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## **School of Empathy Introduction and first results**

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### **Summary**

*In the last 15 years at the University of Leipzig and at the Center for Health Education (ZfB), a systemic approach was developed, scientifically evaluated and educationally practiced in different institutions (e.g. educational fields) to bring the "affective (forgotten) Principles of humanity", back in institutions, instead of increasing rationalization and the related pressure and stress (e.g. daily education). It is about creating relaxed, empathetic networks with the aim of living network members, who work with joy and confidence and a high degree of autonomy in institutions. This Master plan is to be introduced. Therefore disseminator trainings were developed and evaluated.*

Key words: Stress Reduction,

### **1. Introduction**

The concept of the School Of Empathy was developed at the University of Leipzig (Stueck, 2010). During a longterm research about Biodanza in Southamerica and Nonviolent Communication in Germany, it was discovered that the development of Empathy depends on the integration of two general aspects, which have to be considered separately to be integrated into one model

- 1) Verbal aspect of empathy by using the method of Nonviolent Communication (developed by Marshall Rosenberg, where two verbal communication styles symbolized by the animals giraffe and wulf) and
- 2) Nonverbal aspect of empathy by using the method of Biodanza (developed by Rolando Toro where two life styles are considered symbolized by polar bears and penguins).

Developing the ability of Empathy is a key factor for making relations and to construct knowledge about Life. In a Masterplan "Healthy Education" (Stueck, 2011) the ability of Empathy and Love belongs to the 3 basic-aspects of being human within educational fields: next to body-oriented presence between humans (human relation) and relaxed basic attitude (empathy is not possible without relaxation). The master plan to secure the balance between intuitive-emotional vs. rational education contains seven steps, which have to be developed within educational institutions.

1. The body as an organ for experience (presence between child/teacher)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Without this access to the body experience the development of self-conscious within children and teachers is not possible (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner, 2005).

2. Healthy lifestyles (e.g. stress reduction, relaxation): basis for empathy and ability to love<sup>2</sup>.
3. Emphatic and respectful communication: School of Empathy (Stueck, 2010):
4. Supervision of teachers.
5. Educational skills/content.
6. Educational concept.
7. Frame conditions.

The aspects of this masterplan are actual and adaptable for all disciplines and institutions, also medical and industrial or sportive fields.

## **2 Theoretical Background of the School Of Empathy**

### *2.1 Definition of Empathy*

Empathy is the most important skill to build relation and to construct Life-Processes. In the masterplan (see above) it is the basis and bridge to construct knowledge, e.g. between teachers and children and to work in the content of education. In the western psychology Empathy is defined only by cognitive and affective aspects: To think or to feel the other. This concept is being scientifically criticized because of the missing aspect of behaviour. Our antithesis "Empathy is behaviour" starts the scientific process to include the action within the concept of empathy.

In the School Of Empathy: empathy is defined as a more complex construct and as the basic of Life processes related to the concept of Love and Affective Intelligence by Humberto Maturana (2002) and Rolando Toro (2010).

Empathy is the basic skill for building life processes and it has a verbal and nonverbal part, inclusive biological, biochemical, physiological, cognitive, affective and behavioural components. It is the ability to create physical, mental and affective contact in the personal (to myself), interpersonal (to others) and transpersonal (to the nature) way. Empathy is always to be considered as a union with the scientific constructs of Affective Intelligence (co-construction with sensibility and feedback) and Love as the source of knowledge (Stueck, 2010).

### **2.2 Integrated Concepts**

#### *2.2.1 Integration of the Concept of Empathy within the Scientific construct of Love*

Empathy is only possible with a minimum potential of Ability to Love. Stueck announced in 2011 as a key note speaker in a international conference on trauma therapy Love as a scientific basic concept of all disciplines and as the basic of Life. For Toro Love is a natural law and related to his concept of affective intelligence.

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2 Stress reduction, relaxation and health is the basis for empathy. A study by Schaper, Schoppe and Stueck (2007) shows a high significant correlation between healthy work-related behaviours and emphatic behaviours in teachers. Also, a study by Stueck, M., Sonntag, A., Balzer, H.-U., Glöckner, N., Rigotti, Th., Schönichen C. & Hecht K. (2005) shows a significant difference between teachers who are chronically stressed (physiological hypersensitivity) and teachers without stress. The hypersensitive teachers were significant less able to show an ability of love (empathy).

