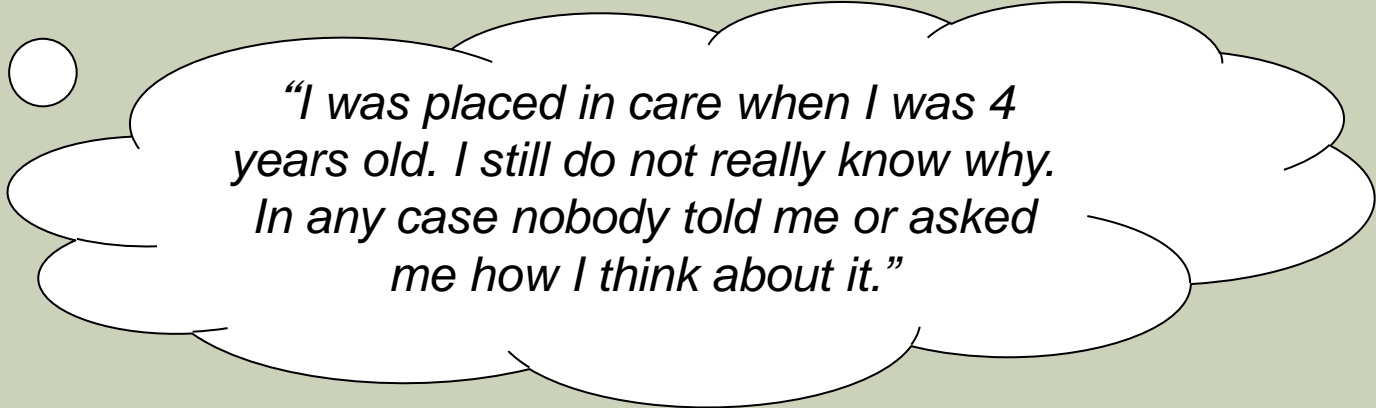
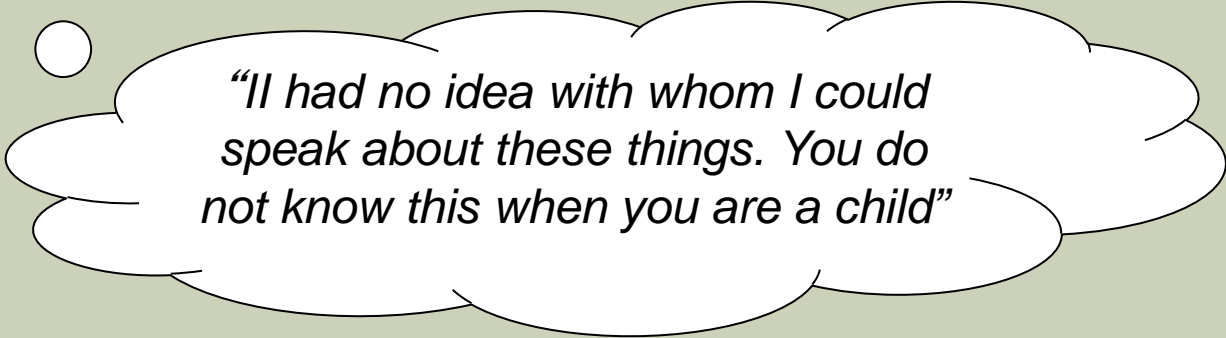


Boy, 12 years old



“I was placed in care when I was 4 years old. I still do not really know why. In any case nobody told me or asked me how I think about it.”

Girl, 9 years old



“I had no idea with whom I could speak about these things. You do not know this when you are a child”

Mijn
Backpack



IFCO
October
2012

Bep van
Sloten
Rinske
Mansens

PRESENTATION

- What is My Backpack?
- How does My Backpack work?
- The theory behind My Backpack
- How do you speak with children about the placement in foster care; What is your attitude
- The implementation in The Netherlands



IMAGINE....

- Close your eyes and imagine that you are in your own room in the house you grew up in.
- Visualise your room: look at your bed and your cupboard, your toys and clothes
- What are your feelings here, how is it to be in this room?
- Imagine that you were just told to pack your bag to move house, away from your parents
- What would you pack?

