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Save the Children



Agir pour le Lien social
et la Citoyenneté

NIDOS
guardianship for refugees

IMPACT



Working with unaccompanied children Training of Trainers

Location: Utrecht

Date: 7, 8, & 9 June

Trainers: Meta Kuipers & Marjolein Groen



Welcome

- Short introduction on the IMPACT project





Trainingprogramme Working with UAC

Settling in

Developing and integration

Preparation for autonomy

Who are UAC

What are their needs

Focus on resilience and agency

Tasks of the social worker

Skills and tools social worker

Trauma-sensitive guidance



Who are these children?

- Left their country of origin without their parents.
- Sometimes accompanied by a family member, who has parental authority, but no legal responsibility.
- No one is legally responsible for them during their flight and subsequent stay in Europe.
- Coming from war zones.
- Unlikely that all of them will get residence permits in the EU. Whether they are eligible for an asylum or a work permit differs from country to country.
- Some are in Europe involuntarily, as victims of human trafficking.



Reasons to flee

- War
- Fear of rape, abduction or recruitment by Islamic State (Syria)
- Taliban recruitment also victims of sexual slavery and child prostitution, ('dancing boys' (bacha bazi) in Afghanistan.)
- Persecution (homosexuality)
- Persecution or extermination being a minority (f.e. Jezidi)
- From conscription, female genital mutilation or honour-related violence .
- Family- or, culture related problems (honour related killing, forced marriage)
- Human trafficking
- Poverty and hopelessness (living on the street since young age)



They are alone and underage,
have left their home country and
are seeking protection and
shelter. Vulnerable due to
traumatic experiences and the
fact their parents aren't present.
But even though these children
have a lot in common, they
should always be seen as
INDIVIDUALS.

**They are migrants, on
the move**

**But they are above
all CHILDREN**





Unaccompanied children

Are children having normal reactions to abnormal circumstances (normal development, securely attached etc.)

Unaccompanied children are often traumatized; sleeping disorders, Problems at school, short tempered, physical complaints, depression, re- experiences

Under high pressure (of people smugglers) to repay the high cost of the journey

Under high pressure of expectations of the family (finances, family, reunification, career etc.)

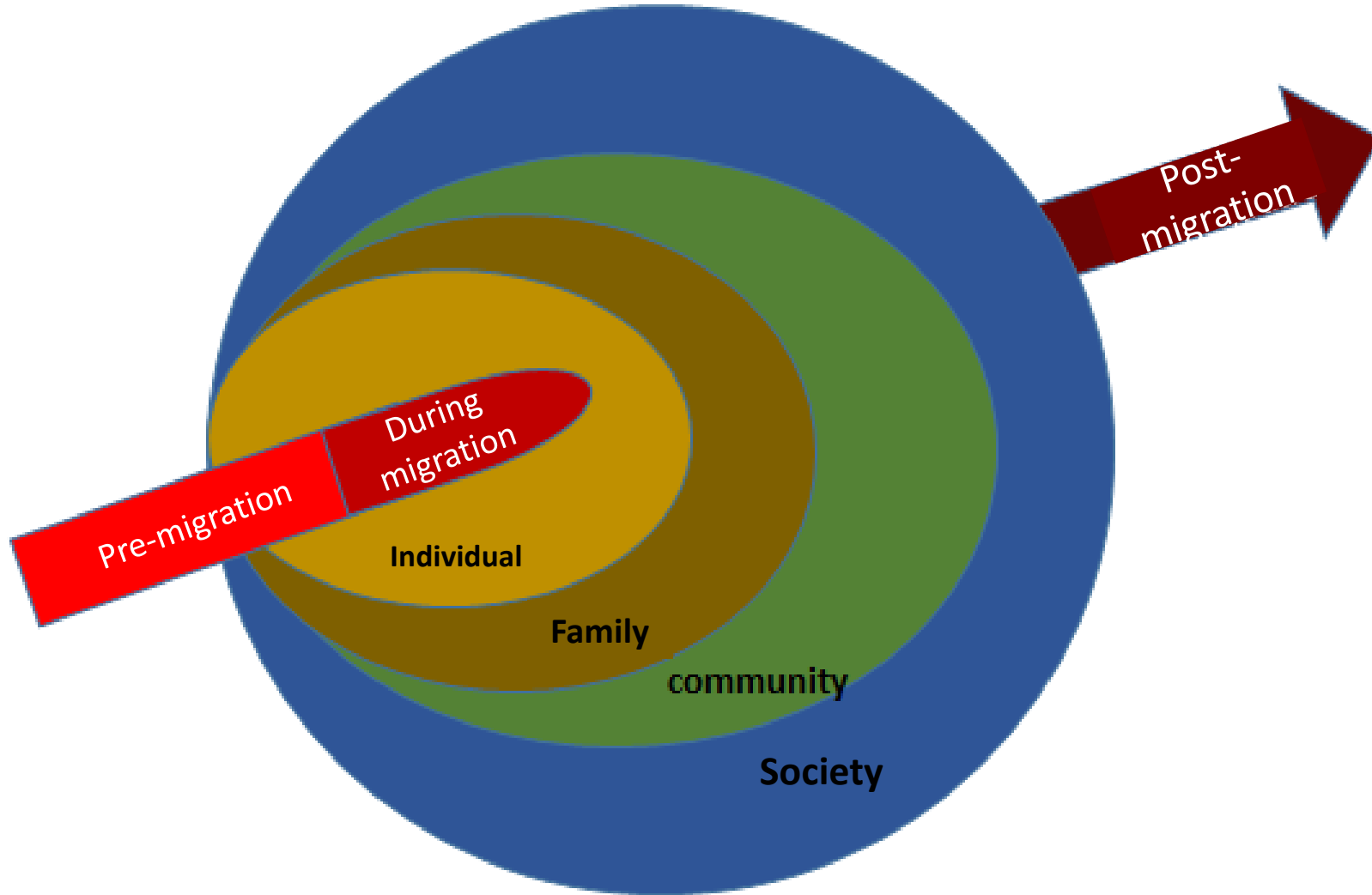
Honour, good name and expectations of the family are very important, more important than individual interests