### 2.2.2 *Affective Intelligence*

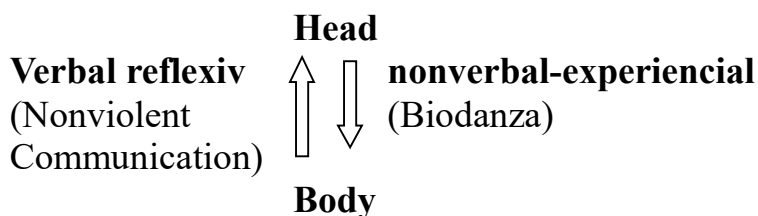
Affectivity is the holistic ability to Love and Empathy towards the humans and towards the Life in general. For Toro the structure of affectivity is one of the most urgent and necessary researchfields within our society. For him the Genius of our species is not in its intelligence but in a affectivity which is directed to Tolerance, compassion, friendship and Love. Affective Intelligence is to be developed and based on affective experiences (Spanish: Vivencias). It is connected with our primary experience to receive protection and nutrition and is the ability to access feelings and to create long lasting relations to humans and to nature. For this purpose R.Toro developed the Method Biodanza.

Toro describes four pathological factors of affectivity: 1) Inability to express 2) inability to communicate 3) egoism 4) intolerance.

### 3 The School Of Empathy

In the Method of the School of Empathy two main methods were integrated: Nonviolent Communication of Marshall Rosenberg and Biodanza of Rolando Toro.

The first aspect is the verbal-reflexive activity (nonviolent communication modell of Marshall Rosenberg) to describe and express feelings, emotions and the needs behind it in words. Depending on the exact verbal expression of feeling words, the more likely it is to express the associated needs and communicate them to others as a basic ability for empathic behaviour. Marcus Stueck call it the way "... from the body into the head".



The second way is to "... from the head to the body". It is necessary to go from the "... head into the body" and to experience physical arousal (feelings, emotions) and allow or act out of you, without naming them. Thus they are not immediately structured by the rational structure of the word. Garcia (1999) describes in his book "Life as a therapy," the importance of the experience without words, and thus the opportunity to experience a new feeling, without it into existing conceptual categories to classify and destroy it. This head-body-way is non-verbal and experiential, and is practiced in the method Biodanza (Fig. 1).

