

Mental Health Promotion in Youth Work

Since
2011

Elina Marjamäki

Mental Health Promotion of Young People

Youth Work Competence Centres

MIELI Mental Health Finland



MIELI Mental Health Finland

- Non Governmental Organisation (NGO)
- 1897 The world's oldest mental health association 😊 125 yrs

Promoting mental health by:

1. **Politics, policies, curricula**
2. Mental health **training and material** for all age groups 0-100
3. **Help and support**; national crisis help line 24/7, Crisis chat for young people, suicide prevention, support groups, crisis help for immigrants, live and online
4. **Volunteer**-based work and active citizenship



OUR MISSION:

is to increase every adult's understanding that they have the power to positively impact on mental health of every child and young person every day and we should build safe environments where mental well-being is supported and taught.

The importance of every day, basic level became visible during pandemic



Therapy guarantee law is in the process, Low threshold therapy, Easy access to therapy services → Walk-In Psychology Services in Helsinki Health Care for ages 13 →

Everyone can and should do this. The stronger the base, the less need for corrective services

The National youth work and youth policy programme 2020–2023

Aiming to ensure a meaningful life and social inclusion for all young people

Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2020:4

https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162381/OKM_2020_4.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Young people emphasized the importance of mental health.

Mental health promotion is written in the programme and it is one of the tasks of youth work.

Ministry of Education and Culture finances:

Six National Competence Centres for youth work: MIELI Mental Health Finland is working in 3 of them



**Municipal
youth work**

**School youth
work**

**Targeted
(outreach)
youth work**

One of the many tasks of youth work is to promote mental health.
Cooperation, listening, supporting, skills

WE AIM TO INCREASE ADULTS’:

Knowledge and understanding of

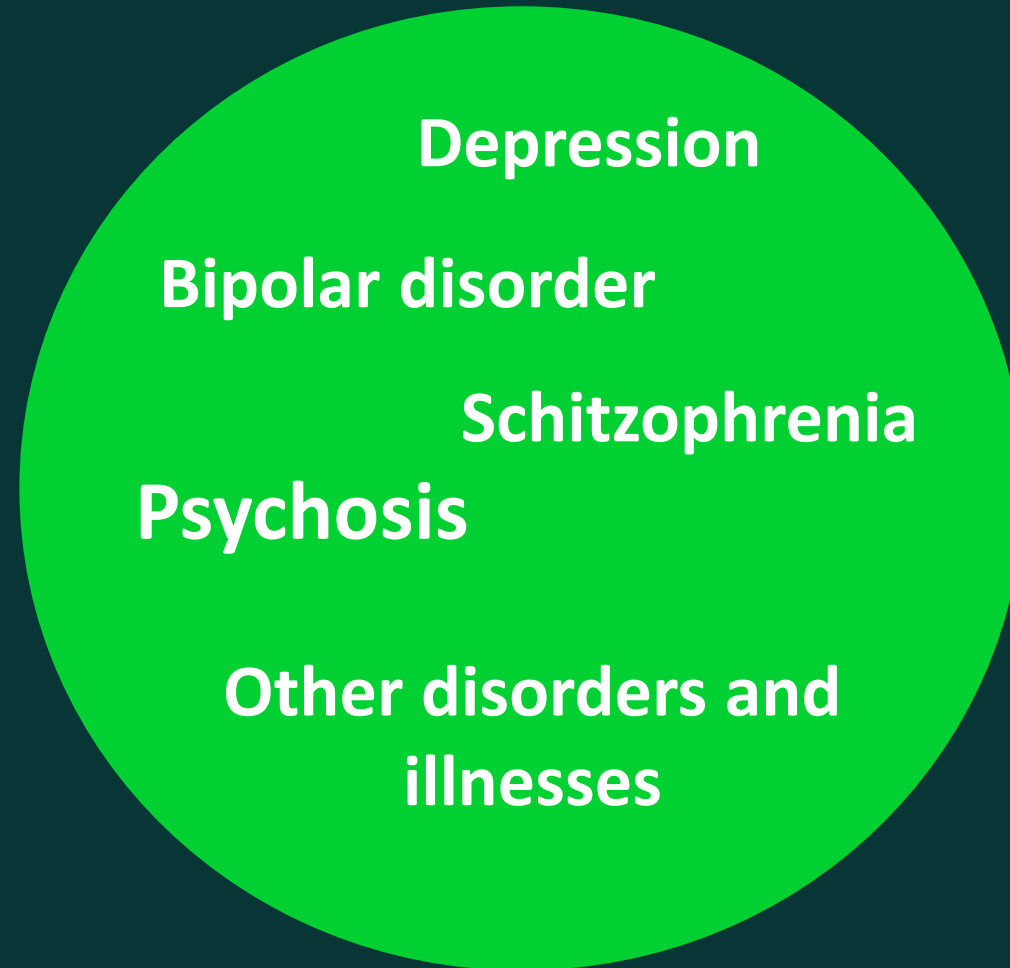
- Mental health as a positive resource and skill which we can teach, learn, support and strengthen
- Risk and protective factors of mental health
- Means to strengthen mental health
- Importance of reducing stigma towards mental health problems and challenges
- Awareness of ones own attitudes about mental health

Skills and motivation

- To teach and strengthen mental health skills
- To listen and to engage
- To raise a concern and support
- To know when and how to find help and support



BUT IN THE PAST WE SAW MENTAL HEALTH ONLY AS



And this was a heavy burden

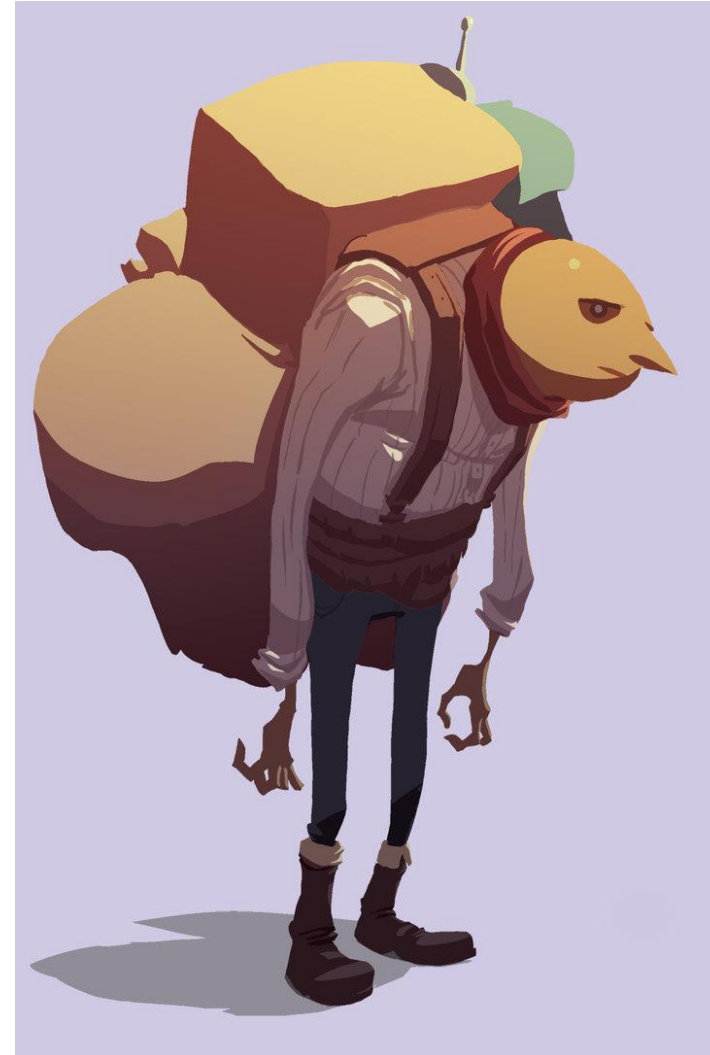
...for professionals to handle
It caused a lot of:

Fear

Anxiety

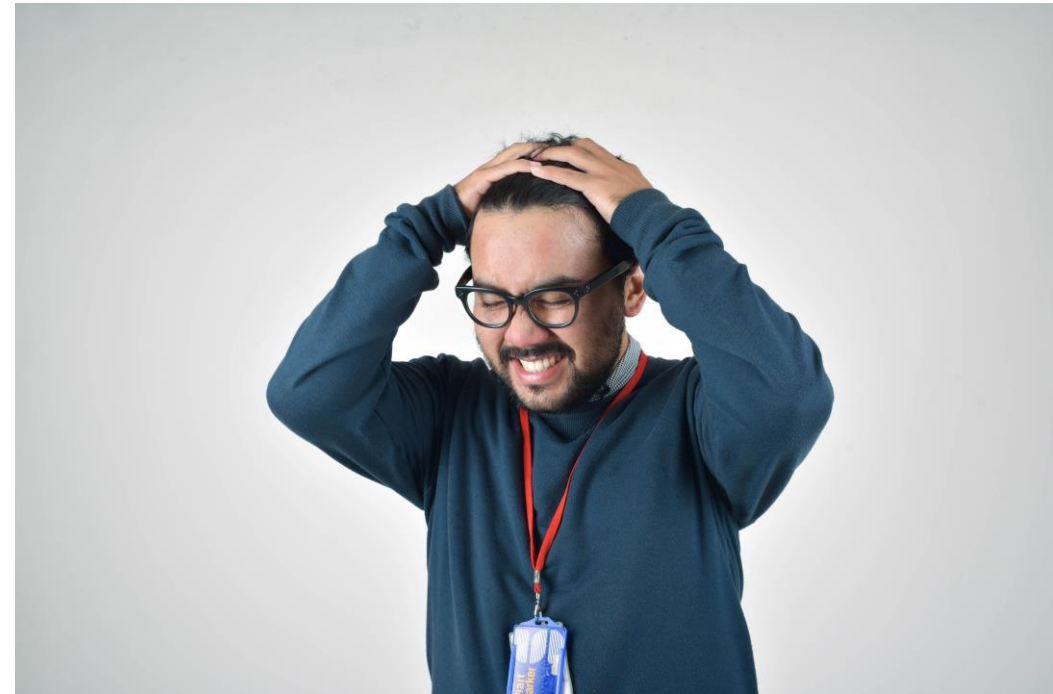
Resentment

Stigma



AND THIS PARADIGM MADE ADULTS FEEL ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:

- Fixed mindset about mental health; you either have mental health or you don't have
- Feelings of overwhelm and hopelessness
- Too many problems, I can't fix them → I give up
- I am not interested in children's wellbeing
- I don't have time to care
- I am here to teach, not to be a doctor or social worker!



