



DEALING WITH CHILD-TO-PARENT VIOLENCE: WHERE RESEARCH MEETS PRACTICE

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CRIME & SOCIETY
RESEARCH GROUP



Interactie-Academie

INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

1. What is child-to-parent violence and abuse?
2. How do Family members involved:
 - explain CPVA?
 - deal with CPVA?
 - what are their needs & barriers to seek/receive help?
3. Responding to CPVA
4. What can you do?

1. WHAT IS CHILD-TO-PARENT VIOLENCE AND ABUSE?

DEFINING CPVA

Child-to-parent violence and abuse can be defined as (personal adaptation of Holt, 2015):

- A pattern of harmful & controlling behavior
- Instigated by a minor or adult child
- Abusive behavior: verbal, emotional/psychological, financial, sexual, physical
- To some extent intentional & control achieved through fear (Baker & Bonnicksen, 2021)
- Parents unhealthily adapt own behavior to accommodate child
- Parents are not dependent on the care of their child (vs. elder abuse)
- ≠ 'typical' adolescent behavior (Paterson et al., 2002)

Parent maltreatment

Violent and challenging behaviour (VCB)

Adolescents' aggression towards parents

Parent abuse

Mother abuse

Adolescent family violence (AFV)

Adolescent-initiated parent abuse

Filial violence

Filio-parental violence

Adolescent-to-parent abuse (APA)

Adolescent-to-parent violence (APV)

Adolescent violence and abuse
towards parents

Adolescent-to-parent violence and
abuse (APVA)

Child-to-parent violence (CPV)

Child-to-mother violence (CMV)

Child-to-parent aggression (CPA)

Battered parents syndrome

Child-to-parent abuse (CPA)

Child-to-parent maltreatment

Adolescent violence in the home
(AVITH)

Child and adolescent to parent violence and
abuse (CAPVA)

Childhood challenging, violent or aggressive behaviour (CCVAB)



CONTEXT PHD: RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

- How do family members experiencing child-to-parent violence and abuse deal with this phenomenon?
 1. What does CPVA mean for involved parents, children and siblings?
 2. How do concerned parents, children and siblings experience and explain CPVA?
 3. What mechanisms are in play within the family when dealing with CPVA?
- How do professionals in Belgium understand and deal with CPVA and what needs/obstacles do they experience in doing so?



TYPES OF ABUSE

- Physical

*"My brother was very aggressive for a long time to which my parents were victims several times and had to be treated for their injuries (**black eye, dislocated shoulder**)."*

(a sister; Demeyere, 2023)

*"My daughter was not allowed to go out at night because she had been missing the nights before and only came home in the middle of the night. She went outside anyways. I said this is not what we are going to do. To which she immediately **physically attacked me. Hitting, kicking, scratching and said she was going to kill me. Never been physically attacked so badly before.**" (a mother; Demeyere, 2023)*

TYPES OF ABUSE

- Verbal

“... The derogatory things that would come out of my boys’ mouth is a major concern...not just calling me ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ and things like that, really disgusting things that they’ve told me to do with my friend Amanda because they hate her...they’ve gone and told me to do sexual things” (a mother; Howard & Rottem, 2008)

“I was just screamin’ for hours, callin’ her [mother] names, tellin’ her how disgusting she is, tellin’ her how much she failed.” (daughter, 17 years; Baker, 2020)

TYPES OF ABUSE

- Emotional or psychological

*"Son constantly bosses me around. **He knows perfectly well how to make me feel bad and seems to enjoy it.** Recently started behaving physically aggressive as well"
(a mother; Demeyere, 2023)*

*"He tried to pit my parents against each other, often by treating one of them (usually my mother) as the 'bad one'. In doing so, he also often **questioned my parents' parenting by stating that they did not know how to parent or by wishing he had other parents. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish where forms of 'blackmail' begin and end.**" (a sister; Demeyere, 2023)*

TYPES OF ABUSE

- Economic or material

“My sister now lives on her own, has a job so she also has money, but she still asks my mum for money because she supposedly can't pay things off. But she would rather spend money on a pair of shoes or a nice dinner out with friends instead of paying off her bills first.” (a sister; Demeyere, 2023)

