

Painting and reflecting with *The magic nut*



A pedagogical resource for emotional literacy
for students aged 7 to 9

Pax Dettoni

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**A pedagogical resource for emotional literacy for students
aged 7 to 9, developed by Pax Dettoni, accompanying
the story *The Magic Nut*.**

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PAINTING

Once we have read the story *The magic nut* with the students, we will ask them to make a drawing of the episode from the story that made the deepest impression on them.

Considering that, at these ages, students process and internalize what they have learned more effectively through drawing, we will invite them to calmly take a blank sheet of paper and, using their colored pencils, draw what they liked the most or what impacted them the most from the story they have just heard.

We will give them time to complete their drawing, allowing them to finish with the precision they need.

REFLECTING COLLECTIVELY

Afterward, we will ask the students to sit in a circle and begin the collective reflection.

For this, it is important that you, as the teacher, understand that your role will be that of moderator for this collective reflection. Therefore, your task will be **to facilitate and moderate the discussions** (by giving speaking turns) and, at the same time, **to highlight the emotional literacy lessons embedded in the story, which will likely emerge as students share their drawings.**

To help you with this process, below you will find two sections for your guidance:

1. General Guidelines for the Teacher
2. Emotional Literacy Learnings in *The magic nut*

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE TEACHER

It is important to consider **a few key aspects when taking on the role of moderator:**

- ✓ Do not judge contributions, either verbally or non-verbally.
- ✓ Make sure to highlight the positive aspects of their responses.
- ✓ Continuously express kindness and affection toward the children through both verbal and non-verbal communication: eye contact, gestures, tone of voice, and speaking rhythm. Therefore, it is strongly recommended not to shout to ask for silence, to use threats, or, of course, to apply punishments.
- ✓ Show joy and motivation with a tone of genuine curiosity.
- ✓ Encourage and ensure the participation of all students, avoiding the same child answering all the questions, and giving space to those who are participating for the first time.
- ✓ Show gratitude for each of the students' contributions. Phrases like the following are recommended when a child has finished speaking:
 - "Thank you very much, Lola, for what you've shared with us."
 - "Thank you very much, Javier, for sharing how you felt."
 - "Thank you very much, Ame, because what you've shared with us is very valuable."
- ✓ Show gratitude to the group at the end of the activity, and if deemed appropriate, encourage a final round of applause to recognize everyone who participated in the collective reflection.



2. EMOTIONAL LITERACY LEARNINGS IN "THE MAGIC NUT"

Once the children are seated in the circle, you will invite them to show their drawings to the rest of the classmates and explain what caught their attention (or what they liked most) about the story of "The Magic Nut."

Based on each of their interventions, you can highlight some of the learnings mentioned here and emphasize them. You can use the posters from the "In Their Shoes" program and also ask questions to help them express themselves or delve deeper into the reflection.



Model/example questions:

- Have you ever experienced a similar situation?
- Have you ever felt like Clara?
- Or like Pau?
- Have you ever felt the monster of emotional pain in your heart?
- Has the monster ever asked you to hurt someone?
- How can we win the battle against the monster?
- Do we sometimes behave like hard nuts?
- Have we ever seen the emotional pain of a friend hurting us?

With "The Magic Nut," we can reflect on the following socio-emotional learnings:

- ✓ **Understanding that emotions that hurt create emotional pain, and when this pain is not recognized or managed, it tends to create more pain in others or in oneself.**

Emotional pain is one of the main protagonists of this story, and when we feel it, it is caused, as the fairy explains, by anger, sadness, fear, or a mix of the previous ones.

Emotional pain follows a single law: to cause harm, either to oneself or to others. It is not bad in itself, but causes harm in order to be seen and recognized.

Therefore, students learn that behind actions that hurt lies emotional pain, and that when someone hurts them, it is that person's emotional pain that is being expressed through the action that hurt them. **They learn to differentiate between the action (which caused the harm) and the person.** The action hurts because that person has not been able to recognize nor manage his own emotional pain.

The same happens when they are the ones who hurt someone. This happens because they have not been able to recognize nor manage their own emotional pain, and it is this pain that wins the inner battle. They become its puppets; if the emotional pain says "hit," they "hit." They are merely puppets, not the ones in control. This is exactly what happens in the story (during the first ending): first to Pau, then to Clara because of the pain Pau inflicts on her, and finally to her friend who also hits her brother—an emotional pain chain causing harm.

"Inner battle" is the term we will use to help the children understand that it is within themselves where they need to win the battle, so that neither their emotions nor their emotional pain take control. Sometimes they will be able to win the battle, and that should be celebrated, and sometimes they won't; in those cases, they will need to learn to do better next time.

Emotional pain can be overcome if it is learned to be recognized and managed. By doing so, one can avoid hurting oneself or others.

That is why the story of "The Magic Nut" has two endings: one where emotional pain wins the battle, and another where Clara wins the battle, and then Pau. This is to show what happens in life; we can always choose which ending we want.

For this learning, we recommend using the poster to assist you. In this illustration from the program, emotional pain is depicted as a black monster that controls the child as if a puppet.



✓ **Calm down first in order to think and act without hurting others or ourselves.**

We understand **emotional hijacking** as when an emotion or emotional pain wins the battle, and we do what its impulse asks of us. Pau is emotionally hijacked by his pain when he insults Clara, and in turn, Clara is also hijacked when she criticizes and excludes her friend Cándida... In the story, we also see Clara hijacked by emotional pain when she cries in her room because of the hurtful insults from her friend Pau.

