

Module IV - The reality of child maltreatment

Prevention of child maltreatment from a child's perspective



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



CO-HAPPINESS

Happy and Safe in Community

Aim of the the module

General aim: Give professionals who work with children, parents and bystanders an inside look into prevention of child maltreatment from a child's perspective

Specific objectives:

After this training, participants:

- Have insight in healthy social-emotional development versus unhealthy social-emotional development
- Have insight in loyalty from children to parents
- Have insight in trauma-informed communication
- Have worked on their child communication skills
- Have reflected on their own previous actions in child communication

This module contents the following chapters:

- The world of a child: Social-emotional development of children
- Loyalty of children to parents / caretakers
- Child communication
- Trauma-informed child communication
- Reflection on previous actions



What defines the social-emotional development of a child?

Emotional development = internal proces : It is developing within the child

Social development = external proces: It is developing in the child's relations to others

The social-emotional development is defined by 4 pillars:

- 1. Attachment**
- 2. Temper**
- 3. Coping with emotions**
- 4. Self image**

- From the moment a child is born it needs care from the parents/caretakers. A child's behaviour is focused on getting the attention it needs. The child is depending on the parents and tries to connect with the environment. Along the way, it gets more and more possibilities to do so.
- Attachment is a 2-way road. The child attaches to the caretaker and the caretaker attaches to the child. Safe attachment is critical for the social-emotional development of the child.
- Attachment evolves when caretakers respond sensitively on the needs of the child.
- Babies learn by experience and recurrence of behaviour: They get conditioned by their caretakers to show certain behaviour.
- If the caretaker isn't able to respond sensitively to the child's needs, safe attachment is at risk. The child will stop 'asking' for the caretaker's sensitive response, and will conclude it is on his own and possibly withdraw from loving contact between itself and the caretaker.

Example:

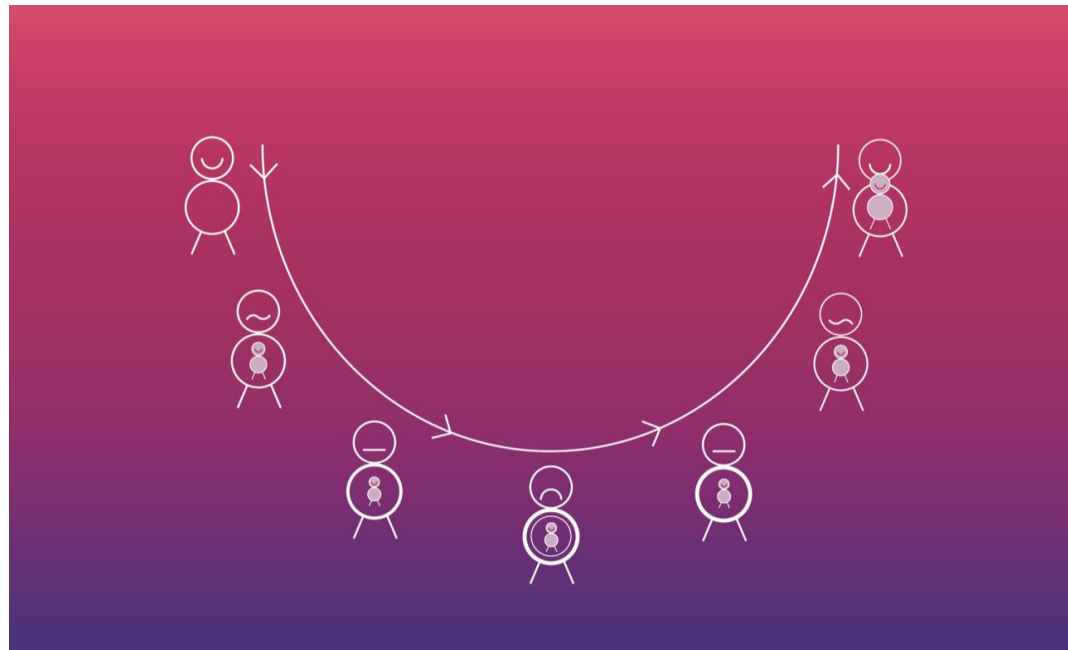
When I cry, mommy picks me up. When daddy puts on my sleeping bag, I go to bed

- As children grow, so do their ways to actively engage with their environment. They are beginning to understand that every action leads to a reaction. The experience of the power to trigger a reaction, makes children until the age of about 9 think that they are to thank and to blame for every reaction. That's why children blame themselves for fighting parents and child maltreatment.
- The self image of children will evolve in relation to their environment. Positive experiences will lead to a positive self image. Negative experiences to a negative self image. In relation to the above, a negative self image is born quick when children are not able to count on a sensitive caretaker.
- Every child is born with a certain temper. The development of that natural temper is influenced by nurture. A short tempered child will get angry more if it's anger successfully leads to fulfilment of it's needs.



