

**ESF - Integration Guidelines of the Federal Government - Networking meeting
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**Choosing your career and vocational training:
Psychological aspects of motivation, skills and
personality development**

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Overview

- What leads to success in life?
- Personality traits and personality development
- Psychological particularities as career barriers
- Motivation, volition (willpower) and the readiness to work hard
- Enhancing the motivation to change
- Practical example: Developing good work habits and social skills

What leads to success in life?

A longitudinal study performed in New Zealand over a period of almost 40 years (Moffitt et al., 2013) proves that it is **not** a person's social background or intelligence that determines success in life,

but rather social-emotional skills and most crucially self-management abilities (= self-control).

Delay of gratification favours self-control !!!

Delay of gratification: Learning early for life

- Ability to forgo an instant, available reward for a reward later on.
- The marshmallows test by Walter Mischel (2015): Kindergarten children who can control themselves well (high delayers) are more attentive, better at concentrating and learning, and experience more success thus becoming more self-confident.
- As adolescents **high delayers** are more self-confident, better at concentrating, possess better social skills and are more stress-resilient.

Delay of gratification: Learning early for life

- **Low delayers** come into contact with drugs more frequently, their relationships are less stable, they have got lower school-leaving certificates and are overweight.
- Differences persist for decades and extend to all areas of life (school, career, relationships etc.).
- Delay of gratification clearly is a key resource/resilience (Petermann & Resch, 2013).

What are indicators of a lack of self-control?

- strong emotional lability,
- quick-temperedness,
- low frustration tolerance,
- lack of perseverance when meeting demands and completing tasks,
- short attention span,
- easy to distract,
- great need to be active,
- motor restlessness,
- poor impulse control,
- difficulties waiting,
- panicky actions (Moffitt et al., 2013).

What are the results of a lack of self-control around the age of 35?

- high rate of mortality,
- high risk of mental illnesses,
- strong unhealthy behaviour (alcohol consumption, smoking, massive overweight),
- drunk driving,
- dropping out of school and vocational training,
- unemployment,
- criminal behaviour,
- risky handling of money (e.g. addiction to gambling),
- financial problems,
- early parenthood (Moffitt et al., 2013).

Five key personality traits (= BIG FIVE)

- **neuroticism** (anxious, sad and difficulties controlling personal needs, poor stress management)
- **extraversion** (sociable, warm, optimistic, assertive)
- **openness to experience** (eager to learn, creative, imaginative)
- **agreeableness** (kind, understanding, modest)
- **conscientiousness** (persevering, hard working, reliable, high degree of self-discipline)

Keys to positive personality development = self-management abilities (CASEL, 2015)

In concrete terms this means:

- Ability to adequately manage your own needs, feelings, thoughts and behaviours
- Ability to cope with stress
- Ability to control impulses
- Ability to adequately motivate yourself over the long run
- Ability to set yourself goals and to work towards them consistently

Other important personality traits for success at school and in your career (based on CASEL, 2015)

- **social awareness:** Ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others. Ability to understand cultural differences and to perceive your family, friends and society as a resource.
- **relationship skills:** Ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships based on clear communication and cooperation. Ability to cooperate with others, resist social pressure and to negotiate conflict constructively.
- **responsible decision-making:** Ability to make constructive choices about personal behaviour and its consequences; respect for other persons and holding yourself accountable for your own decisions.

Summary: Four impairments of personality development hampering work skills

- Failed self-determination/failed pursuit of autonomy
- Lack of self-commitment/conscientiousness
- Low self-confidence/low self-efficacy
- Low level of self-control/lack of self-management

Four psychological particularities hampering behaviour at work

- attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHS)
- aggressive-impulsive/aggressive-dissocial behaviour
- anxiety (e.g. fear being around people/social phobia)
- depression

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder as a career barrier

Some symptoms:

- Spreading tasks over two days.
- Forgetting things you need to do.
- Problems preparing for a task ahead.
- Being quickly disappointed when you fail at something.
- Lack of planning skills and self-discipline when working on a task.
- Problems motivating yourself, especially to start a task and to finish it in a prescribed timeframe.