Allowing emotional hijacking depends on oneself. It is in our hands to avoid it, by winning the battle against emotional pain and thus controlling it

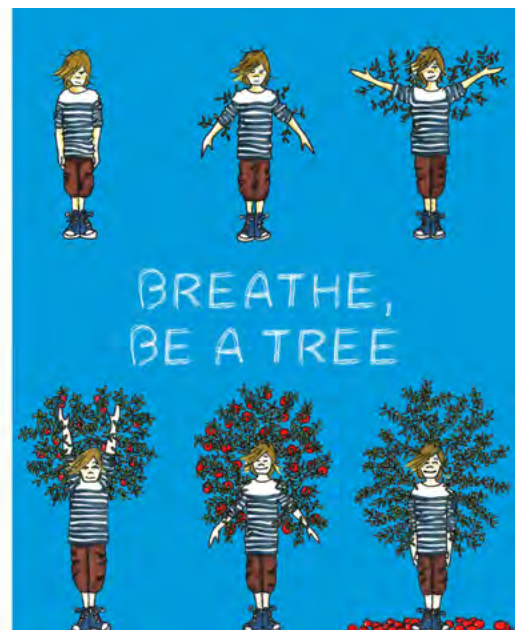
To prevent emotional pain from making the decisions in our actions, we must turn to calmness in order to manage it.

Calmness is the only “weapon” we have in the “inner battle” to dominate our emotional pain and ensure it doesn’t lead us to do what it wants. This is one of the great secrets the fairy shares inside the tree. That’s why, when Clara remembers this, she can calm down and remember that Pau is her friend, and that the reason why he behaves this way with her is because of his suffering. By contemplating it with a compassionate regard, she can forgive him and help him also overcome his monster (his emotional pain).

The students learn that as soon as they realize they feel hurt—meaning, with fear, anger, or sadness and feeling the urge to hurt themselves or others—they are recognizing the “monster” from the poster (emotional pain) and have the possibility of defeating it with calmness. To achieve this, they need to breathe consciously, focusing all their attention on their breath. The fairy teaches them the tree breath, which is what Clara will do in her room:

“The tree breath” (Use the poster in which apples represent emotions like anger, which fall when we exhale and lower our arms – it’s recommended to do this 3 to 5 times, no more, to avoid hyperventilating the child). They will learn to do it physically with their arms and mentally with visualization and imagination, while breathing deeply.

When teaching them the “tree dynamic,” it’s important to emphasize the breathing. When the arms are raised, you inhale; when the arms are lowered, you exhale. Trees help us breathe better, which is why we become one when we breathe deeply and with awareness.



✓ Put yourself “in their shoes,” practice Active Empathy.

Empathy allows us to put ourselves in someone else's shoes, to think and feel what the other person is thinking and feeling, while keeping in mind that, in reality, we are not in their place.

It is a respectful understanding of what someone is experiencing. It requires full attention to the internal experience of feelings and needs, and putting aside, for the moment, our own judgments, opinions, and fears.

In the story, Clara puts herself in Pau's shoes and understands that his heart has become as hard as a nut because the boys who insulted him have hurt him. At the same time, she remembers that behind that hardness lies his goodness, which is why she is able to write him a letter that helps the boy by reminding him of the secret the fairy had told them.

In the story, Clara shows empathy towards Pau because she has been able to calm herself and win the battle against her emotional pain. While emotional hijacking is happening, empathy cannot take place.

Pau, in turn, shows empathy towards the boys who insult him because he understands that they do it because they cannot win the battle against their emotional pain, and by realizing this, he is able to forgive them.

✓ Differentiating between “true forgiveness” and “false forgiveness,” choosing the former.

“True forgiveness” is asked for when one is aware that one's action, even if not done with bad intentions, may have hurt another person. When responsibility is assumed, one asks for forgiveness or says “I'm sorry.” Then, you can seek a way to redress the wrong, asking about the needs of the harmed person.

In the story, we can assume that Pau asks for true forgiveness from Clara for the insults he said, as they manage to maintain their friendship.

On the other hand, true forgiveness occurs when one understands that the person who attacked others—and thus caused harm—did so because they were unable to manage their own emotional pain. This pain won the battle. By forgiving the person who hurts you, the individual prevents generating emotional pain in oneself. **Forgiveness frees, above all, the person who was the victim of the aggression.**

In “The Magic Nut,” we see clear examples of true forgiveness. Clara truly forgives Pau (before

he can even ask for it) and helps him both in winning his battle against emotional pain and

in forgiving the children who hurt him.. In this way, both of them can reconnect with the goodness of their hearts, meaning the secret that the fairy shared with them. This way, they can continue nurturing their beautiful friendship forever.

If you'd like, you can assist the students in this process of true forgiveness with questions like these:

- When someone has hurt you, do you think they might have done it because they were feeling emotional pain that they weren't managing?
- Have you ever felt this way?
- When you've hurt someone, do you want them to forgive you?
- Do we have the right to make mistakes? Can we make amends?
- Does it hurt to hold onto resentment and bitterness for the harm done to you?
- Does the desire for revenge hurt you?
- Do you deserve to feel that emotional pain inside you?

For this learning, you can use this poster from the "In Their Shoes" program, which emphasizes the importance of true forgiveness.



No lies.
Forgiveness, truly.

“The Magic Nut” reminds us of the beauty of friendship and how we must care for it by recalling the fairy’s secret. In our hearts, there is always goodness, even though sometimes it hardens like nuts. That is why forgiveness, a compassionate regard, and empathy are ingredients we will always need to build a friendship like the one between Pau and Clara.

