



## Child Reflex

### Do you see the child in every story?

<https://kindreflex.be/child-reflex-int/>

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# Program

1. Introduction
2. Why Child Reflex?
3. Child Reflex step-by-step



 **Child Reflex**



**Child Reflex**  
**Do you see the child in every story?**

## De Kindreflex

### The Child Reflex is a tool with a broad scope:

The Child Reflex encourages professionals to have a conversation with their adult clients about the subject of parenting. Parents are given the opportunity to talk freely about their children and their concerns. Where necessary, professionals can provide support to parents in their role as mothers or fathers.

The Child Reflex helps professionals detect troubling family situations and restore safety as quickly as possible.



## Ontstaan

- ✓ Inspired by the Dutch 'Kindcheck'
- ✓ Developed by researchers Coppens, De Cuyper and Van Audenhove of the LUCAS KU Leuven research institute and Steunpunt WVG with focus on the mental health care sector
- ✓ Translated to a Flemisch context with more focus on prevention
- ✓ Step-by-step plan with supporting materials that can be translated to different professional groups
- ✓ Active in the field of adult mental health care since 2018
- ✓ Active in the field of general well being and justice centers since 2020
- ✓ Currently piloting in 2 emergency departments of general hospitals

# Roadmap Child Reflex



**Step 1: Have a conversation about the children and parenting**



**Step 2: Try to gauge the safety at home and the well-being of the children**



**Step 3: Support the client in their role as a parent**

**Step 4: Investigate further if there are any concerns and if parents are willing to cooperate**



**Step 5: Restore safety**

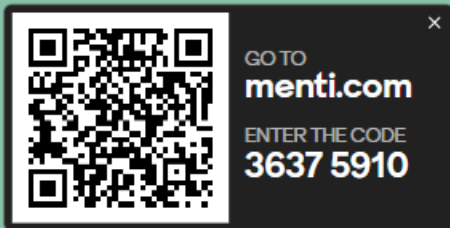
**Step 6: Involve a mandated facility**





# What are reasons to talk with parents about the impact of domestic violence on children?

Waiting for responses ...





## 2 Why Child Reflex



## Flemish Figures

### Child maltreatment

- 1 child in every classroom

### Domestic violence

- 25 000 police reports (2022)

### Children of parents with mental health problems

- $\frac{1}{4}$  children (DSM)



Vanaf het moment van melding bij Veilig Thuis zijn gezinnen 1,5 jaar lang gevolgd.

91%

van de kinderen mishandeld, verwaarloosd of getuige van partnergeweld



**VERWEY** Instituut  
**JONKER**

Bron: Augeo



Helft van kinderen ontvangt geen hulp



jongeren hebben traumaklachten hechtingsproblemen, emotionele onveiligheid en probleemgedrag

## 9 out of 10

parents believe their children are **unaware** of the domestic violence at home or that it won't leave a mark. However, **most children are aware**, and the impact can be profound.



# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)

*The three types of ACEs include*

## ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

## NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

## HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently

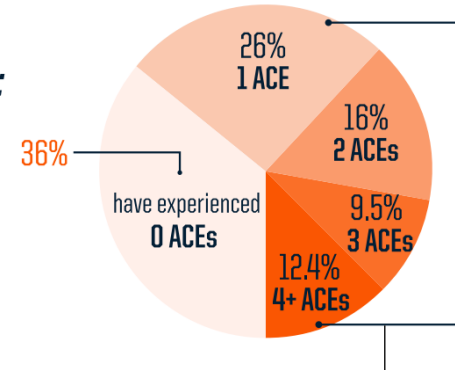


Substance Abuse



Divorce

*Of 17,000 ACE study participants:*



**64% have at least 1 ACE**


















ACE onderzoek

# WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes



## Possible Risk Outcomes:

BEHAVIOR				
 Lack of physical activity	 Smoking	 Alcoholism	 Drug use	 Missed work
PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH				
 Severe obesity	 Diabetes	 Depression	 Suicide attempts	 STDs
 Heart disease	 Cancer	 Stroke	 COPD	 Broken bones