**So we needed
to create a new
way of thinking
about mental
health**



New paradigm for mental health

- **Mental Health is a life skill** that you can always
 - learn,
 - teach,
 - support and
 - strengthen
- **Everyone has** mental health even if they have mental health problems or difficult life situations or crisis
- **Everyone needs** mental health even if we don't have mental health issues or problems
- Mental Health is the foundation for well-being

THE IDEA OF MENTAL HEALTH AS SKILL



**GROWTH
MINDSET**

MOTIVATION

OPTIMISM

- Daily routines and healthy habits
- Emotional skills; Recognition, expressing, accepting emotions, empathy and assertiveness
- Friendships and interaction skills → Preventing bullying and loneliness, safe groups
- Coping skills
- Self knowledge, self appreciation, strengths
- Values and attitudes
- Safety net and knowledge about places to get help from
- Stress management and recovery skills
- Mindfulness and relaxation skills
- Dreams, optimism, goals
- Participation and inclusion
- Important skills for both young and adults

CREATIVITY

PRACTICING MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- Every day life offers us many opportunities to practice mental health skills
- We can practice different skills depending on what are the needs of the young people **you** work with
 - Do we need to discuss about the **values**?
 - How about the **interaction skills**? Do we need to sharpen them?
 - **Emotional** skills? Do we need to have a power-hour for emotions?
 - What about **coping skills**? How do we talk about and practice different coping skills with young people?
 - Is it time to breathe and learn some new **relaxation** skills?
 - Shall we focus on **positive self-talk** this week?
 - Should we pay special attention on the **strengths** of young people this week?
 - Is there a need to find out what are our **dreams** and goals?



What do professionals need?



Three young people are sitting outside.

Training

- About mental health as a skill
- Information, inspiration and empowerment
- Appreciation (!)
- **Support from the management!**



Concrete material

- Handbooks
- Posters
- Cards
- Board games
- Ideas, inspiration
- Online material

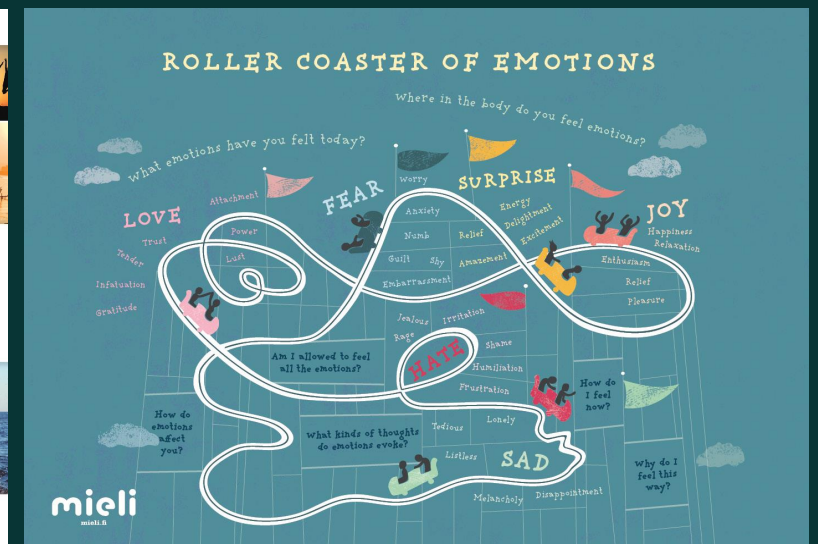
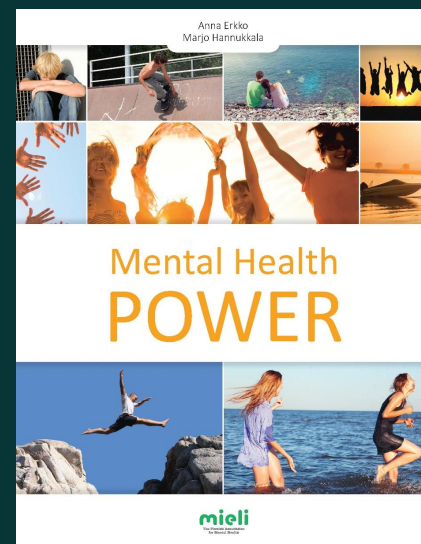
Mental Health Training for youth workers by MIELI



- Mental Health Power – promotion and skills that support mental health 3h – 1 day
- Young people, crisis and coping skills 3 h
- Suicide prevention and young people 1,5 h
- Strengths supporting mental health (based on VIA theory of character strengths)
- Neurological variety and mental health promotion (→School youth work)
- Promoting friendships and preventing loneliness (Board Game, "Buddy in mind")
- Well-Being of the youth workers
- Mental health and resilience
- Hope and optimism supporting mental health
- Recovery orientation (→Outreach and targeted youth work)
- Climate anxiety and climate emotions and mental health; supporting young people
- Mental health first aid 1 and 2 and Young Mind Mental Health First Aid

Material for youth work to promote mental health:

- Handbooks
- Posters
- Board games
- Strength cards
- Workbooks
- “Buddy in Mind” -classes
- Online course



Mental Health Power

- **Youthworkers' guide for promoting mental health**
 - 240 pages
1. What is mental health as promotion?
 2. Young people and mental health
 3. Adolescent development
 4. Emotions and emotional skills
 5. Relationships and social skills
 6. Safety net
 7. Young people and coping skills
 8. Vulnerable mind
 9. Values and mental health
 10. Cooperation as a strength

Anna Erkkö
Marjo Hannukkala



Mental Health POWER



Being used also as an educational material in educating youth workers
Available in Finnish, Swedish and English. Available online:

EVERYDAY CHOICES AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Talking about the daily choices and how they affect our mental health
- Your own daily choices and habits
- Ideas to use this with young people
- Reflecting your own Hand of mental health

Wellbeing of the adults:

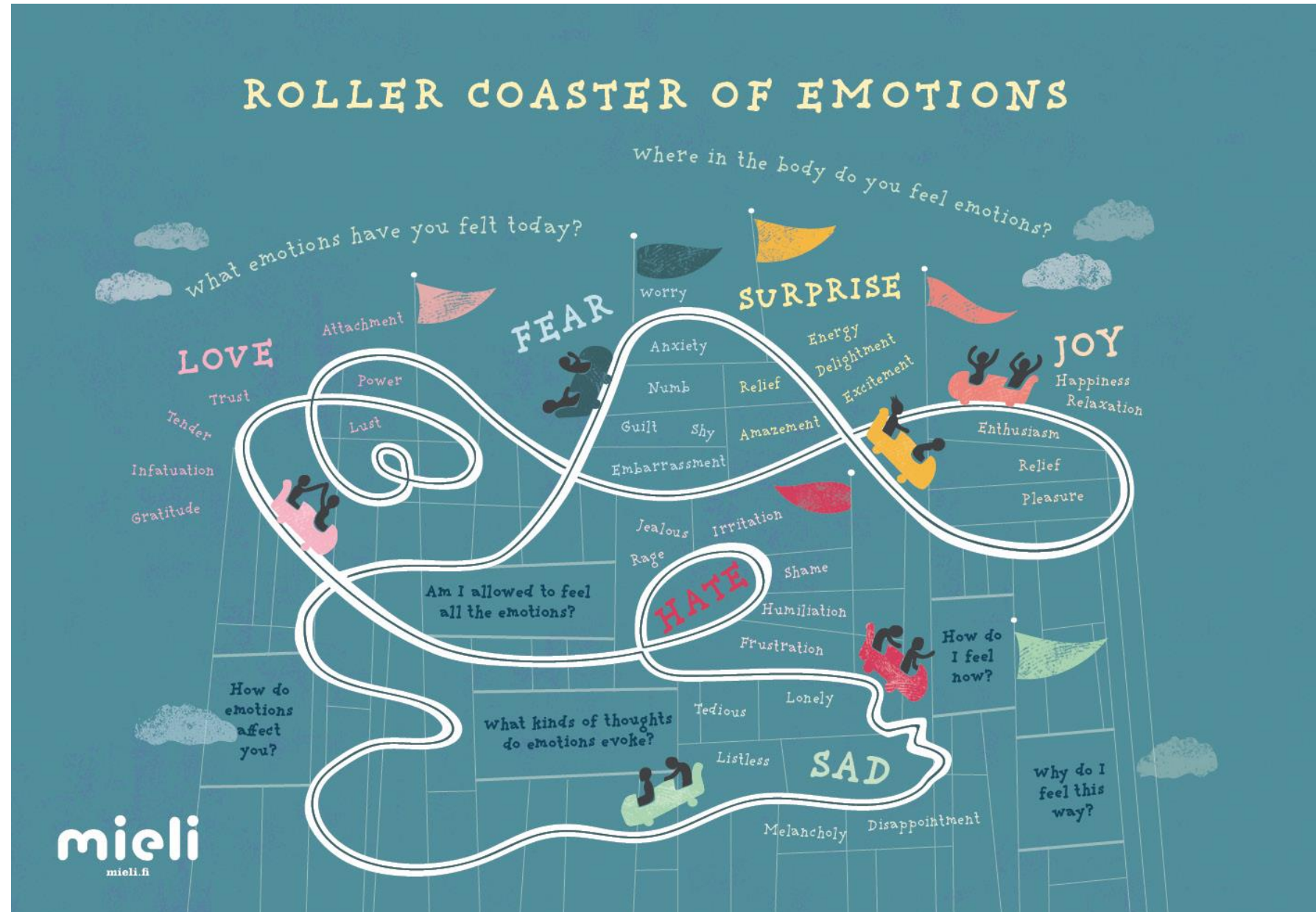
If the adults don't feel well, they don't have the energy to be interested in and care for the young people.

