusion:

We can only give our children a childhood of a good quality when we, as adults, first make the above mentioned seven characteristics our own, because otherwise we will never be able to give them the good example. This is of course also true for our schools and other institutions.

Working Group on the Quality of Childhood

Personally I have been involved for some time in the activities in this area and I am deeply concerned about the quality of childhood in the member states of the European Union. For this reason I have taken the initiative to set up a **Working Group on the Quality of**

Childhood within the European Parliament. Together with the Alliance for Childhood - European Network Group we are planning a number of sessions, the third of which will take place on 6 March 2007.

Objectives of these meetings:

- To gain a better understanding of the Quality of Childhood in the EU member states; this time we will focus on the theme of the quality of relationships
- To think about the role that the European Parliament could play to improve the situation
- To get to grips with the principles and approaches that could lead to a betterment for children
- To form an effective working group and to get a sense of how to move on.

I take pleasure in inviting you for the third session of the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood on 6 March 2007. The best selling author from Denmark Jesper Juul will present to us his views on the above. I believe that we as members of the European Parliament working together with likeminded NGOs and committed individuals can and should play an important role in this area.

Yours sincerely,

Karin Resetarits.
Member of the European Parliament

Program Outline for 6 March 2007

Time	Subject	Speaker / facilitator
13.00	Opening	Karin Resetarits, Member of the European Parliament and Chairman of the working Group
13.05	Perspectives from the Alliance for Childhood	Christopher Clouder, Board Member of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group
13.15	The Quality of Child-Adult Relationships in Families and Schools: explaining the key characteristics that determine the quality	Jesper Juul
13.40	What concrete measures have been taken in Scandinavian countries to work on the theme of the quality of relationships	Jesper Juul
13.50	What can be done at the European level in this respect	Michiel Matthes, Secretary General of the Alliance for Childhood European Network Group
14.00	Discussion	Karin Resetarits
14.20	Rounding off: each Member of the European Parliament suggests two or three action points / elements that he or she finds important to be addressed by the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood	Karin Resetarits