Finding their way 'in between' two cultures.

Often the strongest children of the family are the ones that go to Europe

Resilient, self- reliant and motivated!







Different types of family based care

Most common:

Own network, kinship family

Local (indigenous) foster families

Other examples:

Families with migrant background and/or similar cultural background & Parttime family based care

Don't think in traditional family context, more 'feel at home' then living in the routines of a family system



Semi independent living arrangements SIL



Forms of small-scale
reception for children aged
15-18

Guided by team of
professionals

- Coach
- Hostess
- Caretaker
- Intercultural mediator.



Amir

Amir is a 16,5 year old boy from an African conflict country.

He is the eldest son of a family of five children. He comes from a loving family.

He's got an elder sister, two younger brothers and a baby sister. His mother suffers from a chronic illness.

The family comes from a rural town.

Amir went to school until he was 11, from that time he helped his father with his work on the land. Because of internal conflict, poverty and fear for the future Amir fled the country.



Exercise step in the shoes of Amir 1:

Take 3 minutes to think about the following and write down as many things as possible:

What does it mean for Amir to have left his country?

What did he leave behind and what has he taken with him?



Exercise step in the shoes of Amir 2:

Take 3 minutes to think about the following and write down as many things as possible:

What were the experiences of Amir during his journey to Europe?



Exercise step in the shoes of Amir 3:

Take 3 minutes to think about the following and write down as many things as possible:

What does it mean for Amir to arrive in a new country?

What are his needs?



*excited,
tired,
traumatic experiences,
missing family,
worried,
disappointed (little money, bureaucracy,
reception facility),
culture shock
stress,
uncertain,
happy, alone, grief.. ,*

NEEDS

- **Basic needs ->**
 - **Food (know it's there), shower**
 - **Rest (sleep, unwind, not too much questions)**
 - **Privacy (safe)**
- Health
- Safety (always on guard)
- Stress, trauma and loss
- Questions about asylum procedure
- Contact with family
- Confusion about roles and who to be trusted



PHASE 1

Important issues in the reception of unaccompanied children

- The initial phase of reception focuses on offering rest and safety;
- The basic needs of the child are provided: shelter, sufficient food, physical safety and being in touch with family; the need to feel 'human' again
- The contact with the child is based on support, showing interest and being reliable ;
- The child's distrust, secrets and unwillingness to talk about things is respected;
- The child's level of independence/ self reliance is respected;
- Continuity in mentors/guardians and the reception facility;
- Suitable and preferably useful daily activities
- Positive support for the child's experience and expression of religion.
- Certainty about his place of residence. The need of having a place to call home
- The child understand the procedures he is dealing with



Help an UAC to settle in by:

Start

- Offering protection
- Supporting development

Depending on the child's age

- Preparing for autonomy

In general

- Guidance:
 - School, family, future, asylum procedure, social services, mental health
- Supporting resilience



Tasks
Social worker



First step Making contact



CONTACT



Be reliable



Voice of the kids: ' guardian
feels like a lawyer, I need a
lifecoach'



Offering protection: risks and vulnerabilities

Exploitation (prostitution, drugs trafficking,..)