Psychologist, researcher Marko Manninen
THL



EMOTIONAL SKILLS

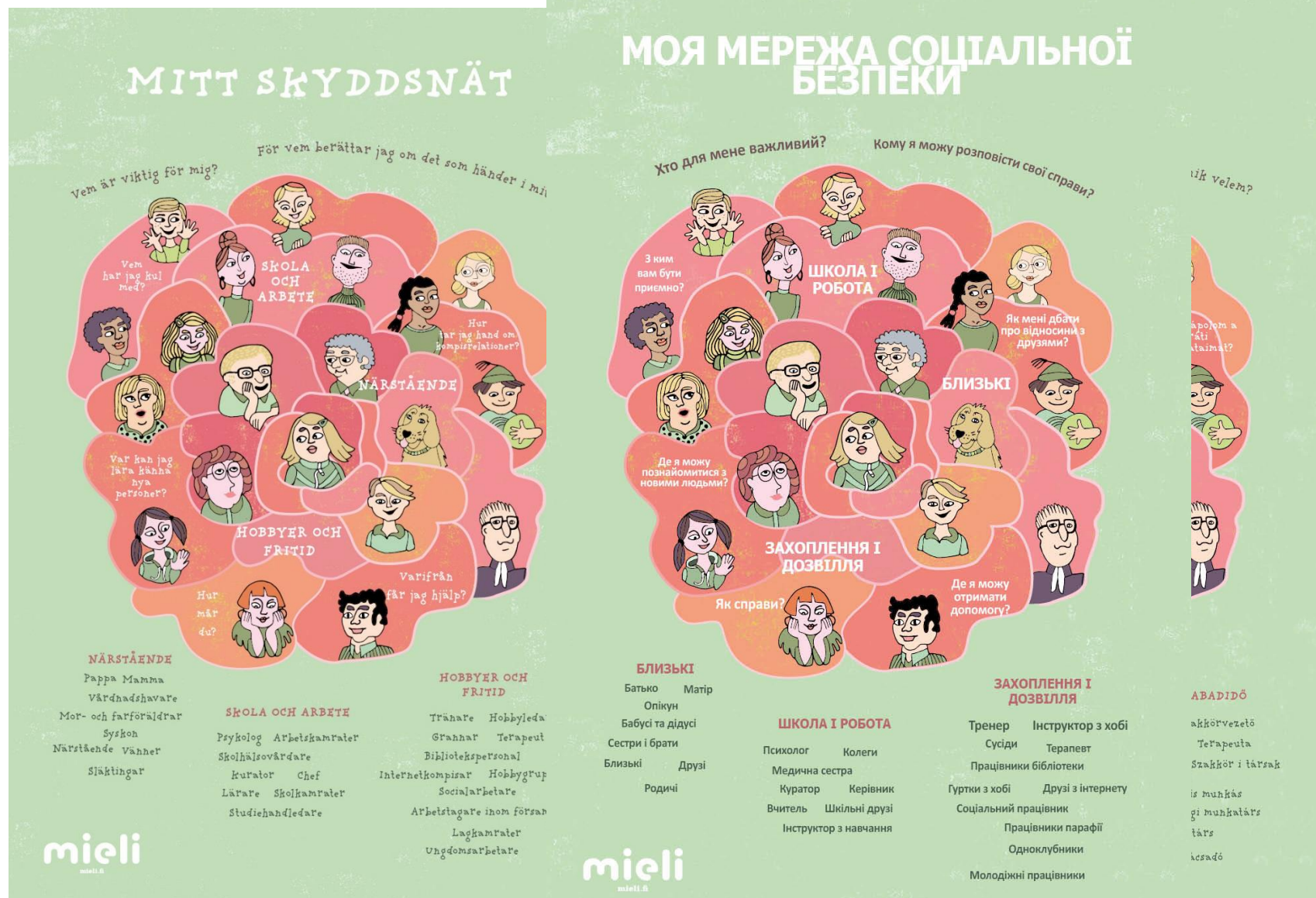
- Vocabulary; important to have a rich vocabulary to describe your emotions
- Thoughts and emotions;
- Accepting your emotions



Safety net -poster

All posters are available in:

- Sami-language
- English
- Swedish
- Ukrainian
- Hungarian
- German
- Dutch
- Turkish (in progress)
- **Your language? 😊**



WE ALL NEED COPING SKILLS

A tool to discuss about crisis and different ways we deal with them.

What are your coping skills?

COPING STRATEGIES

I STOP AND LISTEN TO MYSELF

PHYSIOLOGICAL

I go jogging or walking
I do my favourite sports
I relax and recover
I eat well
I sleep

INTELLECTUAL

I search for more information
I make plans
I write things down
I solve problems
I make lists

SPIRITUAL

I seek hope from values, ideas or religion
I think about the meaning of life
I quiet down, meditate, pray
I am present

I LOOK FOR DIFFERENT WAYS TO RECOVER

CREATIVE

I am looking for new ways to act
I use my imagination
I think positively
I listen to myself
I'm cooking, drawing, handicrafting, writing, filming, podcasting, tik toking

EMOTIONAL

I show my emotions; I laugh, I cry
I talk about my emotions
I express my emotions in different ways; dancing, playing music, writing, painting

SOCIAL

I spend time with my friends
I support others and accept support from others
I turn to others for help
I share my experiences with others

I TRY NEW WAYS OF COPING

mieli
mieli.fi

HURUDANA COPINGSTRATEGIER HAR DU?

JAG STANNAR

MAKKÁR BIRGEJEADDJI LEAT?

BISSÁNAN JA GULDALAN IEŽAN

FYSIOLOGALAŠ CEAVZI

Viegan dahje lihkadan muččiid olgun. Doaimman dan lihkadanšája páras, masa liikon.
Lottkkidan ja áhpáiduvan.
Boran bures.
Oađán doarvái.

FIHTOLAŠ CEAVZI

Hágan áššiin lassecieđu. Dagan plánaid. Žálan áššid bajás. Žoavddán buncaraggáid. Ráhkadan listáid.

LUOVVANNÁVCCALAŠ CEAVZI

Ozan ođđa vugiid doaimbat. Geavahan iežan miellagovahallama. Jurddašan mieđismielalaščat. Guldalan iežan. Dagan áigáioažžu áššiid: kohkken, tevdnen, buđáldan, snihkken.

DOVDDUID DÁFUS CEAVZI

Žaimman, žierun ja žájehan dovdduidan. Muitalan dovdduidan birra. Buvtán ovdan iežan ja dovdduidan dáidaga vugiiguin: dánsun, žuožahan, málen, žálan.

SOSIÁLALAŠ CEAVZI

Vásihan asttuáiggi iežan skihpáriguin. Žađahan asttuáiggedoaimmaid joavkkuin. Válddán vuostá doarjaga ja doarjiin maiddá earáid. Juogan iežan vásáhusaid earáiguin.

