

My story

Manual for social- and healthcare professionals



My Story -workbook is designed for social- and healthcare professionals, who work with traumatized refugee children.

Workbook work has been found to be suitable for war-traumatized children, regardless of age, cultural or linguistic background.

The purpose of the workbook is to listen to the child's story, work on traumas, stabilize well-being and support the child's integration.

Centre for Psychotraumatology, Children and Youth team 2019–2021

Making the child visible

The main task of the workbook is to make the child's own story heard and seen. Through the book, life events and experiences are structured into a coherent whole.

In addition, the book gives an opportunity to focus on the future with child's dreams and wishes.

The workbook is divided into three different work parts, which take the form of different coloured pages. The three themes are the home country events, departure from home country and integration into the new country of permanent residence.



The workbook is a versatile tool

The structure of the book allows its versatile use as a tool for the evaluation, treatment and therapy, or as a tool for assessing the need for social services, for example.

Social- and healthcare professionals can use the workbook in their client and care relationships, emphasizing the most important parts of the book for the child.



Supporting integration

Workbook enables to help the child to integrate into society by offering the chance to talk about thoughts and emotions considering child's homeland and culture and new experiences during the integration process in present residence country.

Professional evaluation tool

The workbook method is a sensitive way to get to know a child and gather information about child's life. While doing the workbook exercises together, the professional can observe, for example, the child's ability to perceive time and events, and the child's memory, evaluate motor skills and coping skills.

All this is helpful in assessing and planning care and service needs.

Versatile working methods

You can work on the workbook with the child at home visits or at the appointments. Drawing, painting or, for example, making photo collages using magazine clips and stickers can be chosen as methods. The plastic pocket in the end of the book, can be used to store the materials.

Narrative tool

My Story -workbook is a narrative tool as such, but a professional can also export a pictorial narrative into written form. There is space for writing a child's story next to each pictorial page. The professional can write a story in the form of me based on the child's story, or the child can write his or her own story. The story of me can be read in the end of every session or in the beginning of the next one. It is always possible to go back to previous sessions and add text or pictures to the story.

The child always has the right to modify and correct the story. The edited story can be linked to a visual story, making My Story -workbook a readable picture book.



Chronological processing

The book is structured chronologically so that the child's life story is told from birth to the present.

The workbook draws together a chronology of joys and sorrows, with the aim of accepting the good and bad things of life as part of the child's own story. This allows the child to remember also peaceful and positive periods of life that are often overshadowed by traumatic experiences.



Telling about the traumatic events

The workbook provides a safe way to deal with the traumatic experiences in the child's life as told and experienced by the child.

Working through traumatic issues through the workbook can be easier than talking directly.

Workbook can be used as a distancing tool for difficult memories and emotions.

Before working on trauma, it is good to remember the various safety elements, for example safety items / toys and mental image and body exercises.

Every child is a survivor in their own way. It is good to ask the child's experiences in dealing with difficult issues.

The aim of the work is to help the child to be more in touch with own thoughts and feelings.

Positive memories protect the child

Positive things work as a protective factor for the child. The purpose of the workbook is to strengthen the child in sensitive way.

Traumatic events may have gained a prominent place in the child's mind, so it is also important to highlight the positive events in life and emphasize the child's strengths. The workbook gives concrete expression to life-affirming, protective, joyful and hopeful things in pictures and words.

It is good for a professional to strengthen the child's experience of survival and success.



Speak about emotions

When dealing with life events, it is also important to address the emotions that they evoke.

At the bottom of each page of the book, there is a corner for emotions, where the child can express the feelings the work has evoked.

At the end of each session, it is good to set aside enough time for stabilizing discussions and exercises.



Use of an interpreter

The workbook can also be worked through interpreters. There is no age limit for using an interpreter.

It is good practice to inform the interpreter in advance of the process and the desire to use the same interpreter for all meetings, as well offer the chance to discuss about the work with professionals after the session.

Interpreters may need their own work counselling to handle difficult issues, which can be arranged through their own interpreting agencies.



The book stays with the child

The finished book remains with the child, if he or she so wishes. The child should be reminded of the employee's obligation of confidentiality and the child's right to his or her own story.

It is good to agree with the child which issues can be shared with the parents.



Parental guidance

Parents may be offered their own visits and psychoeducation on how to understand the traumatized child.

Feedback on working

You can give feedback on workbook to the Project Manager of the Centre for Psychotraumatology Children and Youth Team

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