Vulnerable to sexual violence

Sexual education and relationships, resilience, different norms and values, and learning what is and is not punishable in the country they are in

Drugs and alcohol abuse (easy to get, coping mechanism)

Trouble with their family as their (western) behaviour is seen as a violation of the family honour

Pressure from the family (money, family reunification)



(Mis)understanding behaviour

- Agression?

Amir has a fight with the mentor in the large scale reception: he wanted to get some food but the kitchen was locked after 22 o'clock, they had an argument and Amir kicks a hole in the door.

- No respect? Depressed?

Marah(14) lives in a warm reception family, she is settled in. She is very withdrawn and answers no questions.

- Secretly, holding back

Orsan says he has no contact with his family. The guardian wants to contact them to inform them about Orsan and his involvement.

- Demanding

Mussi calls his guardian every day to ask about family reunification. He doesn't respect her appointments of when and why of contact.



Tasks social worker

- Building relationship and trust with the child (aware of own bias and assumptions)
- Enlarging agency & resilience
- Providing child friendly information
- Providing information on time
- Culture sensitive knowledge and attitude



Culturally-sensitive communication or Intercultural communication

3 steps

•Step 1: You become conscious of the influence of your own culture on your own behaviour.

•Step 2: You become conscious, ask about, learn about and gain insight into the culture of the other person and the behaviour that stems from it.

•Step 3: The insights this knowledge gives you, enable you, to really connect and bridge the divide.



Different types of communication

- GuiltShame
- DirectIndirect
- ExplicitImplicit
- RationalRelational
- Written.... ...Oral

Sharing: favorite intercultural question/quote?



‘Child-friendly information’ means information that is adapted to the child’s age, maturity, language, gender and culture .

Exercise in groups of three:

Looking at this checklist:

- What do you recognise?
- What did you learn?
- What improvements can be made in the way of informing UAC in your organisation/country?



Checklist child friendly information

Step 1: adopt the child's perspective to make an inventory of the questions he or she might have, like

Where am I? For how long? Will I be transferred? If so, when? To where?

What are the roles and functions of the professionals I will be in relation with?

How can I keep my belongings safe? H

How can I maintain contact/relationships with my loved ones? (non-exhaustive list)

Tips on verbal information, written, animations

And:

Do not ask the child if he or she has understood your explanations

Ask the child to tell you what he or she has understood



LUNCH
TIME

SEE YOU
13.30



Amir

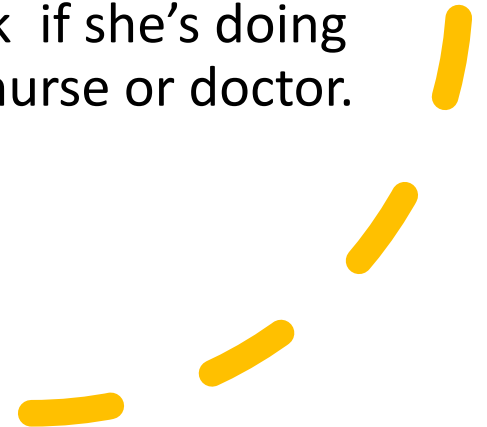
"I thought it would be good here, you know, but it isn't. They don't understand us here. We all have these arguments because they force us to do things we don't want to do and in the meantime, they don't arrange family reunification for us and we don't have money or work. I thought it would be better in Europe, but it's not. And now I don't know what to do. How can I ever get used to this, and get rid of that anger, and how I can help my mother...?"

- Amir is quickly , he learns the language of the host country.
- He has friends- mostly other UAC- .
- He wants to earn money to send home but is frustrated how hard it is to find a job
- His family puts pressure on him for money and family reunification
- He has concentration problems and sleeping problems
- He doesn't feel comfortable at school and is skipping classes frequently
- He is proud and self-reliant and doesn't want psychological help
- He's demanding to the social worker in finding him a job and influence the asylum procedure
- He wants to become a barber



Marah (15)

- Marah lives with her aunt and niece (12) in a small village.
- She wants to go out and sleep at her friends house
- Her aunt finds she must take care of her, and protect her honour and she has to stay home, to 'prevent problems'
- Marah has a lot of contact on social media. Also with a boy, who wants her to upload intimate pictures.
- She is withdrawn and the communication with her aunt gets disturbed.
- School wants aunt to give Marah more space
- Marah's mother calls every week to check if she's doing well at school and works on becoming a nurse or doctor.
- Marah feels lonely.