*“He wanted 5 euros. Lamp smashed. candlestick smashed. Clock destroyed. Half the contents of the fridge on the floor. The neighbours enjoyed themselves again “
(a mother; Demeyere, 2023)*

IMPACT ON FAMILY MEMBERS INVOLVED



Physical



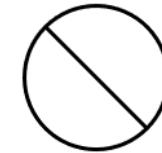
**Emotional
& Mental
health**



Education



**Legal
implications**



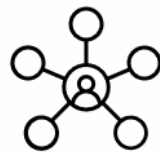
**Restrictions of space,
movement & personal
agency**



**Property
damage**



Financial



**Relationship
breakdowns**



**Shame &
stigma**



peacekeeping

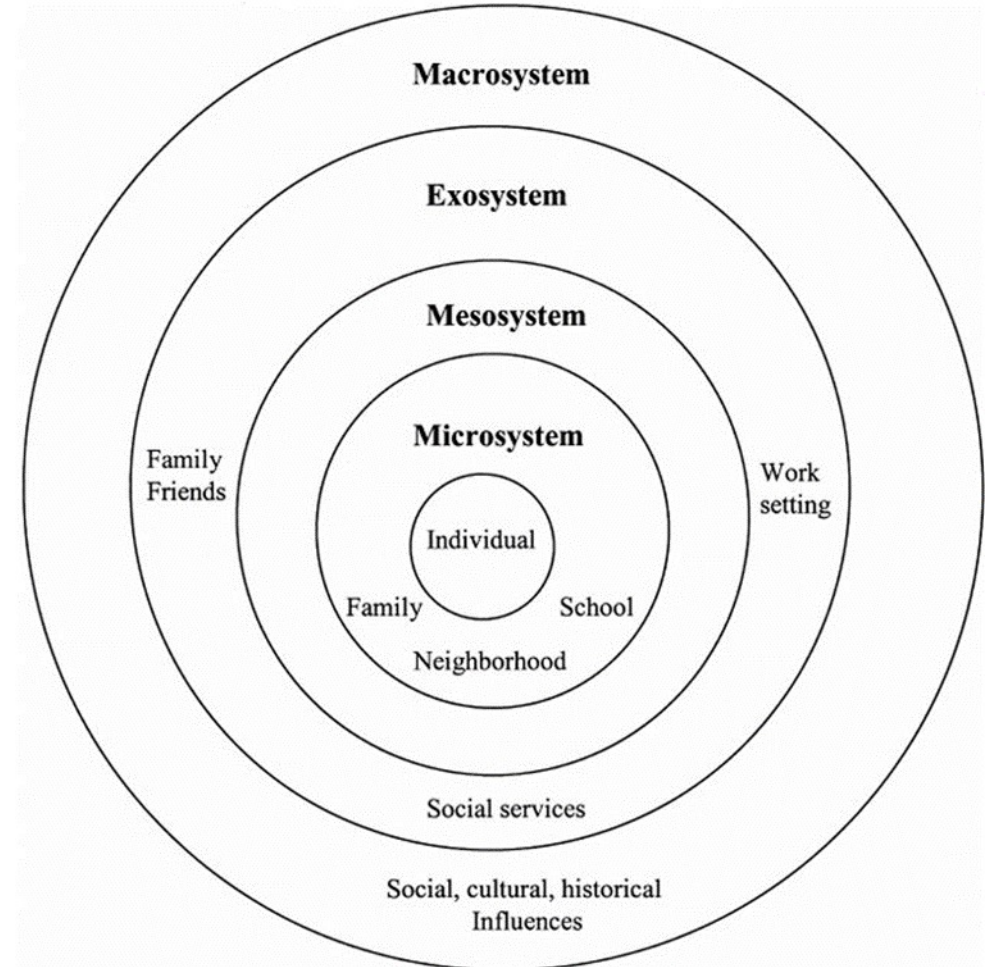
2. HOW DO FAMILY MEMBERS INVOLVED ...

... EXPLAIN CPVA?

