

The framework for the vertigo game¹ calls into question very important affective-emotional aspects when related to the control of fear and anxiety. At the same time, it implements challenge and adventure mechanisms that are of fundamental importance for a balanced structure of one's identity.

Vertigo games are all activities in which there is **a momentary loss of control over the action** and particularly meaningful and demanding **emotional values** are put into play: running quickly, running along the slope of a hill, jumping down, falling, slipping, climbing, rolling, swinging strongly on the swing. The child starts to do these activities as soon as he/she is able to control safe walking and running and, in most situations, *they put to the test control and loss of balance*, namely the effects that physical forces exert over the moving body.

These experiences that relate to the entire body are essential to guarantee **full and effective psychomotor development**, to mature an adequate agility and motor skill based on natural abilities.

When the child swings, slips, sways, launches into emptiness, he/she experiment the momentary loss of *spatial references* undermining above all the *vestibular system*, labyrinth sensations, soliciting the emotion of abandonment and recovery of self-control.

The current hyper-protective pedagogical attitude, implemented firstly by the family, tends to prohibit any limit situation for the child, though controlled and safe. This, to avoid possible physical or moral failures that, instead, represent essential experiences to acquire self-confidence and self-esteem.

The child needs adventure, to put him/herself to the test, to conquer the sense of independence and responsibility in relation to the choices made. The idea itself of risk awareness is intimately connected to experiences, to the memory of emotionally positive or negative results, which help to make choices in subsequent situations. The experience of risk and adventure, which the child freely searches for, is an aspect of educational care that must accompany the child, to teach him/her to guide him/herself in the choices that it is possible to make with respect to what is too difficult or actually dangerous.

Educators must help children, without taking their place, to create adventurous situations with a "calculated risk". This, to explore fascinating and emotionally engaging situations, characterized by personal initiative and assumption of responsibility in relation to the consequences of their actions. Therefore, climbing a tree, jumping from a castle, or pirouetting until he/she falls, become important experiences for the child and his/her self-confidence.

The metaphor of adventure, searching for the new and the unexpected to experiment one's own self, is an elective framework for exploring one's limits but also one's abilities by testing the control of anxiety (fear) and the desire to feel (pleasure) in a positive emotional context. Forbidding these activities, once heritage of all children who played freely in courtyards, means limiting a very important educational environment for self-awareness in managing responsible independence.

Adventurous and risky activities are lawful actions which the children have no fear of, unless induced by adults: the fact that they are prohibited from experimenting them confirms the idea that children usually try them out. No psychomotor activity can exist without vertigo and risk:

*“risk lashes the child committed to action like a whip and has a significant educational impact. [...] this does nothing but reiterate the importance that the educator must be aware of these aspects and equipped to tackle them”.*²

¹Caillois R. (1995) *I giochi e gli uomini. La maschera e la vertigine*. Milano: Bompiani

²Parlebas P. (1997) *Giocchi e Sport. Corpo, comunicazione e creatività ludica*. Torino: Il Capitello