The world of a child

- The way we deal with emotions is partly part our natural character, and partly developed by nurture. Introverts tend to keep their emotions to themselves, while extraverts tend to shut it all out.
- When children face child maltreatment, depending on their coping mechanisms, they will put on a mask for the outside world while their inner child is hurting, or they will share their emotions by acting out or withdrawing while their inner child is happy somewhere inside.
- In a healthy social-emotional development the inner- and outer child are in balance.



Loyalty of children towards parents/caretakers

We distinguish 2 types of loyalty from children towards their parents or caretakers:

1. Existential loyalty: Given by birth
2. Acquired loyalty: Given by sensitive parental behaviour

Child maltreatment and abuse only influence the acquired loyalty of children towards their parents. The existential loyalty is absolute and will not be damaged by bad parental behaviour.

Therefore, it is extremely important to acknowledge, and never underestimate, the existential loyalty of children towards their parents.

When bystanders or professional caregivers act upon child maltreatment without taking the existential loyalty into account, it does not count sensitive and children will be traumatized even more.

Guidelines for inner child meditation exercise:

1. Sit comfortable in your chair. Make sure your whole feet touch the floor.
2. Consciously feel your body. You may want to close your eyes.
3. Go back to the moment you were about 8 years old.
 - What did you look like?
 - What did you like to do?
 - Who were you with?
 - How did you feel?
 - Ask yourself any question you want to be answered
4. (After 5 minutes) Slowly come back to here and now. If they were closed, open your eyes. If you prefer, move your body, just do what you feel like.
5. (If done in a classroom) Reflect on this meditation (with your groupmembers).



What do you need to take into account while communicating with children?

- Until the age of about 9, their awareness of time is not applicable. Chronology is difficult for them, even as duration.
- Until the age of about 12, their abstract thinking is not enough developed to accurately answer the why question. If you want them to describe a situation, ask what, where, who and above the age of 8 when.
- Children do not have as many words as adults. Let alone difficult words and concepts as 'child maltreatment' or 'abuse'. Picture drawing of game playing might give adults the information they are looking for.
- Adults like to limit conversation topics to what is relevant for them, where children switch between topics all the time in a for them more or less logical manner. When adults limit the conversation topics for them, they might get to straight forward and make children shut down.
- Children have their own solutions for most of their problems. To successfully and quickly help child, take those solutions to start with and build upon them until they have reached the skills-level you want them to be at.

What do you need to take into account while communicating with children?

- Children are better dreamers than adults are. Until the age of 6, it's hard for them to distinguish fantasy from reality. Above 7, fantasy helps them to cope with challenges they face. Ask them the Wonder-question, and they will tell you what needs to change in a split second.
- As adults do, children communicate non-verbally for about 90% of their communication. The smaller the child, the more important the non-verbal communication. They expect you to pick up on their non-verbal signals and they definitely pick up yours. Therefore, make sure you are fully present and your verbal and non-verbal communication is congruent.
- Children expect adults to be all-knowing creatures. They might expect you to know everything. Therefore, it is important to tell them you cannot read their minds.
- Children are not fully aware of the emotional impact their story has on you. Stay calm at any time and tell them how glad you are that they have shared their story.

The Wonder-question:

If you had a magic wand and everything could be different tomorrow, what would it be like?

A sensitive reaction of a trusted adult is the most important factor in the recovery of traumatized child.

What is a sensitive reaction?

1. Listen. Be 100% present. Try not to interfere.
2. Stay calm, even though the story made you shiver all over. If the child senses you are overwhelmed by their story, it will not share any more information.
3. Validate the experience. Take the information for the truth from the child's perspective. Do not ask questions or make comments which make the child feel you question or blame it.
4. Thank the child for putting its trust in you and tell them you will help it find a solution together. Tell the child you will not take any actions without consulting it. You are in this together; you start a process of working towards a solution.
5. Do not denigrate the child's parents or caretakers due to existential loyalty. Tell the child that whatever has happened, it was not his fault.

Guidelines for the trauma-informed child communication exercise (in classroom):

Preparation:

- 1 professional training actor who plays the child
- 1 process leader
- a few toys, like drawing materials, a ball, a stuffed animal or blocks.
- flip over
- marker



Guidelines for the trauma-informed child communication exercise (in classroom):

1. The actor plays a traumatized child, playing around with the toys
2. The group members are in circle around it
3. A group member tries to get in contact with the child. If the group member acts sensitive, the child responds positively. If the group member acts insensitive, the child withdraws or lashes out.
4. The moment the child withdraws or lashes out, the process leader stops the exercise to reflect with the group on what's happened. The child confirms if the reflection was right.
5. The process leader writes the tips the group members come up with during this exercise on the flip over.
6. Another group member goes on where the previous group member stopped, and so on until the process leader stops the exercise (after approximately 45 minutes).
7. The process leader evaluates the exercise with the group members: What did the participants like? What did they learn from this exercise?