Understanding CPVA as a social problem

Ecological model of Bronfenbrenner

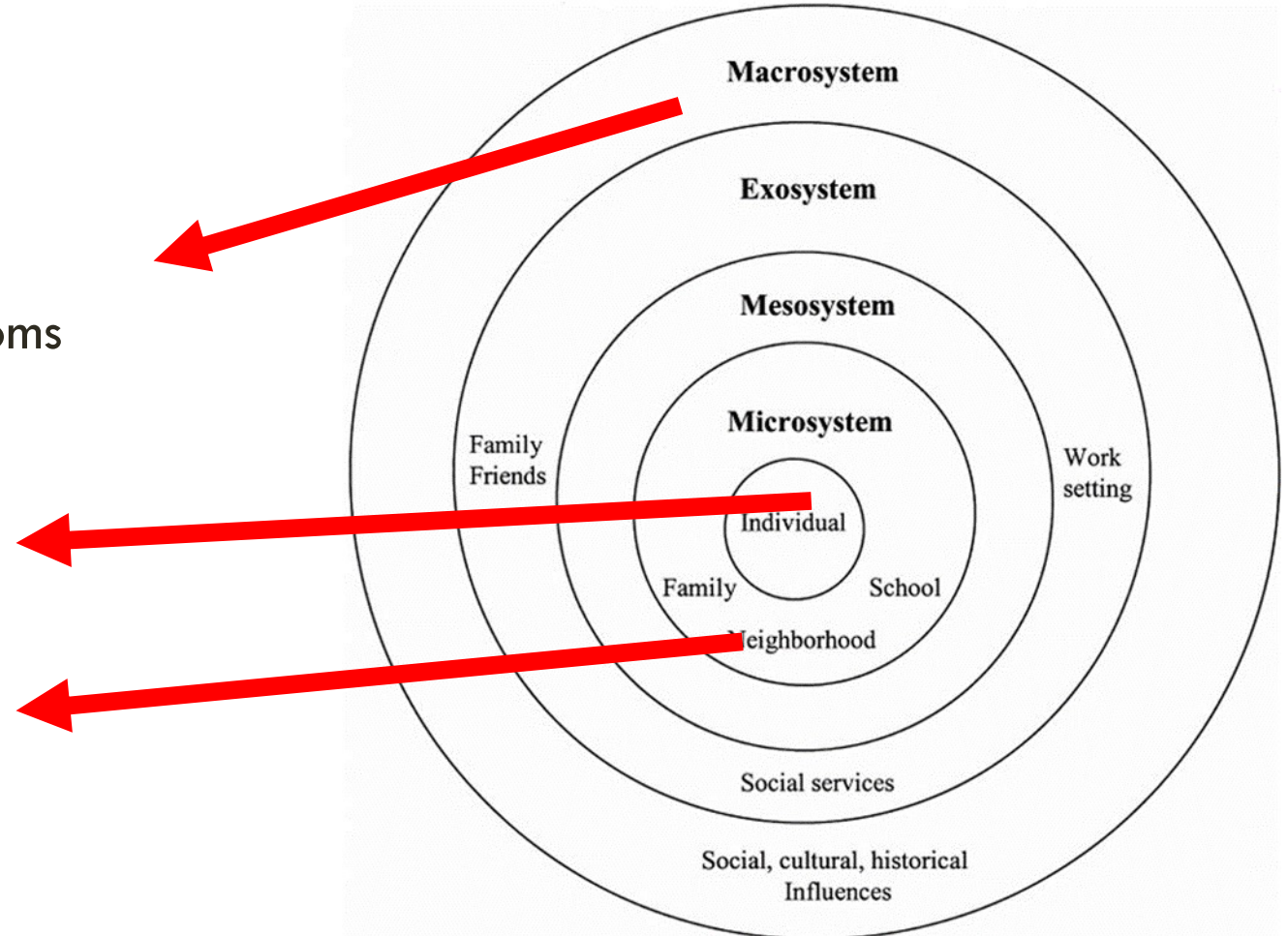
- Individual factors = biological and personality factors
- **Microsystem:** relationship factors
- **Exosystem:** community level factors
- **Macrosystem:** society level factors



... EXPLAIN CPVA?