ISKKADAN OĐDA VUGIID CEAVZIT

mieli
mieli.fi

Cooperation with youth work education

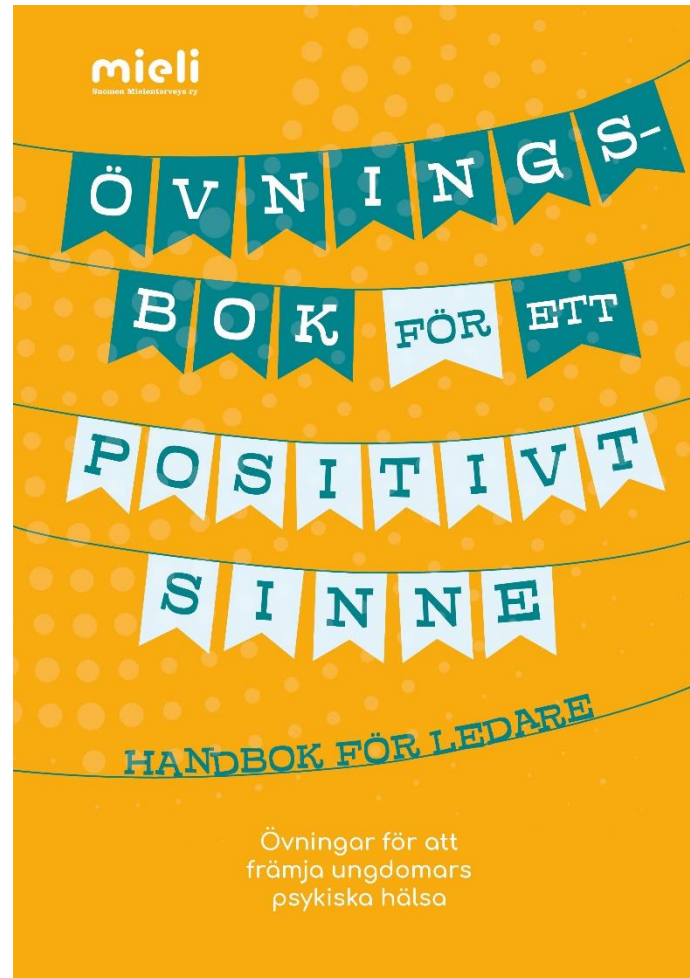
- Trainees working in MIELI
- Thesis work various subjects
- Development work
 - New material; board game, strength cards
 - Training young prisoners; 10 week mental health power training for young men in prison.

Youth Work material to train mental health skills

Train your positive mind;
manual for youth workers

Mental health skills –year plan

Train your positive mind



KAMU "FRIEND" "BUDDY in Mind" "How to support my friend"? –classes. School Youth Worker

- **FRIEND/BUDDY CLASSES (4*45 min)** are created for the young people on 7th, 8th, and 9th grades (13-16 years of age)
- Classes are a tool for youth workers and other professionals in schools
- Goals: Young people will learn about how to take care of their own mental health, coping and stress management, the importance of talking about worries with their friends, and they will also learn when it is important to tell to the adults in schools
- Action activities and discussion activities
- You can modify them also for longer periods (e.g. 60 min, 75 min)



FRIEND / BUDDY in Mind classes consist of 4 sessions led by school youth workers

1. "What makes me feel good?"

In this section you will get tips and information about taking care of your own mental health and stress management

2. "How can I support my friend??"

In this section you will discuss about your socio-emotional skills

3. "How to listen? How to raise concern if needed?"

In this section you will increase your understanding of empathetic listening and you will learn about talking about worries with your friends

4. "When do we need help from adults?"

In this section you will learn to recognise when you need to seek help from adults or professionals and you will learn about different places to get help from

Feedback from the young people:

- "I learnt a lot about friendships and about taking care of them and I also learnt to seek help if I need it"
- "I realised that I have to talk to the adults about different issues even though I feel that it doesn't help"
- "I might help someone."
- "I learn to consider about asking for help from adults."

GAME: Searching a lost friend

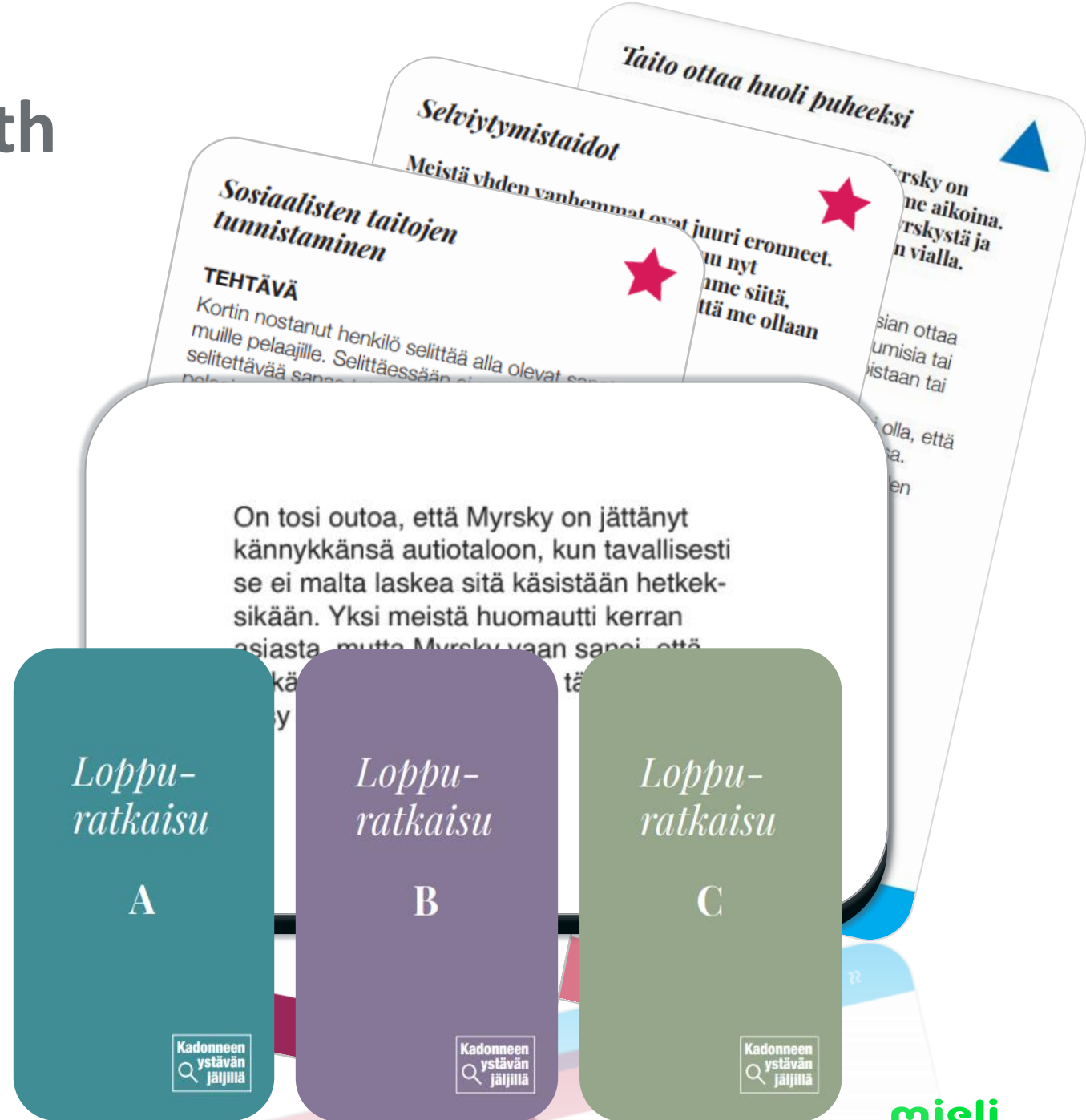
IN COOPERATION WITH A
SCHOOL OF YOUTH WORK

- Designed for young people in 7th, 8th and 9th grade
- 2-6 persons can play as a group.
- They try to solve an enigma of a lost friend called Myrsky
- Duration of the game 30-60 min.



You practice mental health skills by playing

- Emotional skills
 - Social skills
 - Daily habits
 - Coping skills
 - Self-knowledge
 - Mindfulness skills
- 30 different tasks
 - 6 story cards
 - 9 different endings





IN COOPERATION WITH SCHOOLS
OF YOUTH WORK

MENTAL HEALTH POWER CARDS 2.0

65 new pictures

A discussion tool

Pictures are taken by young people studying in vocational school

Graphic design by graphic design student

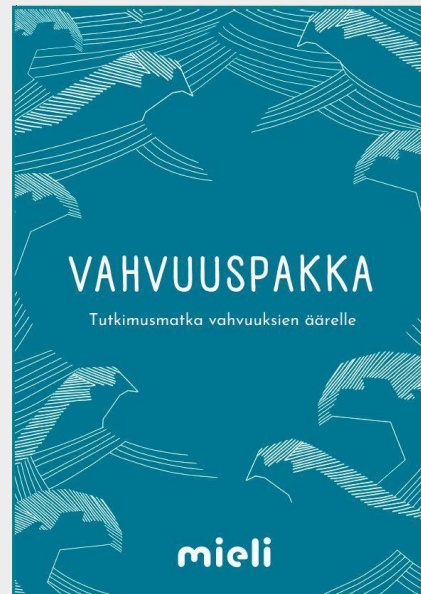
Includes ideas

Included in the training



IN COOPERATION WITH SCHOOLS
OF YOUTH WORK

- 26 cards, 6 virtues
- Information about the character strengths and the research
- Tips and ideas for strengthening the strengths
- VIA-test
- Included in training



Impacting on different levels

1. Professional growth of youth workers'
2. Creating environments that promote mental health;
3. Cooperation with vocational schools and university level education of youth workers
 - Impacting the curriculum
 - **Thesis** work about mental health promotion and youth work
 - Students practical training within MIELI Mental Health Finland
 - **One example**: mental health skills training for young people in prison by a youth work student who then did her third training period in prison with young people.
4. Web-based training and online courses

→ THIS CREATES GROWTH MINDSET ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

I can:

- teach
- learn
- support
- strengthen
- make a difference
- ask "How are you?"