Aggressive-dissocial behaviour as a career barrier

Some symptoms:

- Threatens and intimidates other persons.
- Often starts fights.
- Possesses weapons that can cause others serious bodily harm.
- Is cruel towards people/animals.
- Destroys property of other persons on purpose.
- Breaks into the homes, buildings and cars of other persons.

Anxiety (e.g. fear of being around people/social phobia) as a career barrier

Some symptoms:

- Avoiding situations where you meet new people.
- Inhibition, shame and embarrassment around new persons.
- Social demands and challenges are perceived as extremely burdensome and unpleasant.
- Fear of standing out.
- Leisure activities and interests are extremely limited.
- Fear of being rated, having to perform and of exams.

Depression as a career barrier

Some symptoms:

- Marked and persistent depressive mood
- Losing interest and pleasure
- Loss of energy or becoming tired quickly
- Low self-confidence and low self-esteem
- Blaming yourself and feeling guilty
- Sleeping disorder
- Psychomotor agitation and inhibition
- Difficulties concentrating and indecisiveness
- Loss of appetite or increased appetite
- Suicidal thoughts

Anxiety and depression: Three unfavourable forms of managing emotions

- **Brooding:** Thinking for hours in endless circles about negative life situations, their causes and consequences.
- **Suppressing the expression of emotions and corresponding actions:** Thoughts linked to unpleasant feelings are pushed away.
- **Avoidance:** A real or mental confrontation with an emotional demand does not take place.

Self-centred emotions and learning success

Negative emotions (e.g. fear) block learning.

For success at work it is important to enhance positive emotions and to diminish negative ones:

positive emotions	negative emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• curiosity• enjoying learning• hope to succeed• pride about past success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• boredom• fear of failing• shame of being hurt• grief

Solution: Focusing on positive emotions as they help to deeper anchor what you learned.

Social emotions and learning success

The same is true for social emotions which are major determinants of the learning atmosphere and the willingness to learn:

positive emotions

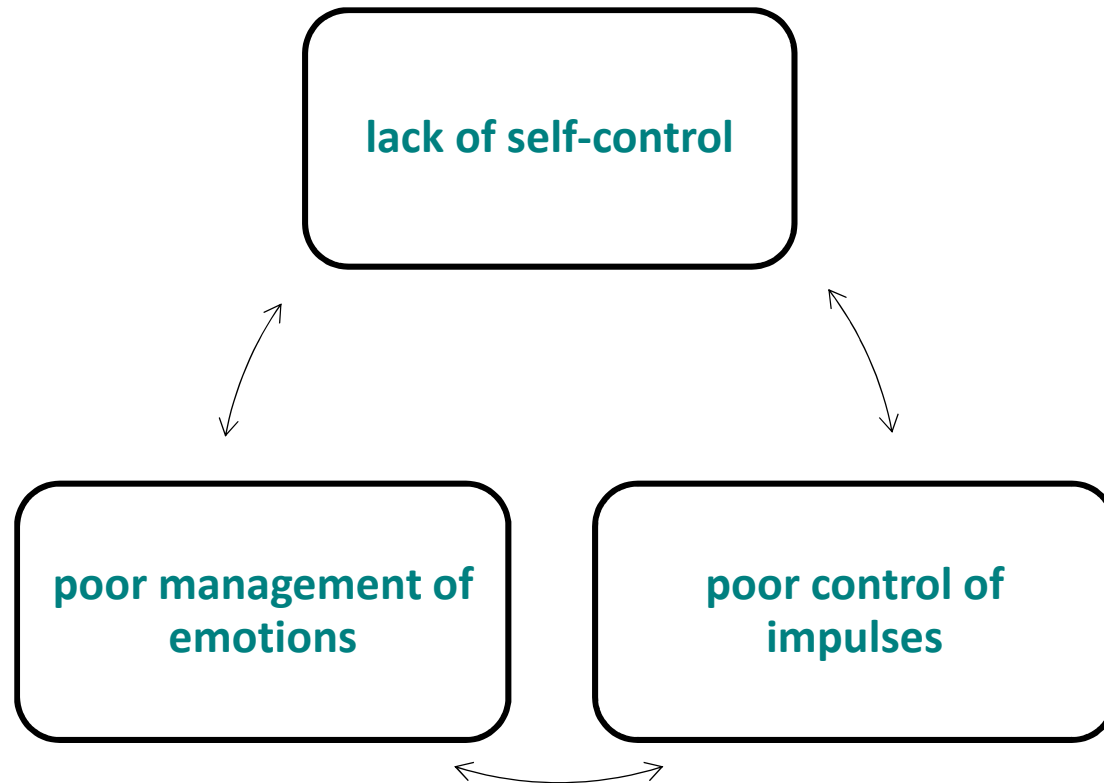
- gratitude
- liking another person
- admiration
- sharing positive experiences