Parents (Demeyere, 2023)
Preliminary findings

- Expectations around regulation & entitlement to privileges and freedoms
- Don't know
- Emotion regulation
- Neurodivergence
- Trauma (adoption)

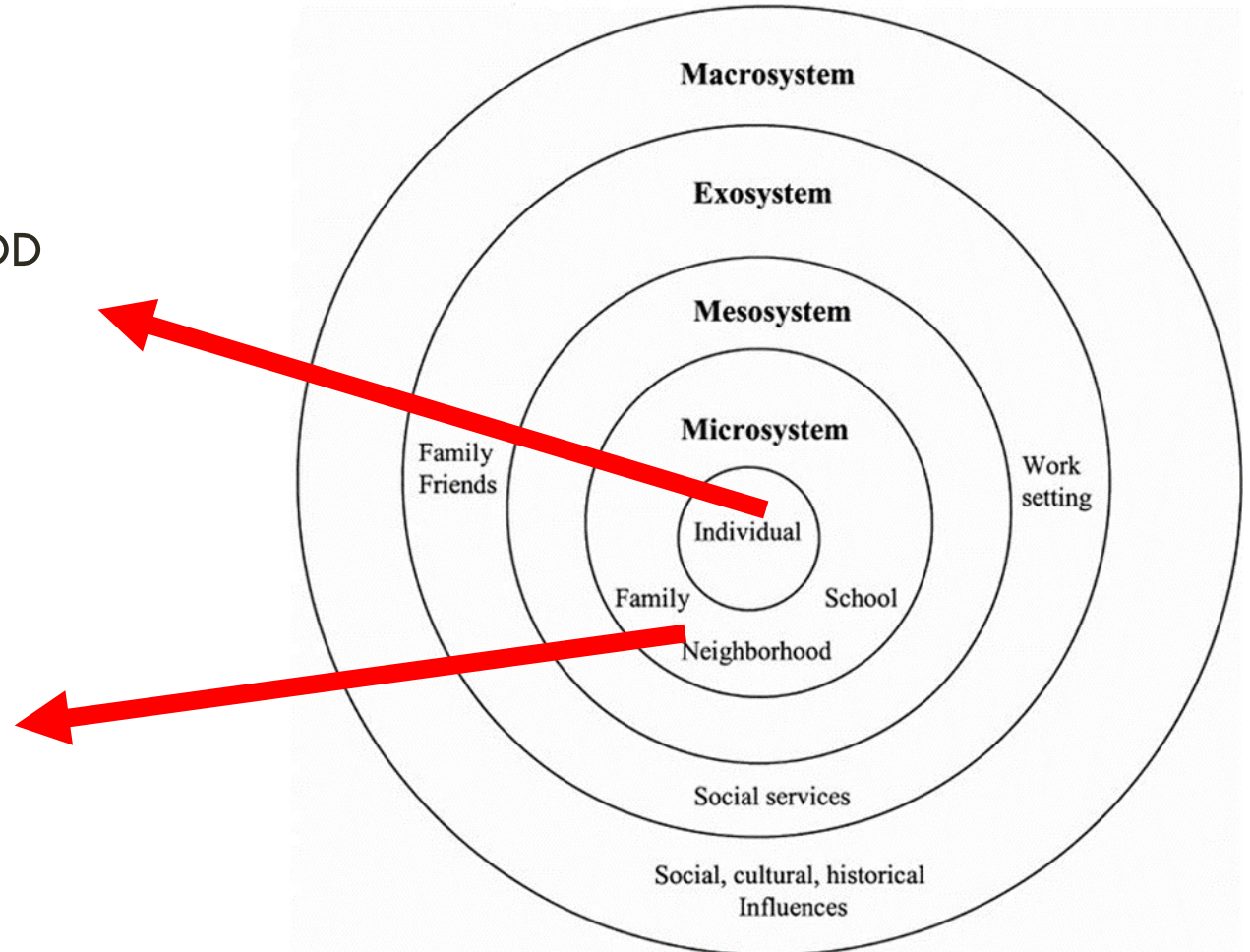


... EXPLAIN CPVA?