I am:

- motivated to promote mental health
- hopeful and feel optimistic
- caring
- focused on the solutions
- Motivated to take care of my own mental health skills



I got information about the **skills that strengthen mental health**

Empowerment: my **work is important**

I got concrete tools which I can use

Reminded me of the **value of my work**

Feedback from the professionals

Reminded me of the **importance of taking care of my own mental health skills.**

I got new ideas and vision for my work

Widened my perspective about mental health

I feel that promoting mental health **is not complicated. It is easy.**

Our youth workers wellbeing at work is important

Mental health promotion is not a sprint: patience, patience, patience

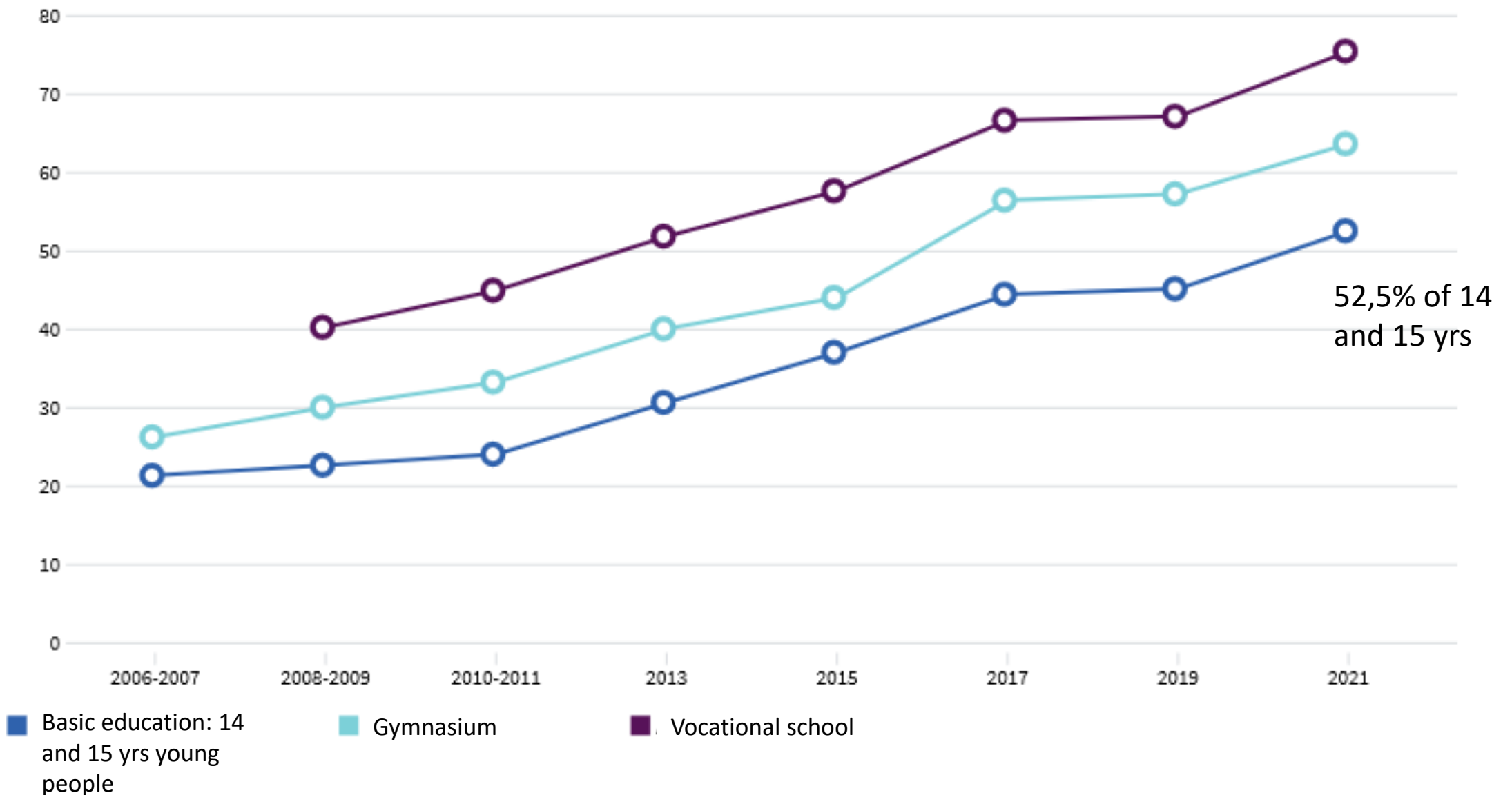
Long term results of promotion:

Total N = 260.000 students

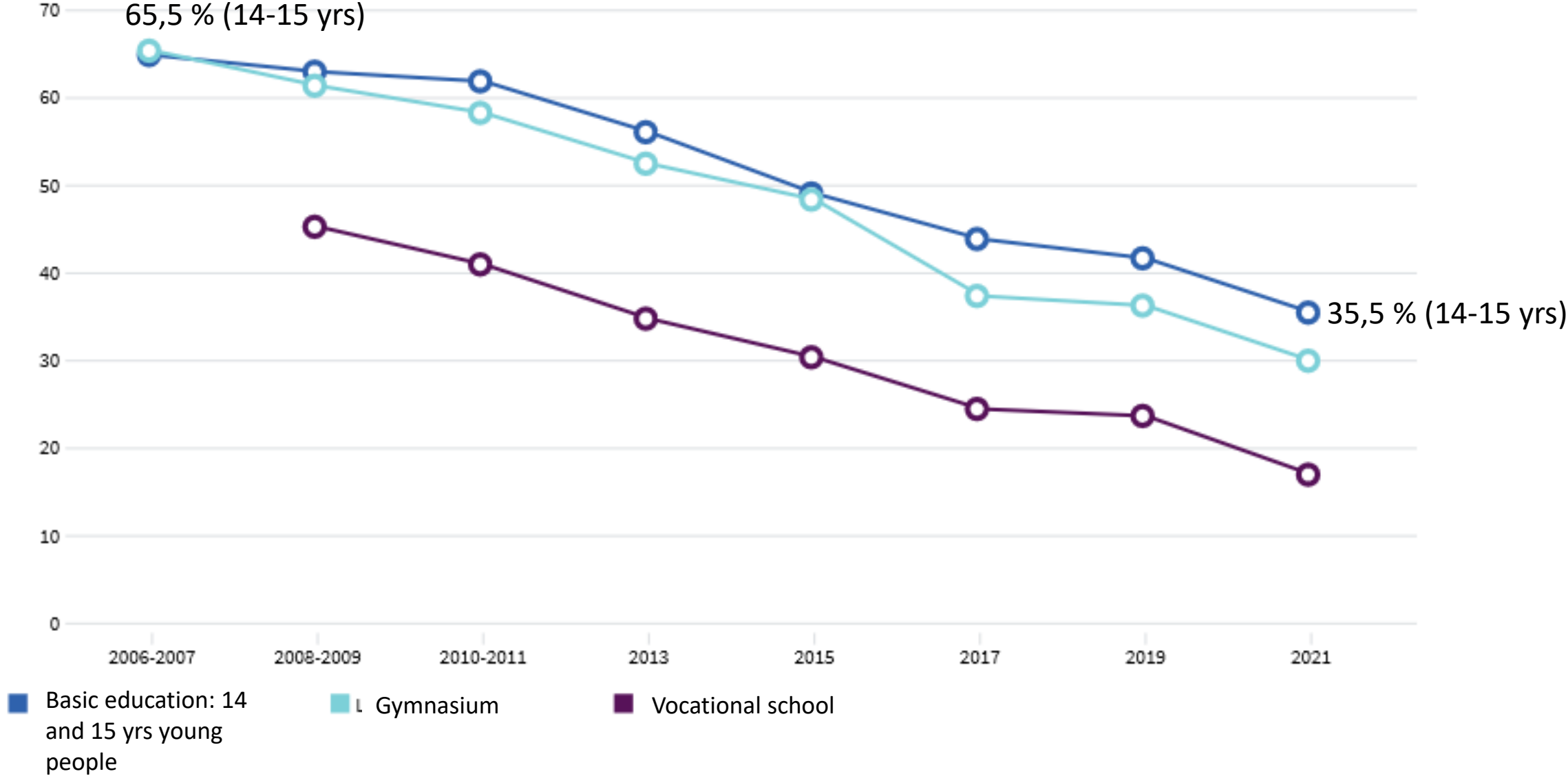
- 4th grade 10 years (87%) of all
- 5th grade 11 years (87 %)
- 8th grade 14 years (77 %)
- 9th grade 15 years (77 %)
- Gymnasium; 16 and 17 years
- Vocational school 16 + all who are under 21 years of age (34%)

