

**LIBERA**

Croatian Association for Education, Entrepreneurship and  
International Cooperation

## PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT FOR „WE EMPOWER CROATIAN CHILDREN TO OVERCOME FEARS“



Dear donors,

Thank you for supporting our project!

**Our workshop, "Rico's Paw Support", was a great and exciting experience for the 2nd grade students of the Julija Klovica Elementary School.**

**We focused on helping children face their fears with the help of the therapy dog Rico.**

Psychologist Josipa and library manager Dubravka organized a wonderful workshop where children had the chance to spend time with Riko, the therapy dog.

They made sure Riko was ready to engage and that the children had everything they needed to feel relaxed and enjoy the session.

There were only several workshops with this group but their connection with Rico was truly heartwarming. Every trick or movement he made sparked excitement and joy.

The children quickly warmed up to him—eagerly taking turns feeding him treats and bursting with happiness whenever he performed a trick. Their sincere affection

created a safe and welcoming space where they could open up and talk about their fears.

Despite the noise and energy of around 24 children all vying for his attention, Riko remained calm and patient, showing just how gentle and well-tempered he is.

The atmosphere was vibrant, and even the sound of candy wrappers added to the cheerful setting.

This unique workshop was more than just an activity—it became a meaningful moment that blended fun, learning, and compassion.

It will remain a cherished memory for everyone, highlighting the special bonds we can form with both pets and people.

### **What the Children Learned**

During the session, Josipa led a lesson on understanding and coping with fear, tailored specifically for the children (ages 8–9). She addressed serious topics

in a way that was easy for them to grasp, always ensuring no child felt scared or left out. With Riko by their side, learning became playful and safe.

#### **1. How to Recognize and Name Your Fears (15 minutes)**

Step-by-step:

Do I feel something unusual?

What exactly am I feeling?

What is making me feel this way?

Understanding: You can identify what's bothering you.

Communication: You can talk about it with someone.

Solutions: You can start figuring out how to manage it.

Reminder: Everyone feels fear sometimes. What matters is learning to face it.

## **2. How to Understand and Visualize Your Fears (15 minutes)**

### **a. Let's Talk About Emotions**

Rapid heartbeat? You might be feeling scared.

Sweaty palms? That could mean you're nervous.

Short of breath? You might be experiencing panic.

### **b. Identify the Fear**

What scares me the most?

Is it something real (like the dark) or just a thought?

Is it related to a past experience?

### **c. Ask Questions**

When does the fear happen?

Why do I feel this way?

Did something in the past cause this?

**e. Draw Your Fear**

Take a pencil and paper and draw what your fear looks like.

It doesn't need to be perfect—just your personal expression.

**f. Relaxation Techniques**

Deep breathing: In through your nose, out through your mouth.

Meditation: Focus calmly on your feelings without judgment.

**g. Share Your Fear**

Talk to someone you trust.

Sometimes just saying it out loud makes it feel smaller.

**3. How to Learn Strategies to Cope with Fear (15 minutes)**

Let's break this into simple, helpful techniques:

Recognize and Name the Fear

Identify the trigger: What situation or thought brings fear?

Name it: Like "Fear of failing a test" or "Worry about being alone."

Write it down: Journaling can help you understand and reflect.

### Understand the Body's Response

Notice how your body reacts—like tense muscles or shallow breathing.

Use calming techniques:

Deep breathing

Progressive muscle relaxation

### Build a Support System

Talk to friends, family, or a therapist.;Healthy habits help too;Get enough sleep; Eat well; Exercise regularly

### Final Thoughts

Start small: Focus on one fear at a time.

Be patient: Progress takes time.

Be kind to yourself: Setbacks are part of growth.

Seek help when needed: You're not alone.

**What was special about this workshop was the fact that the children really genuinely loved Riko and brought him gifts and a letter of thanks**

**in which they thanked him for the workshop and thanked him for teaching them tenderness, helping and understanding fears. With him,**

**the children felt safe and without any fear they talked about the challenges they face at school.**

**At the end of the workshop, everyone was immensely moved and admitted that they could not wait for the next gathering.**

**The implementation of project activities in the past period is in accordance with the set goals of the project, which refer to:**

- socializing and workshops for 24 children with therapy dog Rico and his mentor Josipa,
- conducting various topics that teach us about emotions and ways to control them,
- children's photo session to remember the wonderful gatherings with friends and activities with the therapy dog and
- distribution of gifts that included lots of chocolate and sweets.

All these activities will help in the prevention of later more severe forms of anxiety and at the same time contribute to the solution of related specific

social problems and proactively influence the development of the community as a whole.

Considering the relaxing and stimulating role of therapy dogs for children's development, this type of workshop represents

innovative activity for Croatian school students. So far, thanks to your support, we have included over 160 children aged 8-12,

and our intention is to implement the program in all schools that show interest in this form of holding workshops.

**Dear donors, we invite you to stay in touch with us or contact us through social networks or through our website**

**if you want to know more about our project.**

We believe that the pictures in the attachment will also cheer you up.

Warm regards

**The Libera Team**





Piko, naučio si nas kako biti nježni  
nježni i kako komunicirati sa  
psima kroz naše postupke.

Bilo je to zabavno i uzbudljivo  
iskustvo koje nam je pomoglo da  
bolje razumijemo naše kćerke  
prijatelje i zahvalni smo na  
vremenu koje smo proveli zajedno!

Hvala ti!

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