Issues UAC have to deal with

- Possible trauma
- Pressure family /concerns about safety of the family & guilt
- School doesn't fit
- Feeling of loss
- Finding a job not easy
- Vulnerable for abuse
- Isolation
- Discrimination
- Economical challenges





What are the
developmental
tasks of the
UAC

Sense of belonging

Identity (two cultures, integration)

Perspective on the future

Connecting past and future

Dealing with trauma's & loss



Sense of belonging



What do you need to have a sense of belonging?



Step in the shoes of Amir, Marah: what steps help them?



From your experience in your practice ?



To guide the UAC in the task to develop a 'sense of belonging' : what works, what's difficult?



Recap: what can you share in the plenary session?



Tasks social worker

- Focus on **agency** and **resilience**
- Empowerment -> building on strengths, support their wishes, let them make mistakes
- Support in **dealing with trauma's and loss** & if needed motivating for therapy.
- Barriers to recovery (lack of stability, isolation, culture of disbelief) as well as factors facilitating recovery (appropriate therapeutic support, meaningful relationships with adults, stability, resolution of asylum claim etc)
- Building **supportive network** (can be challenging, look for good practices, strengthen existing links)
- Contact **family**, as long as this doesn't effect the child's chance on a permit (France)



Resilience

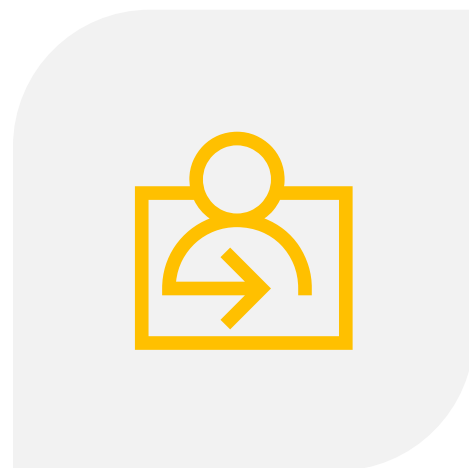
Ability to deal with or recover from a major effort or trauma & a healthy mental state and normal development in a context that could imply the opposite'

Sources

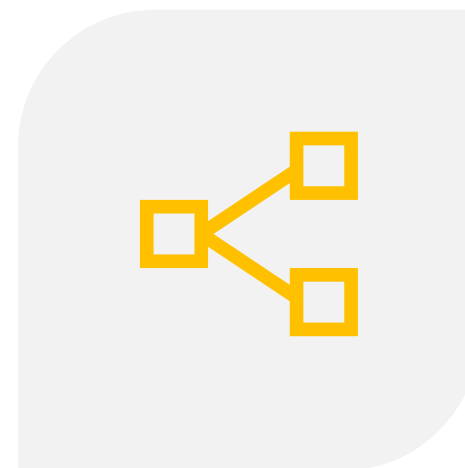
- *Social support environment, connecting with family*
- *Different acculturation strategies*
- *Education*
- *Religion*
- *Avoidance*
- *Hope*



The guidance of the UAC aims to increase resilience by



MINIMIZING RISK FACTORS



REINFORCING PROTECTIVE
FACTORS

In the child

Experiencing agency over the situation

Actively dealing with the possibilities within existing frameworks

Certain level of autonomy or independence

Experiencing privacy

Experiencing safety

Acculturation: being open to the new culture, adapting to a certain extent while retaining their own language and traditions

Make use of education opportunities

Physical activities and stress management

Religion

Employing avoidance and/or silence as a coping strategy

Hope

Ability to stand up for yourself and your family

In the environment

Social support

Professional support

Contact with family

Meaningful relationships

Safe environment

Acculturation: an environment that is interested in and respects their cultural background

Receive appropriate education

Possibility for suitable activities

Possibility to practise religion

Respect for avoidance and silence

Hope

*



Agency

A person's ability and strength to act in a changing situation and to maximise opportunities

How can you recognise behaviour as a form of agency?

What helps the UAC to strengthen their agency?

What can help the social worker to focus on resilience and agency?