- **School health surveys in Finland (done every other year).**

”I feel that the teachers care about me” 2006–2021

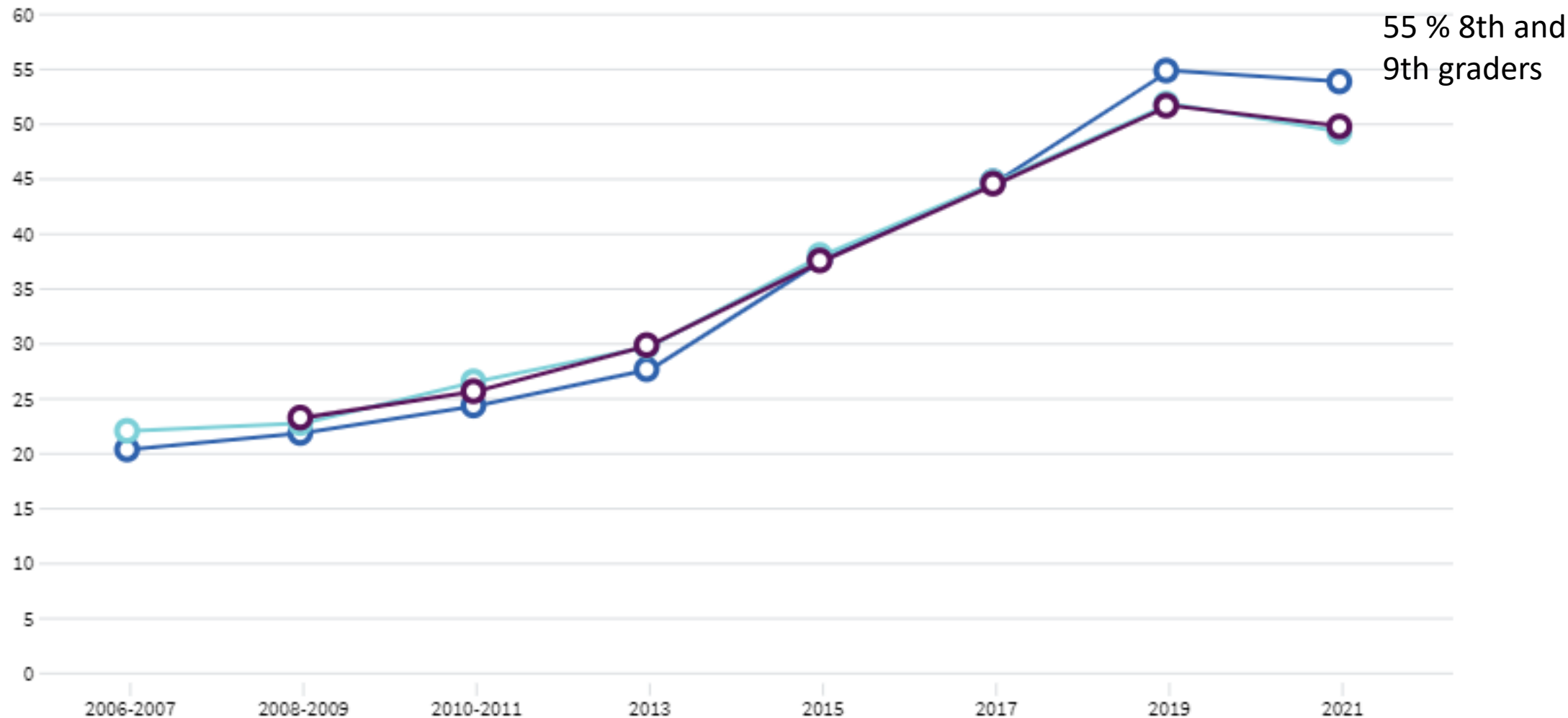


I feel that teachers do NOT care about how I feel 2006–2021



BOYS: "I have good communication with my parents"