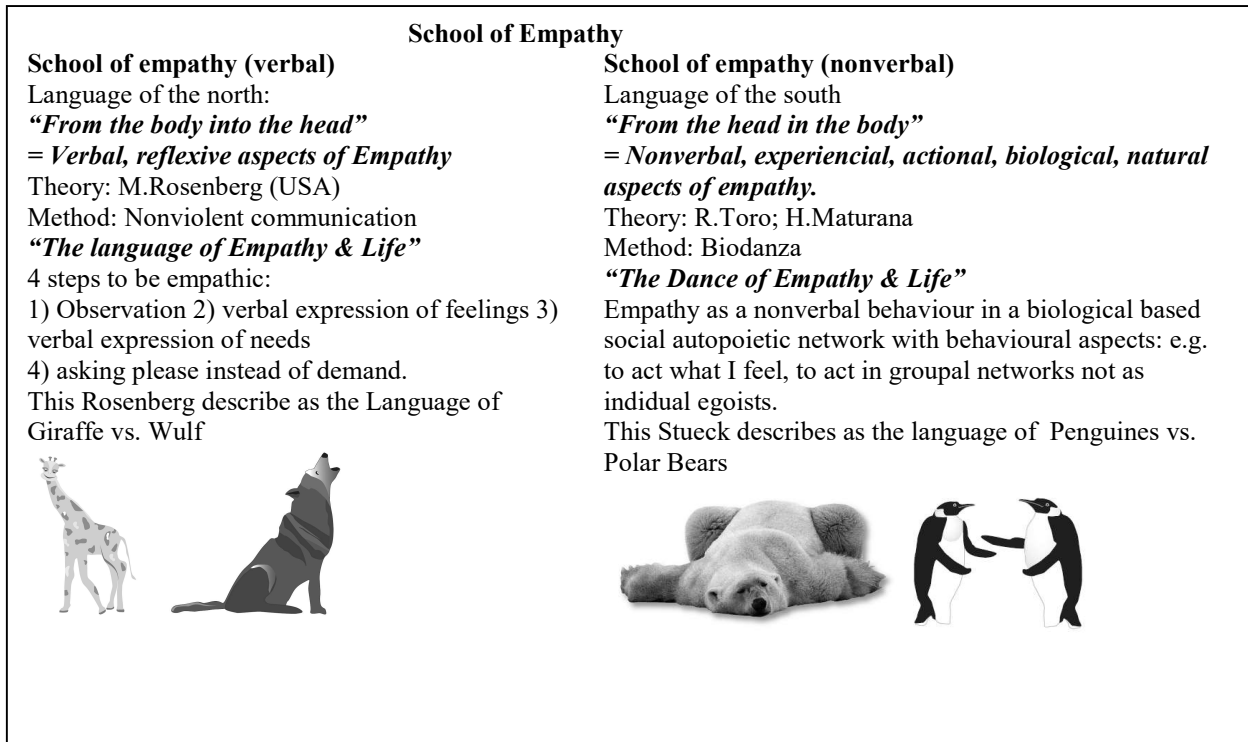


Fig 1: Overview School of Empathy

This integrated model of Empathy (Fig. 2) has two axes: 1) verbal-reflexive aspects of empathy and 2) nonverbal aspects of empathy.

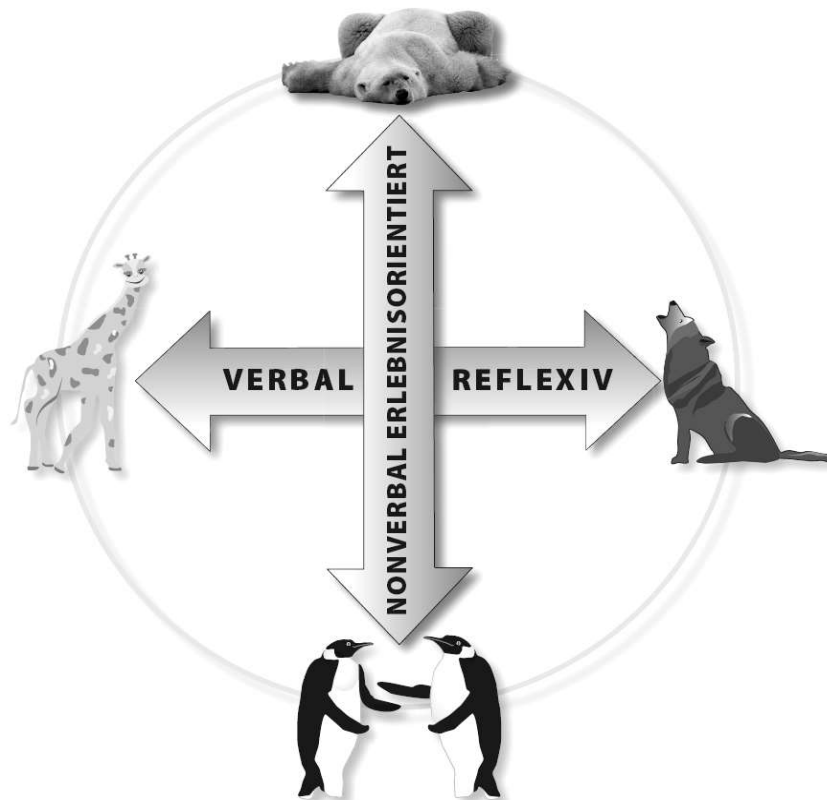


Figure 2: Integrated Model of Empathy (Stueck, 2010)  
 Axis one: verbal-reflexive; Axis two: nonverbal experience oriented

These four poles of the Integrated Model of empathy can be seen as dimensions of empathic, respectful behavior. Between them there is no separation, there is a continuum, with different intensities of expression of each aspect. This is to illustrate that always occur in reality hybrids of these poles, no one speaks only wolf language and behaves like a polar bear.

For us it is important to connect these poles in respectful dealings with each other. There are two levels behind these two axes. The nonverbal-experiential level is always preceded by the reflexive verbal.

### *3.1 The verbal aspect of Empathy: Nonviolent communication*

In the appreciative communication empathy, compassion and mutual recognition are encouraged to interact. This first part of the empathy training includes a guide to introduce the Appreciative communication with a variety of everyday kindergarten games, stories and information for educators, parents and pedagogues. The magic of appreciative communication is the ability to put yourself into others and go into a process of mutual recognition. It is supported verbally-reflexive, by the four-step model of Marshall B. Rosenberg.