Stress PTSD and UAC

- Cumulative stress and trauma (triggers earlier stress, no peace)
- Chronical stress (fear future/ worries family)
- PTSD symptoms : avoiding, reliving, irritability, changes cognitions and mood)
- Impact of stress: sleeping problems, nightmares, worrying, tension, feeling gloomy, anxiousness, loneliness, conduct problems, triggered trauma, concentration problems, anger, passivity
- Complicating factors: miss family, unknown country, uncertain future, missing usual protection of language, food, family, friends, habits, rituals



Window of tolerance

= emotional space in which you can control stress

Window of tolerance

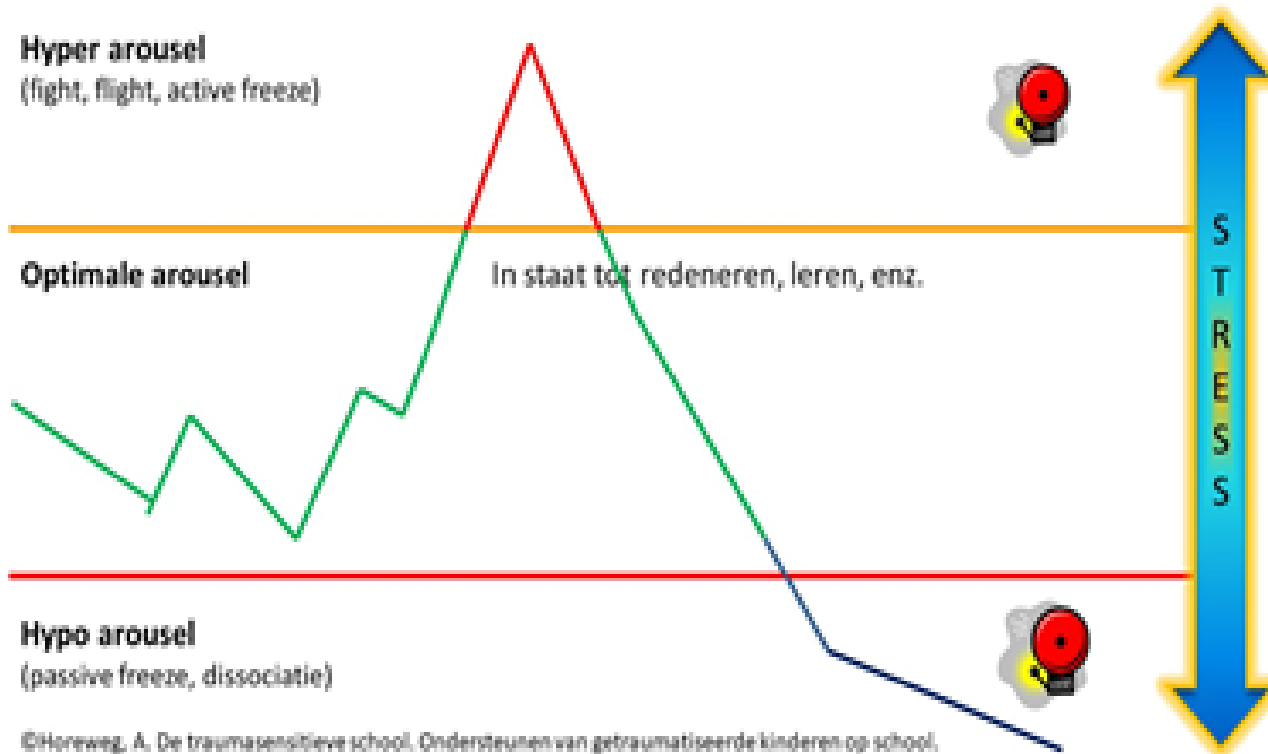
Hyper arousal
(fight, flight, active freeze)

Optimale arousal

In staat tot redeneren, leren, enz.

Hypo arousal
(passive freeze, dissociatie)

©Horeweg, A. De traumasensitieve school. Ondersteunen van getraumatiseerde kinderen op school.



How do you explain how trauma works to a youngster?



