

# *Practicing Purposefully*




## **SOCIAL PEDAGOGY**

### **Head, Heart, Hand**

Ghate, D. and McDermid, S. (2016),  
Eichsteller, G., & Holthoff, S. (2011) Petrie, P.  
(2013). Bruhlmeier, A. (2010)

#### What is it?

Social pedagogy has developed through its long history to become an ethical, theoretical, and practical framework for education, practise and policy. Johanne Pestalozzi (1746 to 1827) saw education as a holistic process. He explored the idea of educating for the whole person their head, their heart and their hands.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>The Person</b>	<b>In Practice</b>	<b>Your example?</b>
<b>Head</b> 	When we are governed by our head, we lean towards our experience and knowledge. Learning through reflective thinking, reading, etc.	Our understanding of development and learning theories, our practice experience, and reflections upon our work. What we know and are learning.	Reflect on your own 'head' as a person or in practice: what exemplifies your thinking?
<b>Heart</b> 	When we are governed by our heart, we tend to follow our intuition and feelings and consider relationships	Our ethical approach, our regard and respect for the people we support and our emphasis on relationships and emotional or ethical needs	Reflect on your own 'heart' as a person or in practice: how do your emotions and ethics impact on your relationships in work?
<b>Hand</b> 	When we are governed by our hands, we enjoy practical activities: doing and acting	Our focus on using practical tasks and everyday activities as vital learning opportunities	Reflect on your own 'hands' as a person or in practice: what actions bring your work to life?

#### It's all in the blend

We may see in ourselves and other people a predisposition for one or another of the head, heart or hand. In certain situations, we may see a preference for one or more of them. Yet in all of us the three aspects exist. We should challenge ourselves to understand how we realise the benefits of blending and balancing them together. This is what Pestalozzi would have seen as holistic learning and development.

Social pedagogy seeks to blend them in a way that develops all three aspects in everyone. A child who struggles with the academics of school may have a passion for some practical skill that can become key to their confidence, motivation, and development. A family member who has low confidence in practical parenting skills may conversely have the connections with the rest of the family to ensure a safe and effective home life.

### Why is it useful?

We often talk about holistic learning but rarely what it looks and feels like. Learning and education often intimidate people due to the academic focus in schools and colleges. Through ideas like head, heart, hand in social pedagogy we can see that learning is a part of everyone's world. We can identify a route into the world of those we support, finding out where they are confident or not to enable them to grow and develop across all three aspects.

Social pedagogues also use head-heart-hand as a dynamic reflective tool. It helps us:

- understand people and their strengths and challenges
- to think about activities and engagements we use with them to help build relationships
- understand ourselves as people and practitioners: how our own strengths and challenges enable and limit our work.

### How to apply it to practice

Consider a child or a family member that you are working with.

Think about what you know about them and consider them in terms of their head (their rational thinking), their heart (emotions and key relationships), and their hands (what actions do they take what activities and practical things do they do).

*It might be a young person who is very rational but not in touch with their emotions who is all too easily drawn into violent reactions when frustrated. Or it could be a young parent emotionally drained by the family situation compromised in their ability to think clearly but with good practical skills to achieve things once they've made-up their mind.*

How would you describe the person you're thinking about? How does your knowledge of their head, heart and hand affect how you:

- might build rapport with them
- might best support them
- might challenge them to take difficult decisions or actions?

This approach could help you plan your next conversation or engagement and if it does not go well, it also gives you a tool to reflect on why this might be the case. Challenge yourself to think of an activity you might do with this person which reflects their head, heart, and hand.

The idea does not need to be used in isolation and can link effectively with other social pedagogy approaches such as the common third, the three Ps, and the learning zone model (see other Practicing Purposefully guides). It can also integrate into other practise approaches you may have at your fingertips.

You might also do a little self-reflection determining your own understanding of the nature and balance of your head, heart, and hand.

### Criticism

The head, heart, hand idea can be seen as over-simplistic, and it is also a metaphor that is used very freely outside of social pedagogy thinking. Its simplicity lends itself to being understood by both practitioners and those we support. It is the quality and depth of reflection that lends power to this unassuming idea.