## Positive and Compensatory Childhood Experiences (PCE's)

Feel able to talk with family about your feelings

Feel that your family stood by you during difficult times

Enjoy participating in community traditions

Feel a sense of belonging in high school

Feel supported by friends

Have at least two non-parent adults who took a genuine interest in you

Feel safe and protected by an adult in your home

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**3** Child Reflex step-by-step

# Roadmap Child Reflex



**Step 1: Have a conversation about the children and parenting**



**Step 2: Try to gauge the safety at home and the well-being of the children**



**Step 3: Support the client in their role as a parent**

**Step 4: Investigate further if there are any concerns and if parents are willing to cooperate**



**Step 5: Restore safety**

**Step 6: Involve a mandated facility**

## Stappenplan



Healthcare professionals take the first 3 steps as a standard procedure with every client. The next 3 steps depend on the situation



The first 2 steps take place in the beginning of the process with the client and should be possible for every professional.



The last 3 steps are a shared responsibility within an organization or in a network

# Who asks a client during an intervention or first conversation if there are children?



0  
Yes

0  
No



# Step 1 Have a conversation about the children and parenting



## Step 1 Have a conversation about the children and parenting



- Communicate that the topic of children and parenthood is a standard part of your organisation's way of working.
- During the conversation, ask if the client has minor children at home or expects a child (pregnancy).
- If the client is staying as a resident, remember to ask if any childcare has been arranged.
- Record any relevant information regarding their children in their file: the number of children, their date of birth, their names and whether they reside with the client permanently.

# Who asks about the experience of parenting during a 1st or 2nd conversation with a client/parent?





## Step 2

**Try to gauge the safety at home and the well-being of the children**

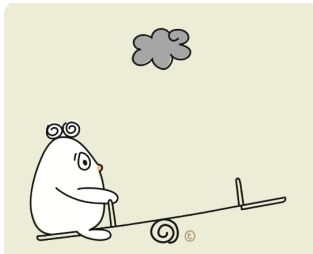
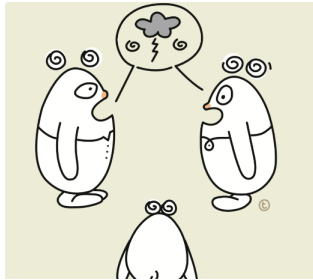


## Step 2 Try to gauge the safety at home and the well-being of the children



- Always consult other colleagues or an expert to make an initial assessment of the children's safety and well-being. Labelling a home situation as troubling is a subjective matter. Your own values and norms can colour your judgment.
- Write a note in the client file whenever you have the feeling that something is not right about the home situation and why.

## BABO



## How to talk about domestic violence ?

### 1) Ask stimulating open questions:

- ❑ What do children see/hear?
- ❑ Where are the children during the discussion/violence?
- ❑ What do they do/how do they respond?
- ❑ How would they experience this?
- ❑ What behaviour do they show?
- ❑ Do you talk about it with your child?
- ❑ Who can be there for them?

### 2) Inform parents about the impact of violence on the children (step 3 or 4)



## Practice: What next?



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Single mother with depression, sleeps a lot

Absent impression

Many conflicts with ex-partner (father of their children)  
concerning visitation rights

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2 children:

- boy 4 years old

- girl 7 years old

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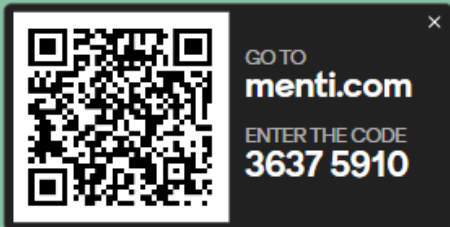
Try to determine what the impact of the violence on the well-being of the children is

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2nd conversation

# Which challenges do you meet in speaking with parents about the impact of domestic violence on children?

Waiting for responses ...