What works on chronical stress and PTSD

-
- **Safety and peace**
 - **Comfort of known foods, language, family, habits, religion, rituals.**
 - **Network, support family, friends, caretakers**
 - **Day-night rytm**
 - **Distraction, relaxation (sport, music, writing...)**
 - **Psycho education**
 - **Emotional and stress regulation. Learn to understand triggers and ways to control/prevent strong emotions**
 - **Cultural ways of healing and coping**
 - **Trauma therapy**
 - **Medication**
-

The social workers' role :

- Do not to focus on the trauma, but rather on the **strong resilience** of young refugees.
- Avoid looking for the traumatic stories, **focus on "everything else that makes the person be a young person"**. (solution focused approach) "problem talk creates problems; solution talk creates solutions".
- **Don't ignore** trauma: symptoms of sudden fear and flashbacks, sudden anger, difficulties in concentrating, lack of trust and difficulties in investing in new relationships : refer young refugees **to professionals** who can address the trauma.
- Create a safe comfort zone enabling young people to create spaces of trust, "normality" and opportunities to be young, engaged and busy with topics that concern youth. **No need to perform or tell their story.**
- Learn them to understand their reactions are "**normal reactions in an abnormal situation**". Trauma is a natural physiological reaction to danger, and that there are **ways to then go back to calming the body** and continuing with a normal life.
- **Psychological first aid**: how to calm down an over-active person, to deal with trauma and acute stress, and also to calm oneself down in highly stressful situations. Traffic light metaphor.
- Stay open and curious: **what might be the good reason behind the behaviour of the youngster?** Try to solve it in normal life and give agency.





Exercise traumasensitive guidance

IMPACT



In groups of three:



Read the checklist & focus on: What can social work/ mentor do?



Take notice of ideas for daily work practice



Reflect in your group:



Do you recognise this and can you share a case example or a good practice with the colleagues?



Developing: Building bridges

Integration

Preparing for autonomy

Selfcare social worker

Day two



INTEGRATION

Adapting to the new environment, the dominant culture, while retaining your own culture.

Inclusion

Society includes newcomers, accept Differences, makes it possible to Participate

Social adaptation to a different culture		Adaptation to a dominant culture↓	
		Yes ↓	No↓
Preserving your own culture →	Yes→	Integration	Segregation
	No→	Assimilation	Marginalisation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8ywjhDd_tl



Integration

- **The importance of building networks. (neighbours, the job in the supermarket, the soccer club) somewhere.**
- **PEER to PEER youth groups**
- **Intercultural learning**
- **One friendship can make a big difference**
- **If needed: role models**
- **Create possibilities to connect with two cultures**
- **Peer to peer groups on identity development**
- **Storytelling: connecting past and future (past successes, values, dreams and present ...)**
- **Not as a migrant, a cultural person, but as you unique individual**



Case Marah

School shares
worries about
Marah:

Aunt doesn't
want her to go
to girlfriends,
she gets
isolated and
withdrawn.

Marah is
vulnerable for
'wrong
boys' (social
media)

School calls
social worker
and ask him to
help.



Building bridges

The importance of building bridges

Clarifying the interpretation of behaviour from different cultural frames of reference and create more understanding and possibilities to find a solution for the child's situation.

Invite and support everyone to explain his perspective

Cultural sensitive psycho-education

When helpful involve the biological family system



Multi-perspective based approach

- As a professional you take every perspective equally serious
- From the point of view of each individual, his role/position is logical

Helpful: **Step in the shoes of the persons involved**

Goal: working together in the best interest of the child





Building a bridge : exercise

Prepare a bridging conversation

Outline your plan:

- What's your goal?
- Who's in the meeting?
- Discuss details of the conversation: introduction, interventions

Present the outline in the group.



Amir had to wait for quite a long time before he could move to Semi-Independent Living. He moved to SIL 6 months before turning 18. Amir started socializing with his housemates quite quickly but was showing quite dominant behavior towards the rest of the group. He was taking good care of himself but not of the house. He did not really participate in the cleaning duties of the house. Amir is a very smart boy, but often said that he would stop going to school once he was leaving care (18-21) because his priority was to financially support his family. He was often complaining about his lack of money. From your daily visits to SIL you notice that he was not cooking and eating regularly.

You are concerned if Amir will be ready to be independent and move to the next step. You doubt if he will be able to manage financially, you notice that he does not have a supportive social network and his intention is to leave school once he will turn (18-21).

What needs to be done?



Preparing for autonomy: tasks for the UAC?