2006-2021



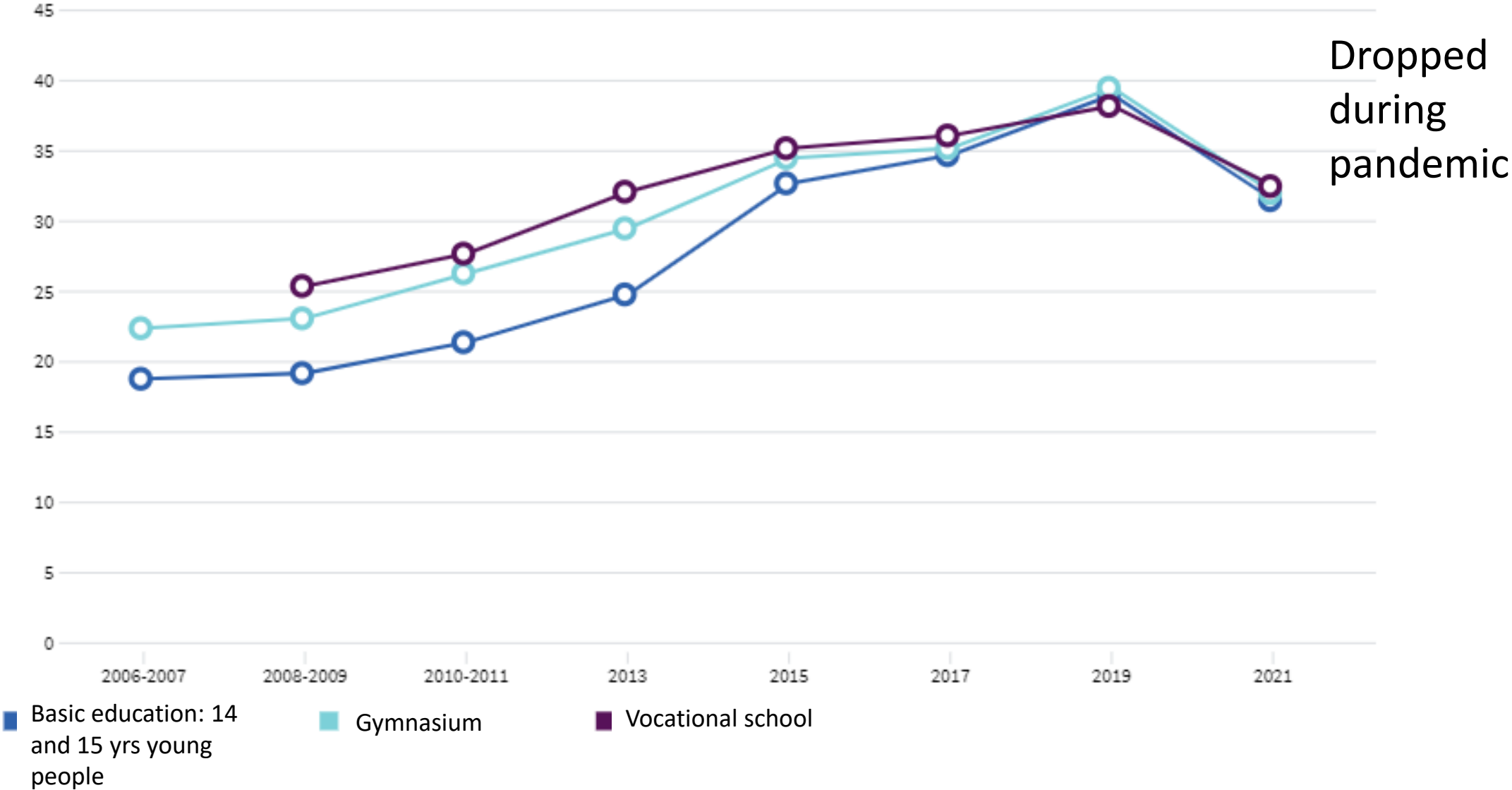
55 % 8th and 9th graders

Basic education: 14 and 15 yrs young people

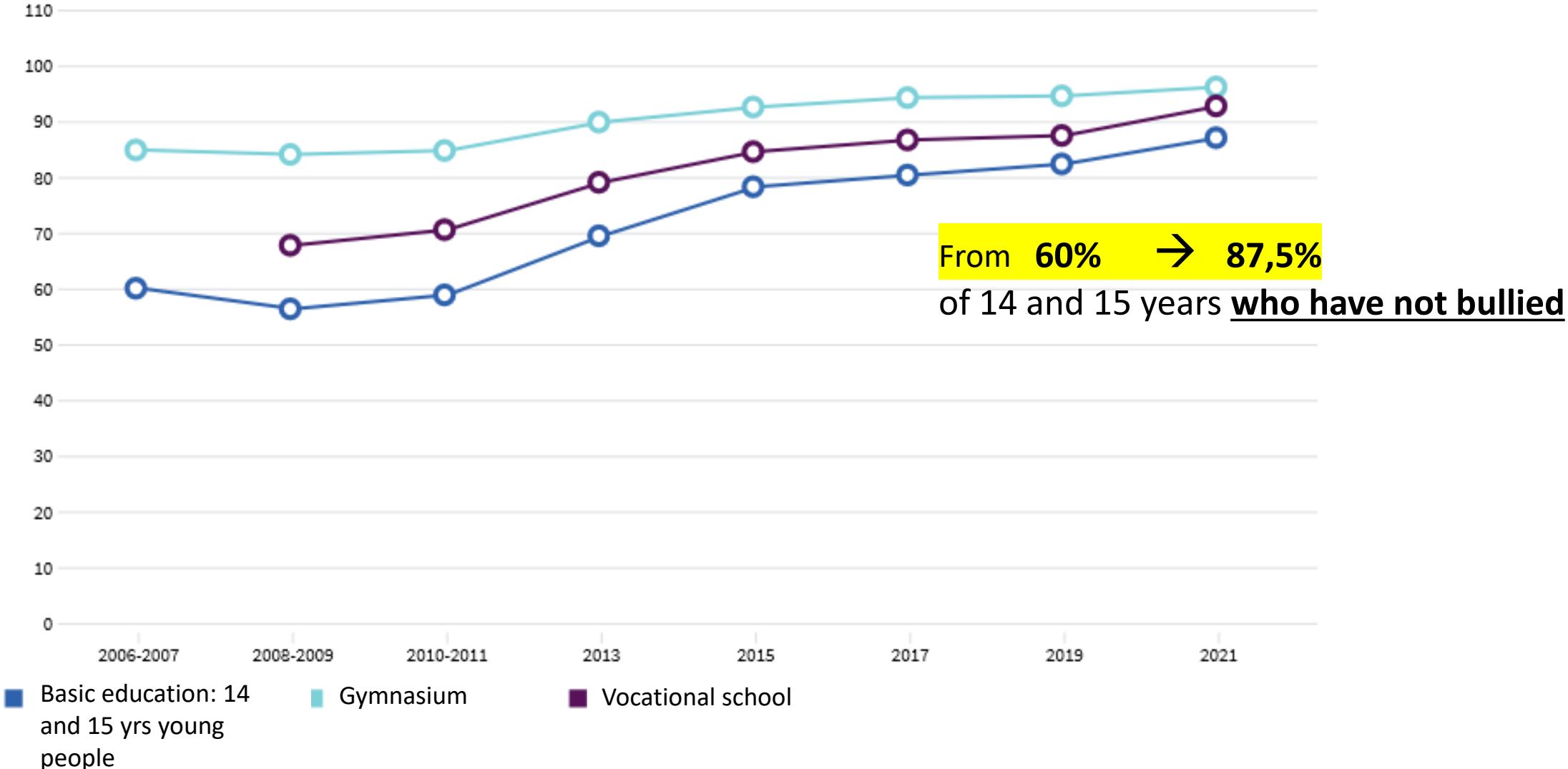
Gymnasium

Vocational school

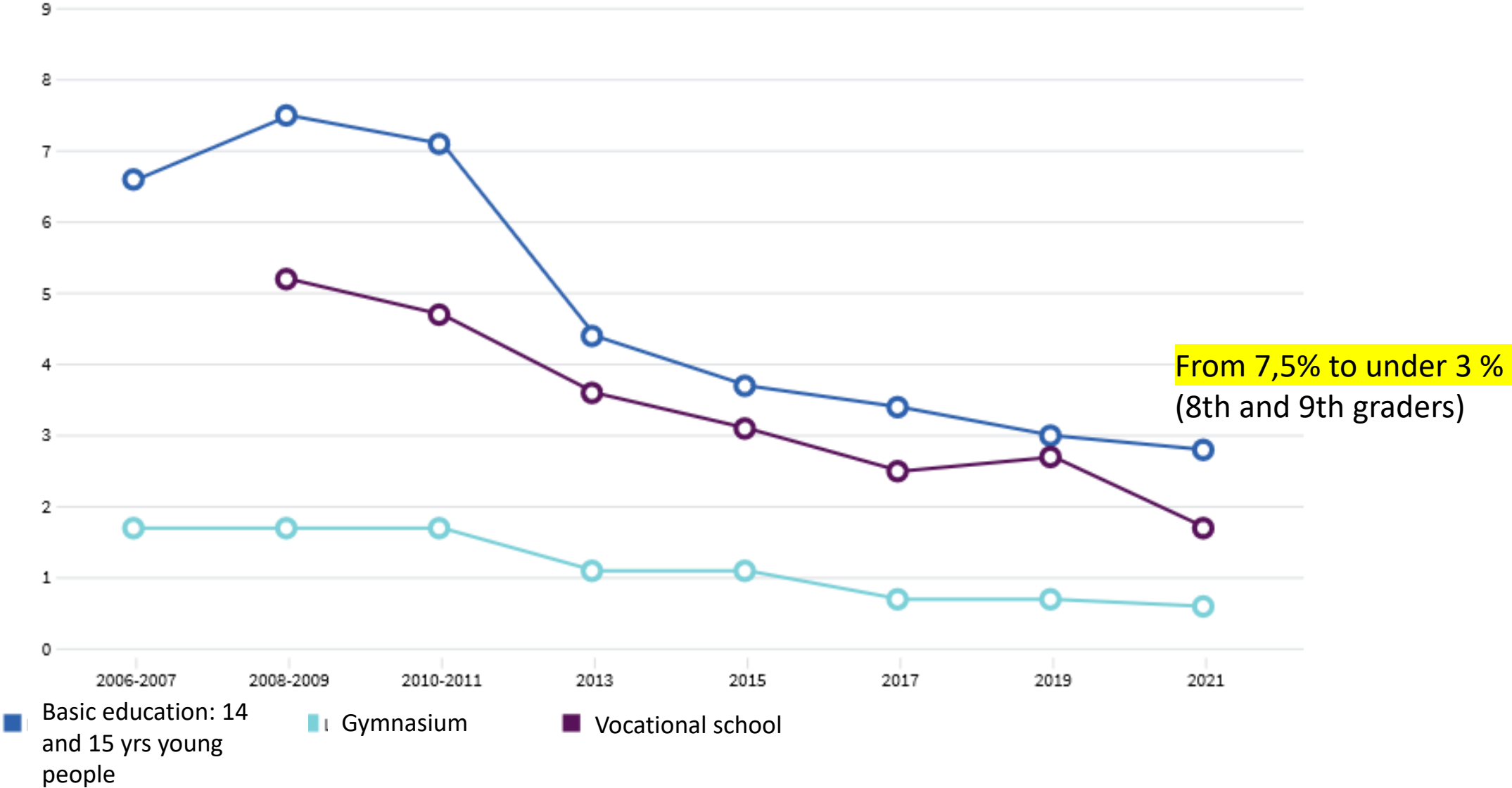
GIRLS: "I have good communication with my parents" 2006–2021