# How to engage in a conversation with parents?

## What parents say

They are too young



## What we reply

- The younger the more vulnerable
- Children see, hear and feel what is going on but can not explain it to themselves
- 'The body keeps the score'
- Unborn children also experience stress
- [www.geweldenzwangerschap.be](http://www.geweldenzwangerschap.be)

# How to engage in a conversation with parents?

## What parents say

They weren't there, they were sleeping, watching tv, in school...



## What we reply

Children see /hear / feel:

- Children are like sponges
- Tension before and after the conflict
- Hypervigilant
- Stressresponse

# How to engage in a conversation with parents?

## What parents say

My child doesn't give any signal that something is wrong



## What we reply

- Children want to spare their parents
- Inside / outside
- Not learned to express emotions
- Learned to keep emotions to themselves
- Coping



# How to engage in a conversation with parents?

## What parents say

We make it worse by talking about it



## What we reply

- Children make up their own story
- Sitting and dealing alone with troublesome emotions, thoughts and worries
- Talking about it helps them to understand what they feel and experience
- Important for children to get permission of parents to speak openly about problems with someone outside the family

# How to engage in a conversation with parents?

## What parents say

We don't want to involve the children



## What we reply

- The children are involved
- They feel guilty and responsible
- Their vision of the world around them alters as an affect of the violence
- Adults should have the courage to explain what is ok / not ok, reassure and take feelings of guilt away
- Children should be able to be children



## Reasons why children don't speak up:

- Feelings of guilt
- Feelings of shame
- Loyalty
- No permission to speak: bearer of 'family secret'
- Consequences of speaking / fear
- Children want to spare their parents
- The child is used to it



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**Children never stop loving their parents,  
only themselves**



“I'm so afraid that it is all my fault...”

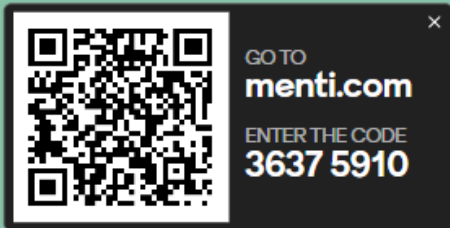


## Feelings of guilt: what can you do as a professional

- Encourage parents and support them to talk about feelings of guilt with their children.
- Animatie stichting Augeo:  
<https://vimeo.com/864009768/c07ec02a56?share=copy>

# Who can give support in a child's life?

Waiting for responses ...



## Step 3

Support the client in their role as a parent



## Work in partnership with parents on the well-being of their children

- Every parent wants the best for his/her child
- Every parent is expert concerning his/her child
- Parenting can be difficult for everyone
- Wanting the best does not automatically mean being able to do the best



## What can parents do?

Speaking about  
important  
matters with  
children

Participating and  
showing interest  
in the life of your  
child

Knowing friends

Regulating  
parental stress

Providing  
psycho-education  
for kids

Creating room for  
emotions

Person of  
confidence for  
children

Possibility to be  
just a kid

## Facilitate practical en social support for parents

- Help with administration
- Planning daycare and activities for children
- Introduction in community centers
- Financial support
- Help with finding jobs
- ...

## Help developing parental skills

- Home visitations by child and family centers
- Positive parenting programs
- Organisations who work with volunteers in supporting parenting

## Inform parents about the influence of aces on parenting and arrange support

- Adults with > 4 ACE's = enhanced risk having problems with attachment and relationships, psychological problems and unhealthy life style
- **30 – 40% passes on ACE's to children**
- Defected stress center as a cause of ace's:
  - Not responding or stressed out towards child
  - Being extremely critical or hostile towards child
  - Having a chaotic or unpredictable style of parenting
  - Difficulty in managing the household
- Give parents psycho-education about stress:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8gLstY6dYc>



I keep hearing it  
takes a village to  
raise a child.

Do they just  
show up?  
Or is there like,  
a number to call?