Checklist 18

+

Make a list in
groups of 5

SELF RELIANCE SKILLS FOR UAC	
	Examples of skills
Health	looking after your own health sensibly seeking medical assistance in time dealing with chronic stress or post-traumatic symptoms
Personal care	taking care of personal hygiene and clothing
Home	keeping your home neat and clean preparing healthy meals
Income and expenses	handling finances properly, budgeting carefully
Social life	building a social network making friends, having intimate relationships participating in a social environment
Being an asylum seeker	creating realistic future prospects coping with family expectations, contact with family who were left behind finding your feet in a strange, sometimes hostile environment bridging the culture gap
School/work	mastering the language of the host country finding and retaining education/work working on realistic career prospects in Europe, the country of origin or elsewhere looking for appropriate leisure activities
Organisations	following the asylum procedure making use of and interacting with organisations and support services
Travelling	using basic infrastructure and transport options





Amir

- How can I find a job that pays well ?
- Where will I live?
- How much money will I get and what will happen if I don't have no job
- Who will take care of me when I need help?
- What do I tell my parents, who think I'm very succesful?
- What about insurances?
- Will I still see you, my friend social worker?



Amir and social worker in contact:

How is it going?

Growing trust in yourself being autonomous-> is the youngster (in) secure? Fearing becoming autonomous? Having realistic expectations?

Development 'soft skills' -> asking for support, knowing where to find information, building a supportive network

Building 'hard skills' -> Budgeting, ability to set priorities, understanding of bureaucracy, job related regulations, housing, benefits, etc.

Creating and keeping overview on tasks & actions related with adulthood/
inform where to find information and support

Making clear appointments, giving the youngster agency on his process



Tasks social worker Preparing for autonomy phase

- Having overview
- Creating overview & giving practical info
- Find a way to keep it achievable and positive
- Reinforcing 'soft skills' of the youngster:
 - > Asking for support, knowing where to find information, building a supportive network
- Giving trust -> support the child's own autonomy
- Support building a network
- **Focus on what works & small successes**
- Increase agency and resilience



On which of these tasks on the previous sheet can you share a **good practice** ?

Taking turns , making it very specific:

- What was the issue,
- The situation,
- What are **you** most proud of what you did
- What exactly did **you do** to make it work out so well?

Exercise in
pairs
Good practice
interview



A lot to do:
how to keep
it simple and
positive

- A checklist is helpful
- A week plan – evaluation moments
- Focus on the soft skills:
 - Asking for support,
 - Knowing where to find information,
 - Building a supportive network
 - Organising a way to keep overview

What works in reinforcing soft skills ?





Solution based interventions

Using scale questions

Positive exception

Miracle question

In earlier similar situations: how solved?

Indirect compliment (recognise and acknowledge the positive intention)

Give recognition

Normalise

Reframing (static to dynamic)

Ask questions: little steps, how exactly, and what can you do more of?



Focus on what works,
small successes.. solution
focuses approach



What increases your
resilience



How do you keep
overview



And how is your
supportive network
(professional)

Parallel proces social worker



Professional wellbeing and selfcare

- Social workers are not trained in trauma and mental health issues, and often feel overwhelmed by such situations, without knowing the first actions or steps to take to stabilise the person or how to contact the relevant resources.
- The high level of emotional stress social workers have to face and the complexity of the task to assist this particular target group with specific needs can lead to exhaustion and even burnout of social workers.
- The complex societal structures and bureaucratic rules, practical limitations may cause stress and frustration in the phase of preparing for autonomy. The social worker wants to let the youngster go with a good feeling and can suffer of not acting well enough to do so.
- ...



Professional wellbeing

Professionals risks of working with UAC looking at professional wellbeing?

HOW TO PREVENT?

Pairing up with colleagues (buddy-system), intervision, supervision, debriefing with colleagues (and specialist) and follow up

....

Step 1: Self awareness and self care



Selfcare

First step: Self awareness

How well do you know yourself :

