

OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF BEING THE CENTRE OF ATTENTION WITH A TELEPRESENCE SYSTEM

Situation

The pupil feels anxious and fearful when using the telepresence system because it puts them in the spotlight, drawing too much attention to their unique situation.

Reflective questions

1. How does the telepresence system contribute to the pupil's fear of being the centre of attention?

2. What emotions or feelings could the pupil experience regarding being the centre of attention while using the telepresence system?

3. What specific situations or scenarios might trigger the pupil's fear of being the centre of attention while using the telepresence system?

4. How can you create a supportive environment that helps the pupil deal with anxiety related to being the focus of attention, or help them to overcome this fear?

5. What strategies can be implemented to help the pupil manage their fear of being the centre of attention and feel more comfortable (normalising the presence of the system and reducing the potential stigma associated with it) using the telepresence system?

Possible Approaches

1. Preparation: Have an introductory session with your other pupils, before the pupil receives the telepresence system and “comes to class” with it. Talk to pupils about the implications of having to use this system and how challenging this can be for the individual, especially on an emotional level. Additionally focus on respecting the boundaries of others and providing space, if needed. You can also prepare a settling-in period at a friend’s home before the school placement.
2. Inclusive Classroom Discussions: Foster open discussions in the classroom about the telepresence system, its purpose, and the importance of inclusivity and empathy. Regular communication with the entire class about the telepresence system can additionally create awareness and understanding. This can reduce stigma and make the pupil feel more accepted.
3. Reflection and Adjustment: Talk to the pupil regularly, and ask about their feelings and their concerns and needs (open communication can help identify concerns and find solutions). Continuous evaluation and reflection on the pupil’s comfort level are important for implementing change or improvement. Work with the pupil to develop a strategy for how best to withdraw from critical situations. Don’t shy away from adjustments or becoming creative in finding solutions.

Approaches According to the eHandbook

The handbook outlines the importance of the buddy system and how to best implement it. Here just one pupil, the buddy, focuses on the telepresence system directly, so the attention of the others is not needed. Furthermore, the buddy can also function as a supporter, if too many pupils want to interact with the telepresence system, the buddy can intervene. This can help to reduce the feeling of needing to interact with everyone, by relying on a familiar face.¹

The implementation phase is well described in the handbook. In the case of a very anxious pupil – who is afraid to be the centre of attention – the suggestions provided there should be carried out carefully. Gradually involving the pupil in classroom activities and discussions about the telepresence system with classmates (after seeking permission), can help them feel more at ease when interacting. Schedule the affected pupil’s attendance in small groups to minimise exposure to attention from others.²

In addition to the classroom context, the handbook suggests involving the pupil in non-academic activities, such as breaks and excursions. These rather relaxed settings could help the pupil to feel more comfortable with using a telepresence system. Using telepresence systems in various contexts can help in normalising their presence and promoting social interactions, allowing everybody to get used to them.³

¹ ABILITI Teacher eHandbook, pp. 39-41.

² ABILITI Teacher eHandbook, pp. 34-38 and p. 47.

³ ABILITI Teacher eHandbook, pp. 41-42.