negative emotions

- envy
 - contempt
 - anger
 - jealousy
-

Solution: Focusing on positive emotions and strengthening social-emotional skills

Vicious circle: bad feelings, lack of self-control and poor control of impulses



Four aspects of impaired motivation

- lack of perseverance
- low hope of success
- no or unclear goal orientation
- no or negative reference points
 - in relation to yourself and your own biography
 - in relation to your peer group
 - in relation to the norms or expectations of society

Motivation versus volition - what matters?

Motivation helps to explain how a **readiness to act** is developed, managed and maintained! (= formation of will)

Volition is the **willpower** which helps us to translate our resolutions into practice (= implementation of will)

Solution: training of willpower

Volition: Willpower is what matters!

Motivation alone is not enough! Even motivated people do not manage to successfully turn their intentions into action. Why is that?

- 1) Willpower (= Volition) enables us to translate ideas into deliberate actions and to accomplish things. In other words, we succeed in overcoming internal and external resistance!
- 2) Willpower is the basis for successful self-management. It keeps us from getting distracted, helps us to not give up once we encounter the first setbacks and to pursue long-term goals.

Volition - potential resistance

- 3) resistance I: poor management of emotions (e.g. apathy/lack of interest, anxieties, depression, loneliness, lack of energy, indecisiveness).
- 4) resistance II: lack of impulse control (e.g. ADHS, aggressive-dissocial behaviour, high propensity for violence)

Solution: enhancing willpower

Enhancing willpower I

- **Learning to accept your own limits:** Allowing a confrontation with reality by trying out your own abilities (feedback to change your behaviour).

Problem: Many people have exaggerated notions of what they can accomplish. Due to chronic avoidance behaviour, they do not get realistic feedback on their own limits. This makes self-modification impossible!

Enhancing willpower II

- **Limiting yourself to the essential: Organising your life:** What is important/what is not so important?

Problem: Many people do not even know what they want!

- **Mobilising your own energy:** Becoming aware of positive feelings and quickly overcoming emotionally difficult experiences.

Problem: Many people are self-centred, brood about missed opportunities, do not put themselves in the place of others and are afraid of the future.

Enhancing willpower III

- **Good time management:** Preparing steps well and planning the completion of tasks well ahead.

Problem: Procrastination is a problem for many people. When they fail, they do not assume responsibility for their failed problem-solving.

Enhancing willpower IV

- **Putting in an effort and deliberate actions to show others that you can make a valuable contribution thus deserving respect.**

Problem: Many people believe that you are born with abilities and self-confidence. However, even self-confidence can be acquired in small steps.

- **Strengthening self-discipline** by picking tasks that you can get done. If you then manage to turn your experiences into a perspective, you will be able to see “purpose“ in your own work.

Summary: In each case at least three areas need to be assessed in order to provide tailored career-related support to adolescents and young adults:

- **skills/interests**
- **motivation**
- **willpower (volition)**

Readiness to put in an effort

Motivational or emotional barriers can explain why somebody is not willing to put in an effort. For example, some people do not manage to tackle tasks and get them done because they are afraid to fail, allocate their resources badly, or because they are lazy. Avoiding to put in an effort is negatively correlated with the motive “hope to succeed“.

Solution: Increasing the readiness to put in an effort by setting a realistic level of expectations, confrontation with reality, benevolent feedback and support. The key is strengthening personal accountability.

Solution: Developing a stable image of your abilities

All persons define themselves on the basis of their abilities! These abilities can correspond to a norm (e.g. “I complete tasks reliably!”) or deviate from a norm (“I’m also a good driver when I’m drunk!”)