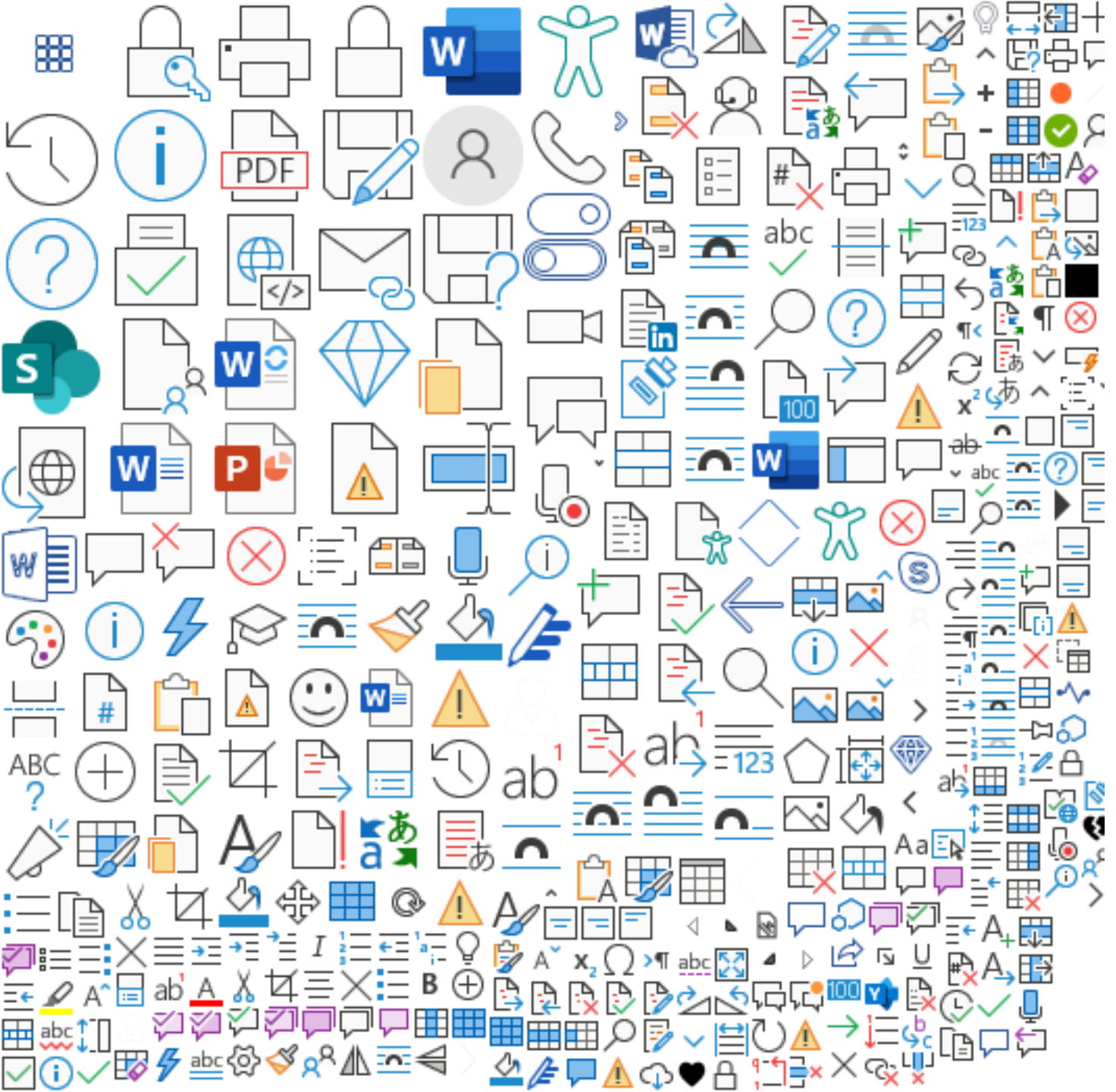
- What works to unstress, reload, to let go,
- What do you need (from others)
- What are you going to do different?

How do we attribute to a organisation culture

stimulating selfcare--- care for each other--- facilitating professional care?

Plenary exchange:


How is support for the social worker organised in your country/organisation? What works well & what is missing?



- Social worker colleagues
- Behavioural scientist/psychologist
- Guardian?
- Teammanager

How is multidisciplinary teamwork organised in your context?

What are strength and vulnerabilities in the system?



Working in a
multidisciplinary
team



Intervision in groups of 4 – Explore the tool

Follow the steps of the intervision structure

One persons brings in a question

One acts as a facilitator (leads)

Follow the steps in the tool

In the end: reflect on how to use it in your
professional context



Day three

Sharing good practices

First steps

Bringing it back to your own context

World café- Sharing good practices

- **Plenary introduction social workers (10 minutes)**
- **Discuss in smaller groups (25 minutes) the topics on the table**
- **Plenary recap (10 minutes)**



Setting a strong intention

Individual reflection (10 minutes)

- What will you take with you from the training?
- Why is this important for your work?

Smaller groups (35 minutes)

Express yourself about what you learned in a creative way:
Draw a picture, a mindmap, write a poem, a song etc.





Reflection in pairs

- What do you want to achieve?
- Who do you need to achieve this?
- What will your first step be?
- What will help you in holding on to this good idea?

Thank you