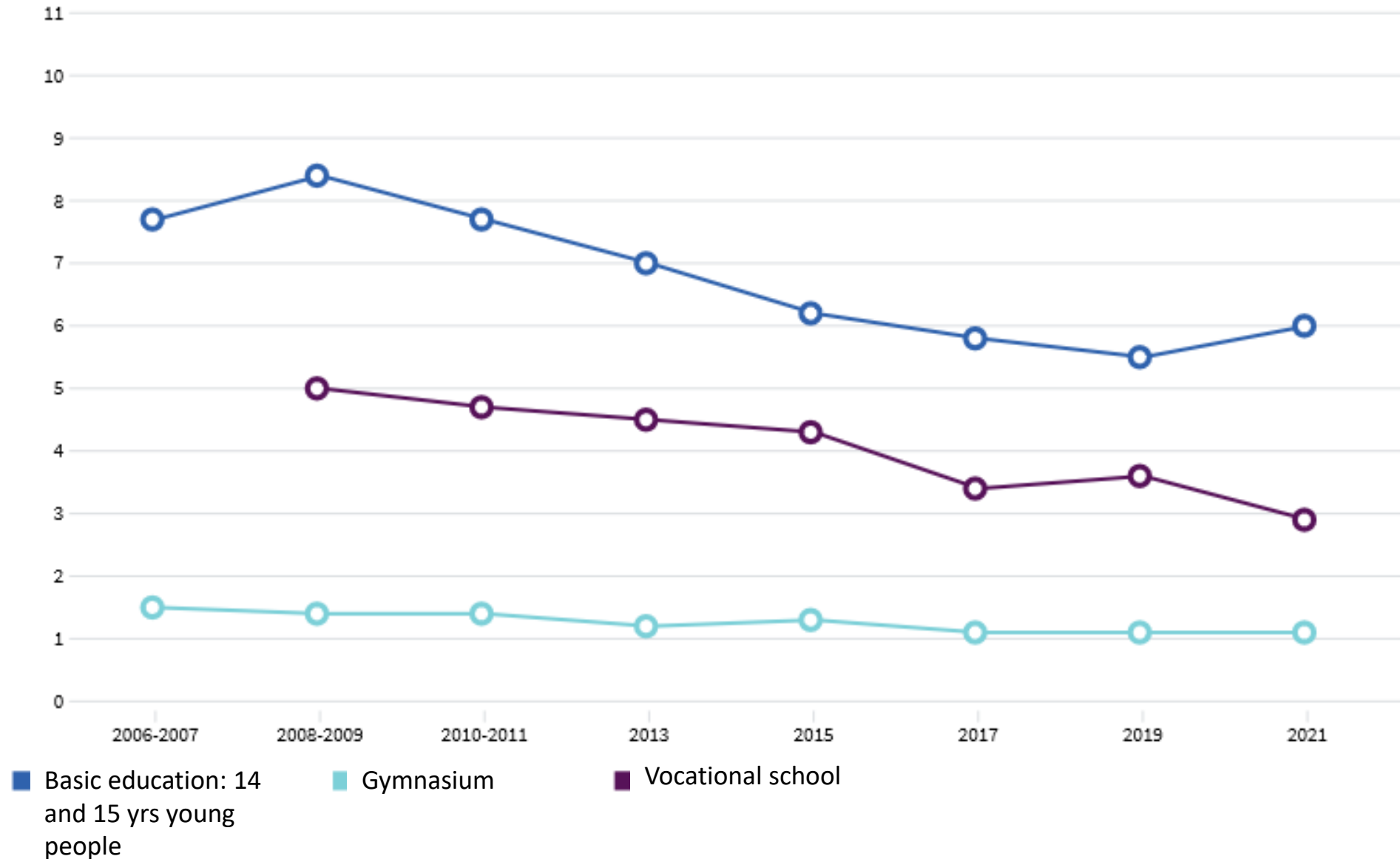
Student has not bullied 2006–2021



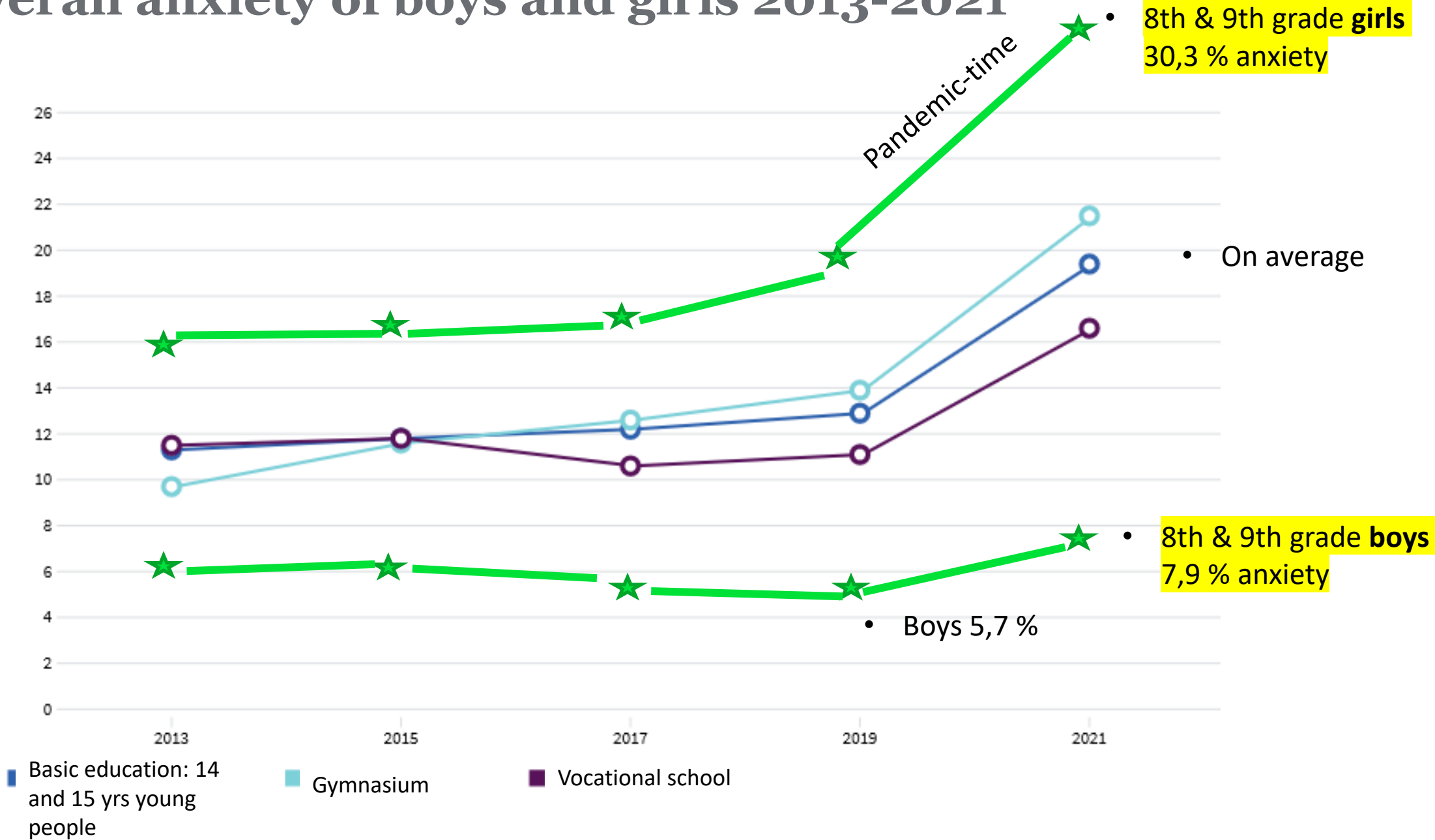
Student has bullied at least once a week 2006–2021



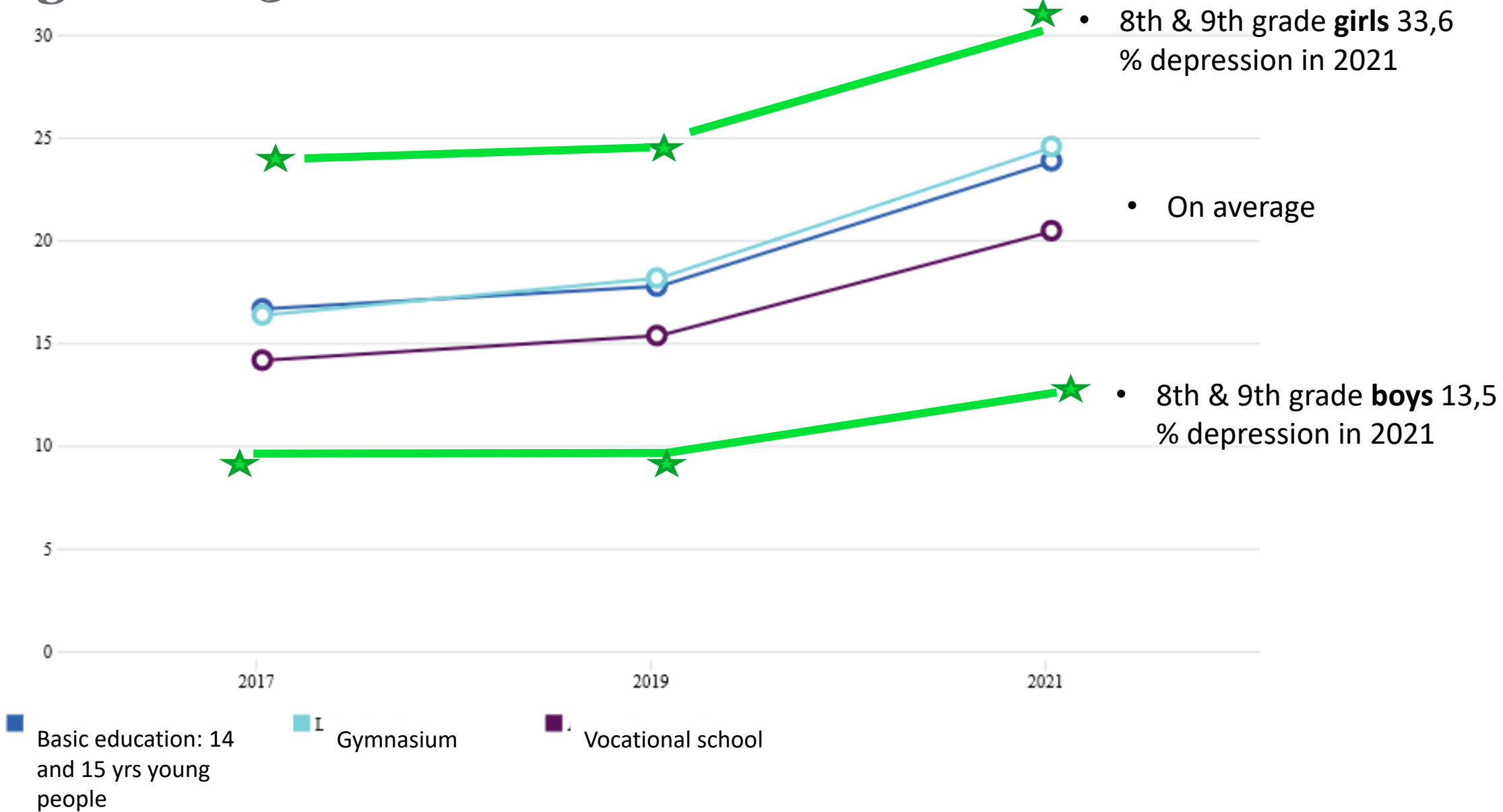
Student is being bullied at least once a week 2006–2021



Overall anxiety of boys and girls 2013-2021



Depression that has lasted min. 2 weeks of boys and girls 2013-2021:



Back to basics!



Psychiatric
Services

Prevention

Early recognition of the problems, Help services, crisis services, services should be readily available if problems occur

Early
Con
Sport

Therapy guarantee law is in the process, Low threshold therapy, Easy access to therapy services → Walk-In Psychology Services in Helsinki Health Care for ages 13 →

Libraries,
hobbies,
sports etc.

Everyone can and should do this.
The stronger the base, the less need for corrective services

CASE STUDY: Laakavuori school grades 1-6 (ages 7-12): (according to National School Health Survey)

- Did not enjoy being with each other
- Loneliness and bullying
- No skills to solve small arguments
- Emotion regulation was a constant problem
- Temper tantrums
- Working together was a problem
- Racism was common

**MANY RISK
FACTORS FOR
MENTAL HEALTH**

**MENTAL HEALTH
SKILLS
INTERVENTION**



Systematic teaching results in Laakavuori school in two years (ages 7-12):

- Class atmosphere improved.
- Cooperation and group working skills improved
- Concentration on school work improved (!!)
- Social skills and emotion regulation improved greatly.
- Almost all children learned to solve small arguments.
- Racism, bullying, temper tantrums and bad mood decreased.
- Helping others increased.

**HEALTHY
ENVIRONMENT
FOR MENTAL
HEALTH**

Thank you!

Let's all promote mental health together



Elina Marjamäki
Mental Health Promotion
MIELI Mental Health Finland

www.mieli.fi

Contact:

elina.marjamaki@mieli.fi

Tel: +358-40-678 7295