# Who already experienced a gut feeling about problems within the homesituation of a client?



0  
Yes

0  
No



# Did you ever consult a colleague about this gut feeling ?



0  
Yes

0  
No





## Step 4

Further investigate your concerns and explore if parents are willing to cooperate



## Step 4 Further investigate your concerns and if parents are willing to cooperate



- Collect additional data to make an assessment of the situation. In doing so, look at both the risk and protective factors
  - If necessary, use an assessment tool that identifies the blind spots.
  - Listen to key people (partner, children, grandparents, ...). If you involve children, you need their permission. After all, from the age of 12, children are already allowed to make a lot of decisions for themselves.
  - Keep in mind that your own values, norms and experiences influence the way you interpret the situation. Therefore, always discuss the results with a fellow counsellor or expert before you talk to the client again.

## Step 4 Investigate further your concerns and if parents are willing to cooperate



- State your concerns concretely in a conversation with the client and be open to alternative explanations.
- Put together all the collected information and decide as a team if the situation is troubling.
- If you decide that the situation is troubling, continue to assess whether the client is willing to change the situation.

# Do you also create a safety plan with the children involved?



0

Option 1

0

Option 2



# Step 5

## Restore safety



## Step 5 Restore safety



- Create a safe situation for the children. Start working with the client yourself or involve an appropriate support facility
  - Get started with the client's context and involve the whole family
  - If necessary, set up help for the children as well
  - Discuss parenting regularly with the client and stay alert for troubling signs
  - Record the progress in the client file

# Step 6

## Involve a mandated facility



## Step 6 Involve a mandated facility

- Contact a mandated facility
- Inform the client of this and prepare them.
- Make a note of any follow-up actions in the client file.
- Together with the mandated facility, see what further actions you can take as a counsellor to help restore the safety.
- Stay in touch with the mandated facility to monitor the client's progress.





## Practice: What next?



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Single mother with depression, sleeps a lot  
Absent impression  
Many conflicts with ex-partner (father of their children)  
concerning visitation right

---

2 children:

- boy 4 years old
  - girl 7 years old
- 


Try to determine what the impact of the violence on the well-being of the children is

---

2nd conversation



**5** To work in a partnership



**6** Additional information  
(dutch)

# Infofiches Augeo

<https://www.augeo.nl/nl-nl/themas/trauma-en-stress/ingrijpende-jeugdervaringen/>

- [Ouderschap](#)
- [Verslaving](#)
- [Fysieke gezondheid](#)
- [Mentale gezondheid](#)
- [Onderwijs en leren](#)
- [Voeding, sport en bewegen](#)
- [Jongerentaskforce](#)

# Geweld in gezinnen

Nederlands onderzoek naar de effectiviteit van de aanpak van geweld in gezinnen

Kwestie van lange adem:

Samenvatting van het onderzoek

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiE7wgTT2ZI&t=1s>

Infographic

<https://www.augeo.nl/-/media/Files/Infographics-Kwestie-van-lange-adem-kan-huiselijk-geweld-en-kindermishandeling-echt-stoppen.ashx>

Discussiemateriaal:

[https://www.augeo.nl/demo/R9\\_Gesprekshandreiking/](https://www.augeo.nl/demo/R9_Gesprekshandreiking/)

## Kopp problematiek

<https://www.psychosenet.be/naasten/kopp-kinderen/>

Uitleg + link naar uitzending rond Karrewiet

<https://familieplatform.be/je-bent-kind-van-je-bent-een-kopp-kind>

Veerkracht helpers:

Uitleg rond kopp + fijne animatie met uitleg

# Psycho-educatie en veerkracht



- <https://www.augeo.nl/nl-nl/themas/trauma-en-stress/>

Uitleg rond stress en trauma bij kinderen en animatie rond de window of tolerance

- Veerkracht – versterkers:
- <https://www.augeo.nl/nl-nl/themas/veerkracht-en-steun/veerkracht-versterkers/>



Do you see the child in every story?



# Contact

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