- Open your eyes
- How did you feel?
- Did you manage to pack your bag?



WHAT IS BACKPACK?

- Backpack is a methodology developed for and by children under the age of 12 who are placed out of home.
- The aim is to speak with these children about their placement in foster care and speak about everything that happened.



BACKPACK TOOLS?

- Workshops for children in foster care
- DVD with a computer game
- Backpack with working materials for the child
- Handbook and documentary for foster carers and professional workers
- Training for workers and foster carers



THE BASIC STORY

- A Duck leaves its family to start living with the dog family.
- It starts with the animation of the Duck packing its own red backpack and moving to the Dogs house where he/she is welcomed.
- In the workshops and the game the child makes up the story of what happened between the moment of leaving and the arrival in the doghouse.



WHY DID WE DEVELOP MY BACKPACK?

- Placement is a difficult subject to speak with children about. “nobody said anything”
- There are limited tools to speak with children about how they experienced the placement and all that happened.
- It is a measure to give a voice to the child.



WHY IS SPEAKING WITH CHILDREN IMPORTANT?

- Placement in care is a traumatic experience.
- Trauma makes that one loses control.
- It is essential to give the child control over their life again in order to be able to “ survive” and understand itself, other people and the environment.



THE THEORY BEHIND MY BACKPACK

■ Three streams from psychotherapy:

1. Narrative therapy
2. Mentalisation based treatment for children
3. Creative therapy



NARRATIVE THERAPY

- Create one's own story about the placement: a story that fits in how children experience life and not a story that is “forced on the child” through others
- The child discovers that placement has happened to him or her but that she also has been able to play an active role in how the story unfolds.



MENTALISATION BASED TREATMENT FOR CHILDREN (MBKT)

- Give words and recognition to the inner feelings of the child.
- Enlarge the self-agency of the child: controle about your self and the world around you.
- Regulate emotions and enlarge the self-image and self-esteem.



CREATIVE THERAPY

- In a safe, and controlled manner re-live and get over a very traumatic experience.
Less threatening: handpuppet, together behind the computer, no eyecontact
- Using play, music and art tasks age appropriate.



ATTITUDE OF ADULT

- “Not knowing position”, the child is the expert. The adult has an open and curious attitude, Asks open questions: how, what, where, why etc?
- “An empathetic and mentalisation encouraging attitude”, the adult goes with the child in its inner world. He or she gives words to the experiences of the child and returns them to the child in a questions: “ Am I correct that.....?”



ATTITUDE ADULT

- The adult looks carefully at the affect of the child and ensures that the child reaches his/her emotions but is not overwhelmed by the emotions. (where do you feel this?)
- The adult uses affect-regulating technics (distance versus closeness, rational versus emotional, speaking versus feeling).



ATTITUDE ADULT

- A 'client-centered attitude', i.e. an attitude where the working relation with the "client" in which he or she feels accepted and approached with respect and empathy.
- The adult is authentic/ real and at the same time professional. Children see and feel immediately when you are not honest and fair. (caring, affording, offer holding, be real (your sorry touches me)



CONTACT

- Mijn Backpack is Dutch project and developed by G-Kracht in The Hague, practise for mental health for children and youth.
- The coordination of the project is with Bep van Sloten, international alternative care and foster care expert (bepvansloten@ziggo.nl)
- Trainings and workshops are delivered by Rinske Mansens en Michèle Pflitsch, child psychologists.



THE DOCUMENTARY



THE TOOLS

- Handpuppets: the ducks
- Emotion Cards
- Interactive Computer game
- Handbook how to work with materials and tips for workers and foster carer
- Documentary to be used for training in speaking with children

THE METHOD

- Placement workers introductions in the method and training on how to work with the tools
- Groups of 10 children between ages 4-12 come together in age groups for a workshop in which they get familiar with the story, the handpuppets, working with emotion cards, music etc.
- Foster parents and workers workshop while children have theirs
- Within 2 weeks after the workshop worker makes appointment with child to play the computer"game".
- Child works in book made during game: colouring, writing, adding
- Worker and foster carer can use book for further work with child
- Foster carer can use duck and emotion cards.