Problems:

- (a) Abilities are judged using a black-and-white picture or an all-or-nothing principle.
- (b) Abilities, a person’s own efforts and personal responsibility for professional success and failure are not connected with each other at the experience level.
- (c) The development of a positive image of your abilities fails!

Solution: Six steps to developing a positive image of your abilities

Solution: Developing a stable image of your abilities I

(1) Setting realistic professional goals.



(2) You should observe your own behaviour and thoroughly document your efforts/achievements.



(3) You should gradually optimise your behaviour by setting realistic goals and dividing them up into manageable sub-goals.

Solution: Developing a stable image of your abilities II

(4) Behavioral progress should be judged realistically and be evaluated according to criteria that are comprehensible to other persons.



(5) If it is not possible to rise to a challenge on your own, you should be able to adequately activate help from other persons.



(6) Every partial step, effort and result should be acknowledged and you should praise yourself for it.

Enhancing the motivation to change

according to the transtheoretical model of Proschaska and DiClemente (1992).

Basic idea: You can categorise people according to their motivation stage, i.e. according to their readiness to change their present behaviour. Depending on the stage of motivation, you need different actions for kicking somebody's old habits.

Stage 1: Precontemplation

Stage 2: Preparation

Stage 3: Action

Stage 4: Maintenance

Stage 1: Stage of precontemplation

Persons at this stage have no intention to change their behaviour. They either believe that they cannot change their fate anyway, or they believe that they are not responsible for their situation. In the latter case, they expect others to solve their problem (= no personal accountability). Since these expectations are never met, the motivational problem **cannot** be solved for the time being! However, there is the hope that new (planned/supported) experiences will “lift“ these persons to the next stage.

Solution: Finding ways of reaching stage 2!

Stage 2: Stage of preparation

The first signs of a change in attitude become visible, i.e. persons realise that they themselves are responsible for their situation. They begin to develop an understanding for the fact that their own efforts and a realistic assessment of their situation are important prerequisites for success. Step-by-step this can lead to an understanding of what they need to change in their lives.

Solution. Finding ways of reaching stage 3.

Stage 3: Stage of action

In the action stage intentions to change translate into the independent application of strategies for coping with life (e.g. collection of information, applications for internships, addressing personal mental problems, readiness to seek and accept help).

Solution: Finding ways of reaching stage 4.

Stage 4: Stage of maintenance

This stage is marked by behaviour that serves to cope with life independently and is kept up for more than a month - even under difficult everyday life circumstances. Most importantly there must not be any relapses into past habits. In order to keep up new behaviour it is of crucial importance to expect that you can influence your fate by your own abilities.

Summary: Four aspects of impaired self-management

- **Emotion management** (inability to regulate moods and feelings, especially negative ones)
- **Stress management** (inability to adequately organise and cope with demands)
- **Time management** (e.g. tasks are put off for no good reason and under time pressure they are then performed with mistakes or only partially)
- **Self-management in the narrow sense** (e.g. demands at work are formulated as too high or too low or they fluctuate too much)

Practical example: Developing good work and social habits

Global goals:

- Hands-on, practical support with and practicing of competent social and work skills
- Optimising the work habits of adolescents and young adults:
 - Reduction of aggressive-dissocial behaviour
 - Reduction of apathy
 - Reduction of insecure behaviour among other people

Quelle: Petermann, F. & Petermann, U. (2017). Training mit Jugendlichen. Aufbau von Arbeits- und Sozialverhalten (10., veränd. Aufl.). Göttingen: Hogrefe

Integrating skills training and everyday life I

Goals of the training:

- Self-observation and appropriate self-presentation
- Practicing empathy
- Change of perspectives and practicing competent social skills
- Handling praise, criticism and failure

Goals in everyday life:

- Cooperative and goal-oriented completion of tasks
- Reliability at school, the vocational training place or workplace

Integrating skills training and everyday life II

Goals of the training:

- Learning to resist difficult situations
- Perceiving positive traits in others
- Team spirit and integrating outsiders

Goals in everyday life:

- Putting in an effort and coping with conflicts and difficulties using your own resources
- Personal accountability for your social and professional life

Ten thematic areas I

1	Einführung und Verhaltensregeln
2	Beruf und Zukunft
3	Lebensschicksale und Eigenverantwortung
4	Schwierige Situationen und selbstsicher widerstehen lernen
5	Gefühle, Verhalten und Einfühlungsvermögen