If we do not like something, we tell the other person ...

**First** What we observe (not rated)

**Second** How we are doing (feeling)

**Third** What we need

**Fourth** What can the others say / do to meet our need (desire).

Nonviolent communication enables a new quality of contact, especially for the use of problem-solving situations. Conflicts are reduced to their very core, to the level of needs, where they are much easier to solve.

### *3.2 The nonverbal aspect of empathy: Biodanza*


Biodanza is more than a motion-based method, the focus is on developing the physicalness, expression and the identity of the people. Rolando Toro developed the following definition for Biodanza: "Biodanza is a system of affective integration, organic renovation and re-learning of the original functions of life, based on Vivencias (Experiences) that initiate the dance, and music and singing and situations of group encounter."

The aim of this system is the integration of people on three levels: in and with itself (integration of thinking, feeling and action), with the next (compassionate relationship of a man to his fellow man) and nature (with the immediate environment and the entire universe).

#### 4. Example of use: School of empathy with children under the use of evidencebased programmes

##### School of Empathy

##### Session 1-10 - Verbal aspects of appreciative communication

	<p><b>School of Empathy 1</b> <b>Appreciating communication based on mutual recognition</b> On the basis of Nonviolent Communication by Marshall B. Rosenberg, the children receive, their own and others' needs to perceive and acknowledge. The program promotes the social, linguistic and emotional skills of children and expands their vocabulary. It creates a peaceful atmosphere between the children by the language already beyond the breeding ground for aggressive and exclusionary behavior.</p>
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##### Session 11-23 Nonverbal aspects of appreciative communication

##### Session 11 and 12: Introduction of the polar bear and penguin theme

##### Session 12-23: dance-oriented program for children with elements of Biodanza


	<p><b>School of Empathy 2</b> <b>Encounter between the penguin and polar bear und TANZPRO - Biodanza for Children</b> The children learn through the experiences of the intensive program in the community group and the perception of one's body in dance. In the processing of the experience, the children learn to express their emotions imaginatively.</p>
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Abb.2: Overview: School of Empathy

#### 4 Scientific evaluations

##### 4.1 School of empathy with children

##### 4.1.1 School of Empathy (verbal)

The purpose of this evaluation study was to determine effects of the program “Verbal aspects of empathy” (based on the “Nonviolent Communication” by M. Rosenberg) on children’s social-emotional skills and therewith the early prevention of violence.

45 children (age 3-6) took part in training courses where they were taught in essential basics of nonviolent communication by nursery nurses in a playful way. The control group consisted of 20 children who were not taught in the program. A prae/post questioning of the nursery nurses and parents as well as a

psychological test with the children was the data fundament of the evaluation study.

A rise of social-emotional skills, a reduction of inappropriate behavioral patterns and a better transfer of nonviolent communication principles could be found in the children who took part in the training courses.

Chart 5 shows that educators find, based on basic skills of respectful communication, stronger growth among children in the experimental group. In detail, the significant group x time interactions indicate that children in the experimental group compared to children in the control group improved the ability of their own feelings, and feelings of others. Positive impact of the program were found in the use of emotional words, the children's interest in other people, the perception of their own feelings and of other persons, to the cooperative resolution of conflicts, on the ability of accepting a "no" and a more respectful dealing with them and other people in general. Conforming expectation the overall value of appreciative skills in the experimental group were significantly greater than in the control group. The in some cases high effect sizes illustrated in Chart 5 in the experimental group underline the very positive impact of the program concerning important skills of a respectful coexistence.

Chart 5: Results of two-factorial analysis of variance with repeated measures on the behavioral assessments by teachers using FB "Appreciating Communication" (pre-post)