Reflect on your own previous acting when it comes to trauma-informed child communication:

- Are you content with your previous actions?
- Would you act differently after this training?
- If yes, what would you do differently?
- If no, keep up the good work!



- Nederlands Jeugdinstituut <https://www.nji.nl/nl/Databank/Cijfers-over-Jeugd-en-Opvoeding> (last consulted 28th of May 2019)
- *Nationale prevalentiestudie mishandeling van kinderen en jeugdigen 2017*, Leiden University, Institute of Education and Child Studies, TNO Child Health, Lenneke Alink / Mariëlle Prevoe / Sheila van Berkel / Mariëlle Linting, Mariska Klein Velderman / Fieke Pannebakker, ©Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, Den Haag. October 2018, p-7
- *Jongerenrapport Ik heb al veel meegemaakt*, Augeo Jongerentaskforce 2016, Augeo, Driebergen October 2016
<https://www.augeo.nl/~media/Files/Jongerentaskforce/161026-Jongerenrapport-ik-heb-al-veel-meegemaakt.ashx> (last consulted 28 May 2019)
- *Geweld hoort nergens thuis, Eerste voortgangsrapportage*, Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie en VNG, December 2018.
- *Nationale prevalentiestudie mishandeling van kinderen en jeugdigen 2017*, Leiden University, Institute of Education and Child Studies, TNO Child Health, Lenneke Alink / Mariëlle Prevoe / Sheila van Berkel / Mariëlle Linting, Mariska Klein Velderman / Fieke Pannebakker, ©Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, Den Haag. Oktober 2018

- *Kindermishandeling voorkomen: het kan!*, Preventie in gemeenten, Augeo, Driebergen 2016, extracted from <https://www.augeo.nl/-/media/Files/Gemeenten/Augeo-Kindermishandeling-voorkomen-het-kan-Preventie-in-gemeenten.ashx> (last consulted May 28th 2019)
- *Nemen kinderen het woord? Effectevaluatie van Klokhuis over kindermishandeling*, Cees Hoefnagels et al, Utrecht, 2014, extracted from <https://www.trimbos.nl/docs/bf7c3750-e5dd-4622-85e6-c58c86afb062.pdf> (last consulted May 28th 2019)
- <https://kindermishandeling.hetklokhuis.nl/> (last consulted May 28th, 2019)
- *Methodebeschrijving Signs of Safety*, Resolution Consultancy, extracted from https://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl/doc/Methodebeschrijving_Signs_of_Safety%202017.pdf (last consulted 28th of May)
- *Tussenevaluatie Handle With Care*, Augeo, Marielle Dekker, Marga Haagmans, Tim Mulder, Driebergen, februari 2019, extracted from <https://www.augeo.nl/-/media/Files/Handle-With-Care-digitale-tussenevaluatie-Augeo.ashx> (last consulted May 28th 2019)
- *SISA Factsheet 2018*, SISA Rotterdam, July 2018 extracted from <https://sisa.rotterdam.nl/nl/documentatie> (last consulted 28 May 2019)

Bibliography

- *Self-efficacy study of Augeo Academy's online course on trauma informed teaching*, Augeo, Driebergen, November 2016, extracted from <https://www.augeo.nl/-/media/Files/Bibliotheek/Engels/AUG171002-teachers-self-efficacy.ashx?la=en> (last consulted 28 May 2019)
- *Effectiveness study among teachers, Trauma-informed teaching: The positive results of a pilot*, Augeo, Driebergen, November 2016, extracted from <https://www.augeo.nl/-/media/Files/Bibliotheek/Engels/AUG171002-impact-study.ashx?la=en> (last consulted 28 May 2019)
- *Effectief vroegtijdig handelen ter voorkoming van kindermishandeling, Samenvatting Eindrapport Voorstudie fase 1*, ZonMw, September 2017, extracted from https://publicaties.zonmw.nl/fileadmin/zonmw/documenten/Jeugd/Kindermishandeling/Publicatie_Effectief_vroegtijdig_handelen_ter_voorkoming_van_kindermishandeling_digitaal_def.pdf (last consulted 28 May 2019)
- *Praten over wat je thuis meemaakt*, Augeo Jongerentaskforce, Driebergen 2018, extracted from <https://www.augeo.nl/-/media/Files/181119-Praten-over-wat-je-thuis-meemaakt.ashx?la=nl-NL> (last consulted 28 May 2019)
- *Wat werkt bij Kindermishandeling*, Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, Karin van Rooijen, Tijne Berg, Cora Bartelink, Utrecht 2018, extracted from [https://www.nji.nl/nl/Download-NJi/Wat-werkt-publicatie/\(311053\)-nji-dossierDownloads-WatWerkt_Kindermishandeling.pdf](https://www.nji.nl/nl/Download-NJi/Wat-werkt-publicatie/(311053)-nji-dossierDownloads-WatWerkt_Kindermishandeling.pdf) (last consulted 28 May 2019)