(1) Presentation of topics and rules

(2) Becoming aware of ideas for your career

(3) Looking into typical thoughts and behaviours;
assessing your own contributions and those of others to
events in your life

(4) What makes it hard to resist in difficult situations?
Role plays to practice alternative behaviour

(5) Recognising feelings based on facial expressions;
the links between feelings and empathy

Quelle: Petermann & Petermann (2017)

Ten thematic areas II

6	Halbzeittafel und Vorstellungsgespräche
7	Vorstellungsgespräche: Üben und reflektieren
8	Positives wahrnehmen und Anerkennung aussprechen
9	Außenseiter und Mobbing
10	Rückmeldung und Zertifikat

(6) Feedback on work so far/Introduction to job interviews

(7) Practicing job interviews with role plays (video recordings and feedback)

(8) Importance of praise/recognition

(9) What is tolerance and how can we learn to accept outsiders?

(10) End and closing ceremony where participants receive their participation certificates

Quelle: Petermann & Petermann (2017)

Material sample: Checklist for better self-management

Possible checklist tasks:

- *If I have a problem with something I say so calmly without yelling*
- *I speak slowly and clearly so that everybody understands me*
- *I voice criticism politely (without hurting others).*

Checkliste zur Selbstbeobachtung

Mein Name: _____

Checklistenblatt-Nr. _____

Datum der Woche
vom _____ bis zum _____

Meine Aufgabe:

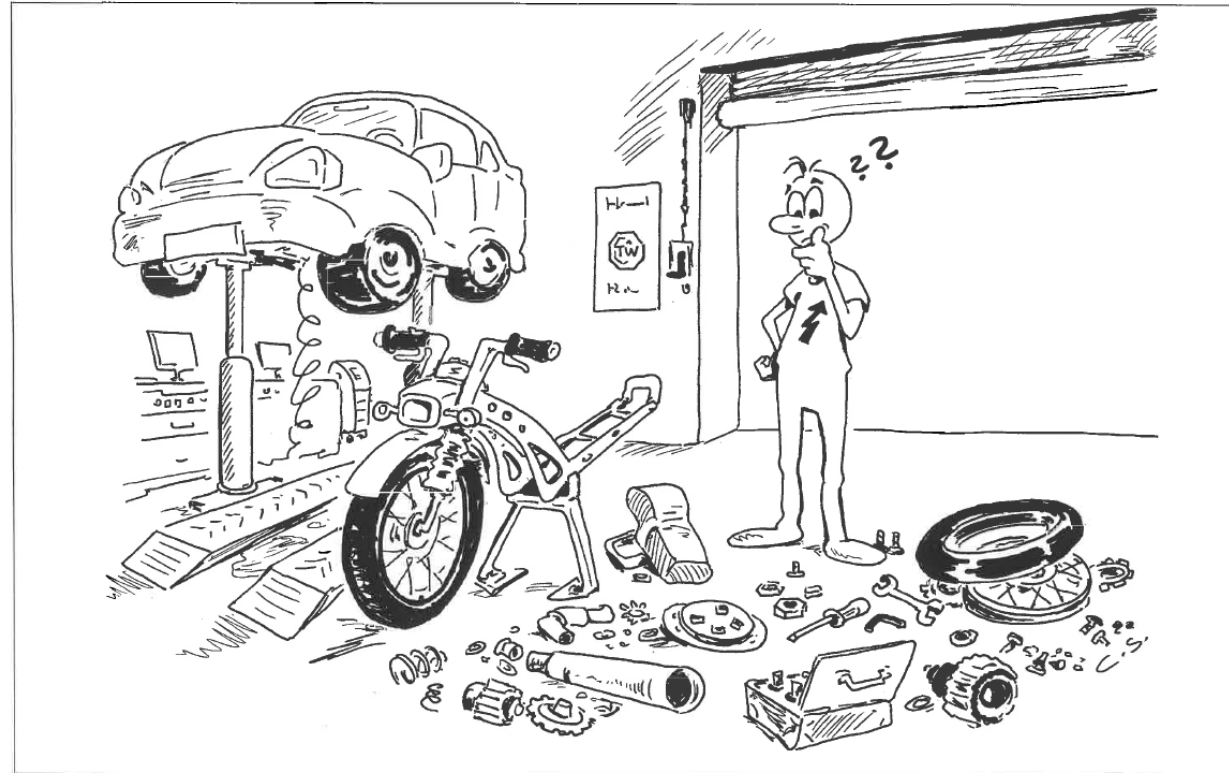
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Geschafft							
Nicht geschafft							