Siblings (Demeyere, 2023)

Preliminary findings

- Neurodivergence: (Diagnosed) ASD & ADD
- Emotion regulation: Sibling can't control herself/himself
- Adolescence: revolting against parents
- Parenting skills: not enough boundaries (doesn't take no for an answer)
- Divorce
- Wrong friends in school (peers)

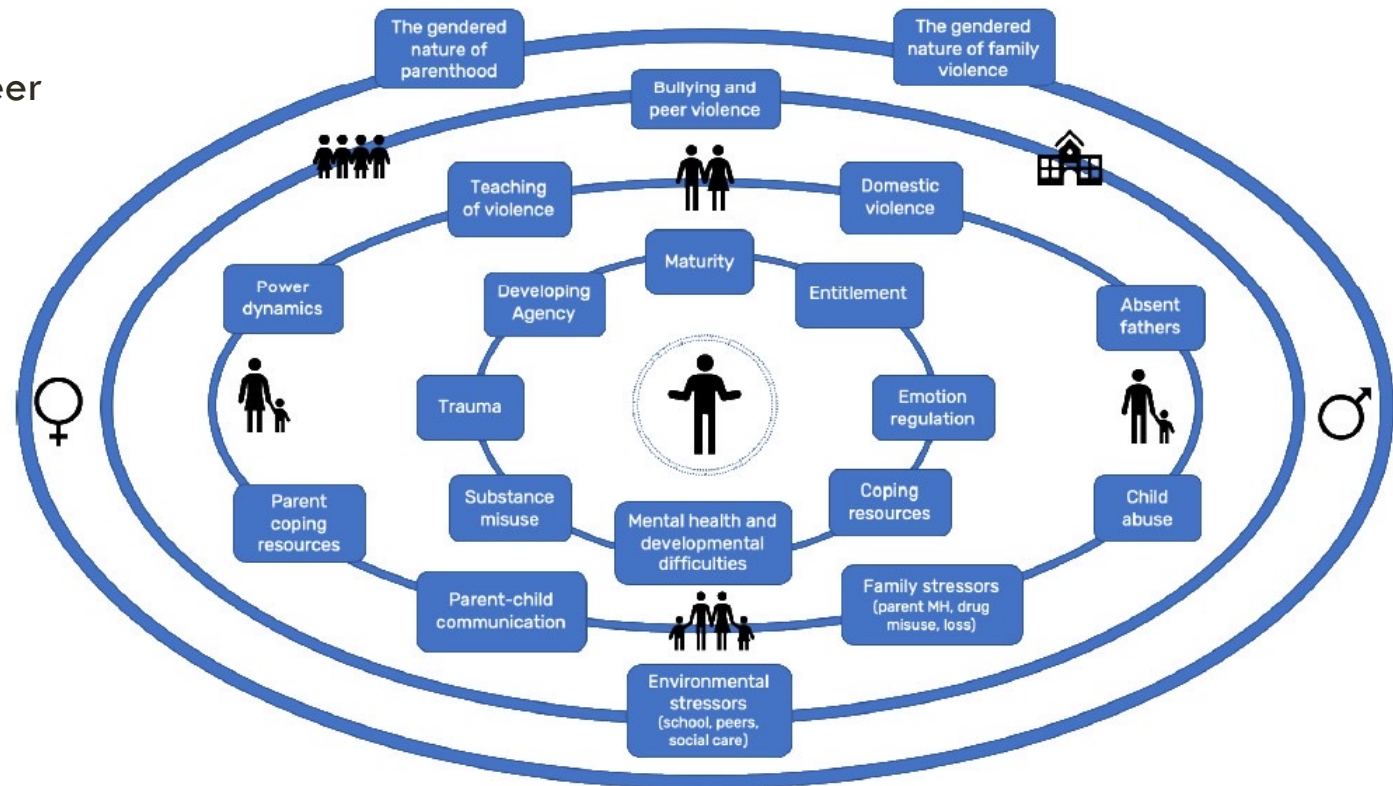


... EXPLAIN CPVA?

Children (Baker, 2021)

- Direct or indirect victims of family violence & peer violence
 - Trauma: anger, stress, dissociation, adaptive response,
- Difficulties in managing emotions
- Parental regulation & control
- Expectations around regulation & entitlement to privileges and freedom
 - (= normative constructions of childhood & adolescence)
- Poor communication
- Stress (of young people & parents)
- Problem of parenting (mother blame)

Figure 9.3: Influencing factors and contexts in the social ecology of parent abuse



... DEAL WITH CPVA?

