

APRECIACÃO OPP

# Surfeel

the *Feelings Detective Program*

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## *Surfeel, the Feelings Detective Program*

The Portuguese Psychologists Association (Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses, OPP) is a professional public association that represents and regulates the practice of Psychology professionals who practice the profession of Psychologist in Portugal (according to Law 57/2008, of September 4th, as amended by the Law 138/2015, of September 7th). OPP's mission is to exercise control over the practice of and access to the profession of Psychologist, as well as to draw up the respective technical and deontological standards and to exercise disciplinary power over its members. OPP's scope also includes defending the general interests of the profession and users of Psychology services; providing services to members in relation to information and professional training; collaborating with other public administration entities in the pursuit of public interest purposes related to the profession; participating in the drafting of legislation concerning the profession and in official accreditation processes and in the evaluation of courses that give access to the profession.

This document arises within the **OPP Appraisals measure**, which aims to **highlight and support the dissemination of products with quality and excellence, authored by Psychologists, whose objective is to promote literacy in Psychological Health and the dissemination of Psychological Science** among different segments of the population.

The application submitted by Psychologist **Carla Filomena César Dias da Costa** (CP 60) regarding the *Surfeel* Program, of which she is co-author, in collaboration with Miguel Morin and Joana Castelhana, was approved.

Promoted by Genuine Happiness, Serviços Digitais Unipessoal Lda., in partnership with Instituto de Apoio à Criança, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE) and Escola Superior de Saúde de Santa Maria, this is a social and emotional learning (SEL) program, primarily aimed at children aged 3 to 12, using a range of videos, songs, materials and activities. The product is currently applied in 22 school districts (3% of public schools in Portugal), mainly by Psychologists, and it can also be used autonomously by parents, teachers, and educators.

We begin by highlighting the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL), in particular during early childhood (the developmental period the program is primarily intended for). Indeed, although it can be worked on throughout the entire life cycle, scientific evidence highlights that **it is in early childhood that social and emotional learning (SEL) has the greatest long-term impact** (e.g., Mondy et al., 2021), as this is the period when children develop a set of crucial skills for their development, namely, learning to translate emotional states into language, to recognize and label such states in themselves and in others, to discriminate different emotions and to use that information to understand their behavior and to guide their actions and thoughts. Acquiring and developing these skills is positively correlated with a greater capacity for adaptation, self-control and stress management, problem solving and resilience, and the establishment of positive relationships, aspects that are essential in the prevention of emotional and behavioral problems and in the promotion of overall well-being and Psychological Health throughout life.

Schools, as one of the first socialization experiences, are contexts that facilitate the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) and emotional regulation strategies that, in turn, allow children to have healthier interactions with others and with their surroundings, and to solve everyday problems more effectively. Therefore, **it is essential that schools recognize that the promotion of social and emotional skills is an essential component of a quality education, integrating social and emotional learning into their curricula and activities.**

Nevertheless, since the promotion of socio-emotional skills should not only occur at school, the development of tools, programs and other resources that enhance **opportunities for social and emotional development in informal contexts**, especially at home, is also extremely important.

We therefore praise the pertinence of the **Surfeel Program**. It is a **creative and playful program, solidly based on scientific evidence and very easy to use**, and can be applied not only by Psychologists, in a school and clinical context, but also by mothers, fathers, teachers and educators, at school or at home. The program captures the extensive benefits of social and emotional learning programs. It includes several impact evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of its results.

The diverse set of materials (videos, puppets, and deck of cards) is also enriched by discussion prompts and arts-and-crafts activities, split by kindergarten and grades 1-4 to ensure their suitability for each group and to facilitate their application.

Despite being aimed at children aged 4-7 years, we would like to point out the possibility of extending the program to other age groups, so that children up to 10 years old can benefit from the sessions provided.

We are also pleased with the inclusion of the recommendations that we proposed in our first appraisal (March 2022), which we believe have contributed to enrich the Program, namely:

- Its expansion to other age groups (with the creation of Surfeel-2, an emotional awareness program aimed at grades 5-6);
- The creation of a Program Handbook with a framework and general instructions for using the program for different users;
- The inclusion, in the Program Handbook, of the distinction between feelings and emotions (as well as the intention to create a specific episode on this issue).

We emphasize that the availability of materials (videos and games) in languages other than Portuguese, enhances the reach of the program, extending it to **foster language development and to increase vocabulary, as well as to support social integration, Psychological Health and the learning of Portuguese among foreign children**. In this regard, it will eventually be relevant to point out in the Manual that emotional expression is conditioned by the child's cultural context, so specific adaptations may be necessary (for example, including examples of situations that are more familiar to foreign children), to consider specific cultural norms that influence emotional expression and interaction with peers and adults.

In summary, considering its relevance in the context of social-and-emotional learning, we believe that **the *Surfeel* Program can be a good tool to support a healthy emotional development.**

### **Bibliography**

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