Notizen:



JobFit-AB3-LSM

Material sample: Broadening career ideas

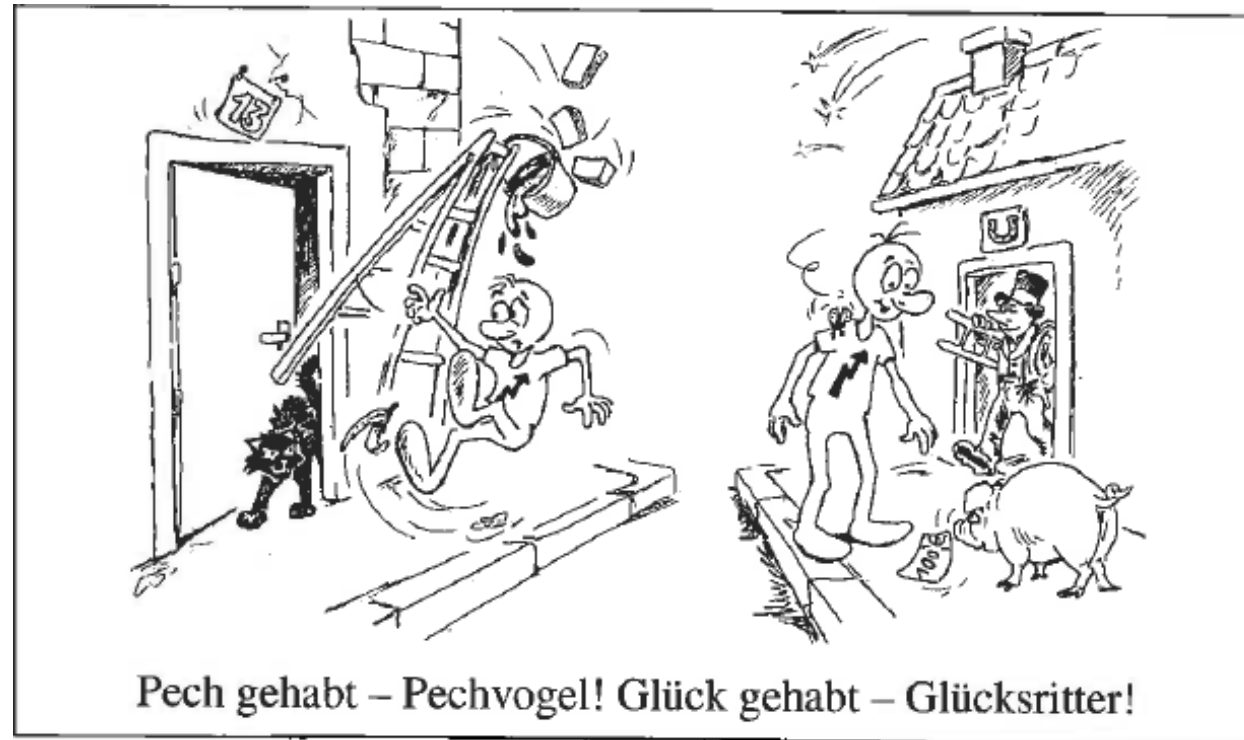


JobFit-AB13-LM

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Material sample: Changing your attitude towards life



JobFit-AB21-LSM

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Material sample:

Enhancing empathy



Quelle: Petermann, F. & Petermann, U. (2017). Training mit Jugendlichen. Aufbau von Arbeits- und Sozialverhalten (10., vollst. überarb. Aufl.). Göttingen: Hogrefe

Material sample:

Enhancing empathy



Quelle: Petermann, F. & Petermann, U. (2017). Training mit Jugendlichen. Aufbau von Arbeits- und Sozialverhalten (10., vollst. überarb. Aufl.). Göttingen: Hogrefe

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