"Sad, not respected" (a mother; Demeyere, 2023)

*"Powerless"
(a mother; Demeyere, 2023)*

*"pretty bad and insecure/unimportant
because of it." (a sister; Demeyere 2023)*

*"Sad , frustrated, desperate"
(a mother; Demeyere, 2023)*

I FEEL/FELT ...

*"Powerless, sad, angry. I often feel immensely sad in my
parents' place who are trying tremendously hard to help my
brother while he continuously curses them."
(a sister; Demeyere, 2023)*

*"Belittled, small, unable to raise a son properly"
(a mother; Demeyere 2023)*

*"Anxious, epressed, stressed"
(a mother; Demeyere 2023)*

*"angry and hurt and sometimes irritated that things
have to turn out this way again"
(a sister; Demeyere, 2023)*

*"unsafe, stressed and sad for my
mother" (a sister, 2023)*

*"I'm worn out, dissapointed, sad"
(a mother; Demeyere, 2023)*

... DEAL WITH CPVA

Reacting to violence

- Trying to calm the child down (parents)
- Confirming warmth and safety (parents)
- Physical violence (selfdefence/ loss of self-control) (parents & siblings)
- Managing feelings of hatred (parents & siblings)
- Ignoring the violence (siblings)
- Standing up for parent & confronting sibling (siblings)
- Punishing (parents)

Narratives

- Justifying the violence
- Blaming themselves
- Minimalizing violence & praising good qualities of the child
- Hiding the violence from friends and family (fear of rejection)

Avoiding violence

- Avoiding arguments and punishments
- Giving in to avoid argument/escalation
- Installing locks on room door
- Withdrawing/ distancing themselves (parents & siblings)
- ...

“I try to stay calm but sometimes I get angry and start yelling” (a mother; Demeyere, 2023)

“Yes, with me it resulted in me living much more withdrawn in the house actually. ... I no longer felt free to walk around the house or go to the garden when he was sitting there with friends, for example.” (a stepfather; Demeyere 2022)

“No one really dares to say anything anymore. Everyone lives like that when she is here, we have to see what mood she’s in.” (a mother; Demeyere, 2022)

... DEAL WITH CPVA?

Help-seeking

- Informal help-seeking
 - Partner, family, friends, colleagues
- Formal help-seeking
 - For themselves:
 - Therapist, psychologist, general practitioner
 - For the child:
 - Psychologist, psychiatrist, CAW, admission child psychiatry, CGG, different forms of therapy, GP
- Experiences are mixed
 - Relieved, helpful, confirmation, getting understanding
 - Not helpful (long trajectories with no results), feeling blamed, help tired, expensive
 - Duality: need to share v.s. ambiguous feelings about what to share
 - Sceptic about the result of professional help for sibling



WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS & BARRIERS FOR SEEKING HELP?

Needs

- A need for great sensitivity & not minimizing parents/children's experiences
- There is no such thing as The victim/perpetrator
- Open & encouraging environment = safe space with no judgement
- Understanding from wider support system facilitates seeking help
- Need for targeted and appropriate responses & more culturally informed solutions

Barriers

- Lack of awareness
- Feelings of shame, isolation and fear of stigma
- Limited resources
- Fear of criminalisation and legal consequences
- Lack of training and understanding of professionals

3. RESPONDING TO CPVA

CASE ORIENTATION



Interactie-Academie:

institute for systemic theory, training, practice, and development

Domains:

- Trauma & Violence
- Parenthood & Family Issues
- Partnership & Gender
- Children, young people and their development
- Divorce & Mediation
- Psychological & Social Difficulties
- Work & Organization

Personal case involvement in working with parents

- Child-to-parent violence and abuse
- Extreme social withdrawal ('Hikikomori') in adolescents and (young) adults, living at home

CASE EXAMPLE

Jenny and Michael are the parents of Dave, who is 15 years old. They divorced 5 years ago. Initially, Dave spent equal amounts of time with his mother and dad, but over time, his contact with his father decreased significantly, and he now only visits him on special occasions like birthdays or holidays. Michael has recurring periods of severe depression, which were also a major factor for the collapse of the relationship. Jenny contacts me to talk about her situation.

