Emotion Regulation & Mental Health in deaf children/adolescents

Carolien Rieffe
Access to the social world

Emotional competence

Mental health
Access to the social world

Emotional competence

Mental health
More mental health problems in deaf children compared to NH peers

Question:
How is that related to their emotion regulation?
What is an emotion?
Nico Frijda (1986)

⇒ concern is at stake
⇒ changes in action readiness:
  aimed to change or maintain relationships
Primary appraisal
- Defines good/not good
- Focus on event
- Physiological arousal

Secondary appraisal
- Which strategy
- Different responses possible
- Determines which emotion
Example deaf / hearing children (11-years-old)

- Sadness
  - focus on loss and its implications
  - judgement that reinstatement desired goal is impossible
- Anger
  - focus on cause of change
  - hopes to reinstate desired situation
Anger or Sadness

Nadia’s friend breaks her gameboy...

How does Nadia feel: angry or sad?

(Rieffe, Meerum Terwogt & Smit, 2003)
Emotion predictions

![Bar chart comparing emotion predictions between deaf and hearing individuals for anger and sadness.](chart.png)
Which emotion?

Emotions don’t “just” happen

Strategic approach to reach most optimal outcome
How do children learn about emotions?
Emotion socialization

Social environment teaches
What to feel
When to feel
And how to express it
Emotion socialization in deaf children

- 90% grows up in hearing environment
- Consequences:
  - fewer communication means
  - little communication time
- Problems in social-emotional life
Access to the social world

Emotional regulation

Mental health
Emotion Regulation
Requirements:

- Emotion Awareness
- Regulation arousal level
Emotion Awareness

- Signals event is meaningful
- Reveals wishes / expectations
- Analysis of emotion-evoking elements in situation helpful to deal with situation adaptively
You are at the circus. There is a funny clown. Suddenly he says: “I like somebody to help me. Please come forwards?” and he points at you!
Emotion awareness, impaired in deaf children

- Less often name more than one emotion spontaneously
- Identify fewer negative emotions within one situation

(Rieffe, 2012)
“the process by which we influence what emotions we experience, when we experience them, and how we express them”
Emotion regulation, development

- Young babies already try dealing with negative emotion experience: covering ears or averting gaze
- Toddlers can self-soothe when mother is absent
- Problem focused $\rightarrow$ emotion focused
Emotion regulation

- Diverting attention
  - CI < NH

(Wiefferink ea, 2013)
Emotion regulation in 12 year olds

Questions per story

“Imagine, your best friend moves to another city”

(Q1) “How would you feel?”

(Q2) “How angry/sad would you feel?” (5-point scale)

(Q3) “What could you do to feel less angry/sad?”

(Q4) “How angry/sad would you feel after that?” (5-point scale)
Outcomes ER in deaf children

- Intensity emotions decreased less strongly than in NH children
- Fewer coping strategies, both problem and emotion focused

(Rieffe, 2012)
• Less emotion awareness
• Fewer skills for ER

More mental health problems

HI children, compared to NH
Social functioning in HI children

- Lower self-esteem
- Lower friendship quality
- Same frequency of bullying
- More problems in understanding others (Theory of Mind)
HI children, compared to NH

- Less emotion awareness
- Fewer skills for ER

More mental health problems

More social problems
the emotion team

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