Questionnaire „Appreciating Communication“ Min=1, Max=4

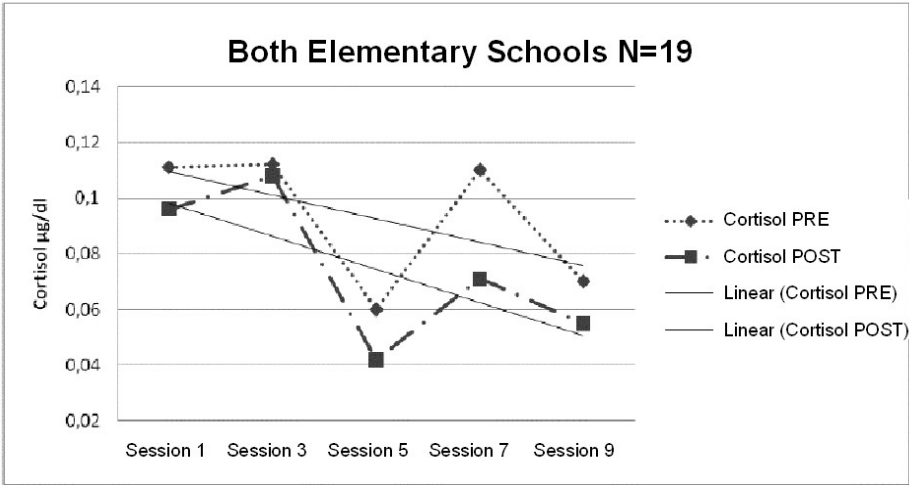
Item	Mittelwerte				F-Werte			Eta <sup>2</sup> (M)	
	VG (n=42)		KG (n=20)		G	M	G x M	VG	KG
	Prae	Post	Prae	Post					
The child perceives his own feelings and can name them.	2.57	3.36	3.20	3.45	4.63*	15.35**	4.11*	.47	.04
The child perceives the feelings of other children or adults and can name them.	2.86	3.13	3.50	3.35	6.98*	0.62	5.12*	.13	.06
The child or children offers its assistance and support.	3.02	3.38	3.40	3.45	1.43	3.32	1.89	.17	.00
The child uses many different words of feelings.	2.02	2.62	2.60	2.65	2.96	8.66**	6.19*	.32	.00

The introduced program can be seen as an option for an early advancement of children’s social-emotional skills and therewith for an early prevention of violence.

4.1.2 School of Empathy (nonverbal)

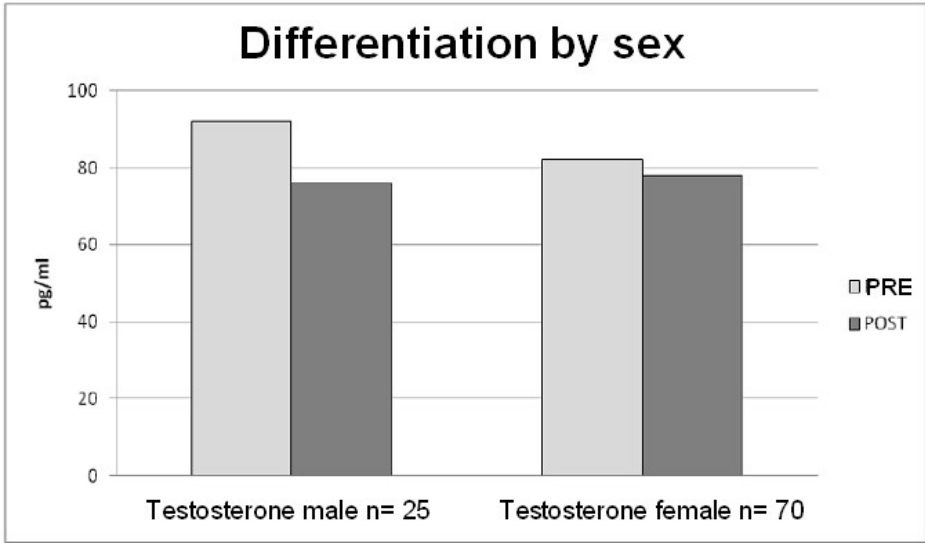
Study participants were children of the August-Bebel and Franz Mehring Elementary school in Leipzig (n=19). By participating in the nonverbal school of empathy, for example, cortisol levels could have been reduced. (Chart 1). Cortisol is released in response to stress, so it can be shown that Tanzpro-Biodanza for children decreases this. This is the basic for empathic behaviour.

Chart 1: Averaged cortisol levels before and after a Biodanza-Session



As can be seen in Chart 2 participating in the School of Empathy also causes the testosterone level to sink in boys. This is the biochemical basic for nonviolent empathic behaviour.