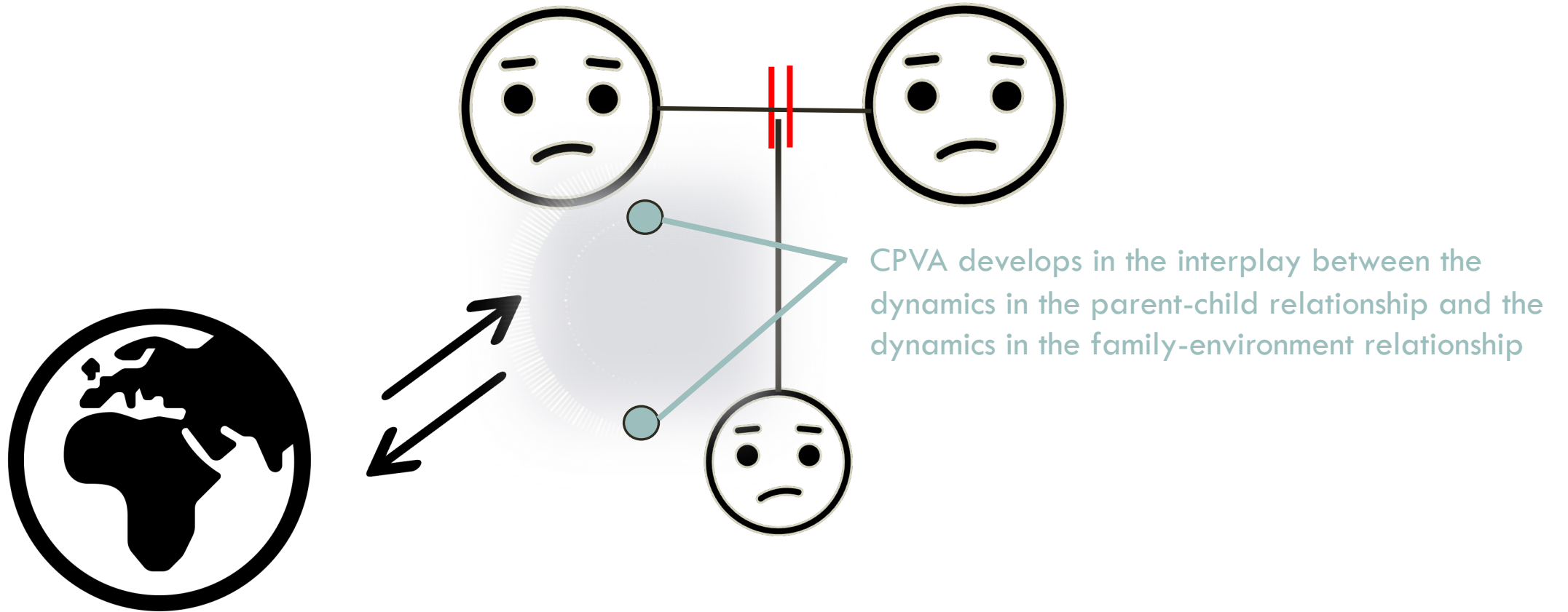
She tells me that she loves her boy very much, and they often share a special sense of humor together. They enjoy stand-up comedy, pasta, and have their little word games. Jenny holds a coordinating function in a nursing home. Her brother and parents still live by the sea, while she moved to Antwerp when she started living with Michael. This is where she has built her life.

In the last two years, Dave has been going through recurring 'moods' where he becomes incredibly mean. Dave then curses at his mother, becomes very demanding, controlling and derogatory, like when he tells Jenny that she's a sloppy woman that will never find another man. Dave also hit Jenny's hands when reaching for the salt on the table, has slapped her shoulders, spat in her plate of food and kicked her in the backside. Jenny avoids being in a situation where he is behind her when she is at the top of the stairs, because on more than one occasion, he has grabbed her, then saying: "you flinched!". He hides her things, only wanting to give them back if she provides him with certain 'favors' like bringing him something to eat or buying a certain shirt. The 'moods' come and go, and Jenny says that "when they're gone, you would never think of something like that happening. We are looking at a comedy show again, laughing and eating crisps."