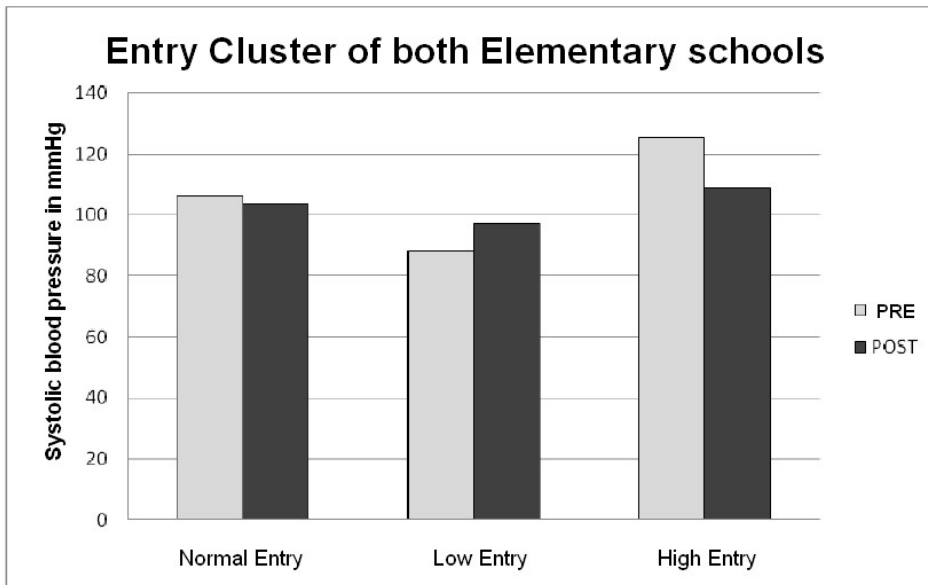
Chart 2: Average testosterone levels before and after a Biodanza-Session



Also low or elevated blood pressure values could be adjusted successfully (Chart 3).

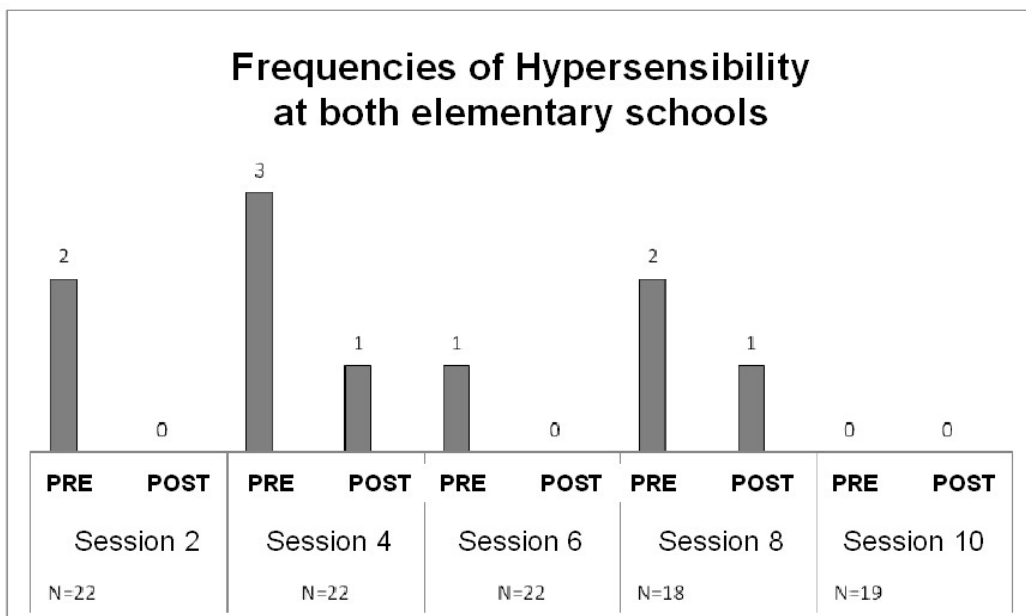


Chart 3: Averaged blood pressure before and after a session of Biodanza, seperated by entry Clusters



And even children who are judged to be hypersensitive benefit from this program, because the hyper-sensitivity diminishes (Chart 4).

Chart 4: Frequencies of Hypersensibility before and after a session of Biodanza



#### 4.2 School of empathy with adults

In 2007 the nonverbal part of the school of empathy (Biodanza) was investigated in a study with teachers. It could be shown a significant improvement of the Contact ability of teachers towards the children.

Were there changes you have observed in yourself or in your life as a result of Biodanza?			
Categories	Post1- Naming (P%)	Post2- Naming (P%)	P
Better interpersonal skills: empathy, forthright behavior, eye and body contact, communication	15 (71.42%)	9 (42.85%)	.03**

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