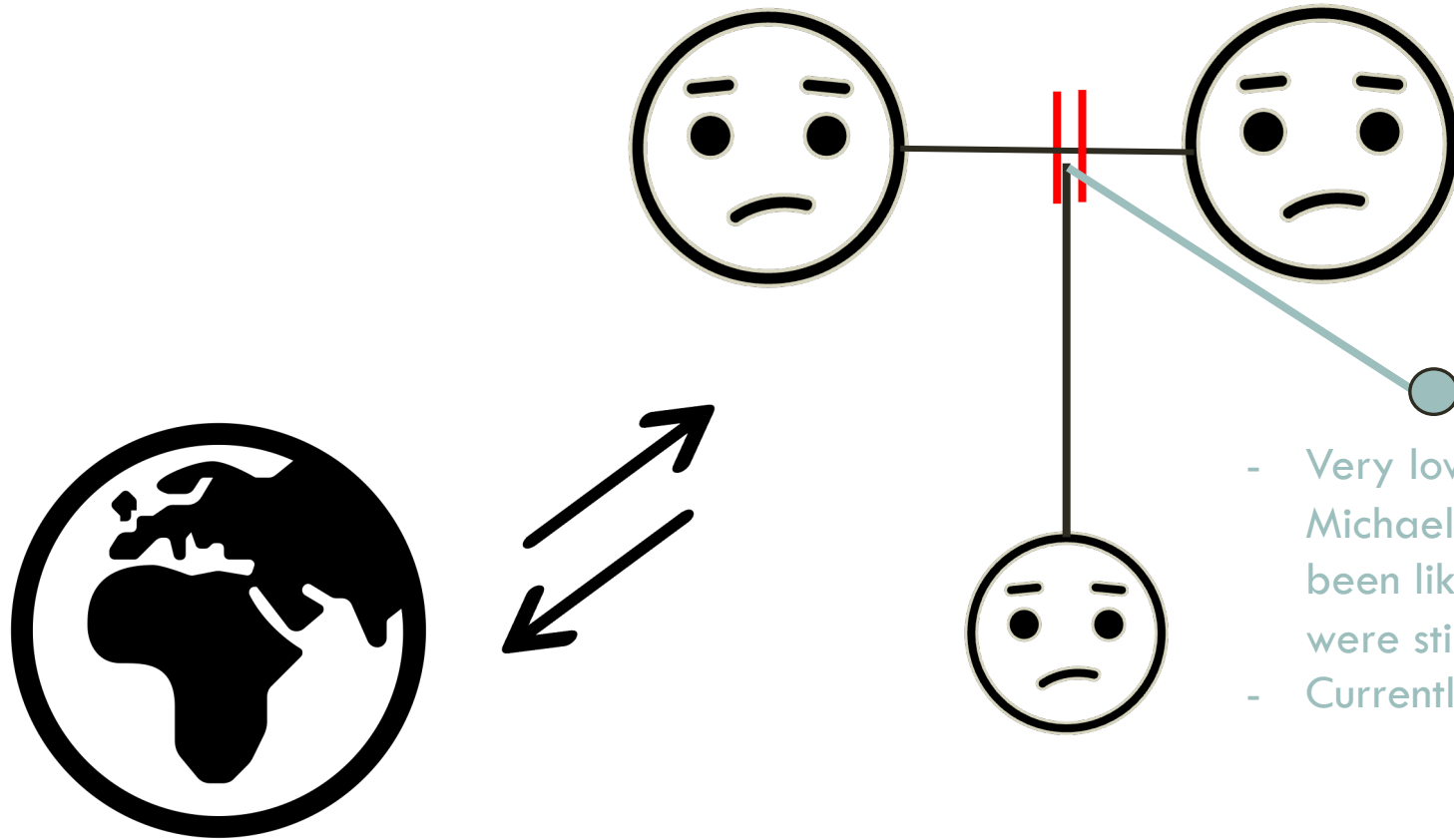
In the past, Jenny felt dumbfounded by such intense moments. Now, she feels like she is always kind of awake and alert. When she senses another 'mood' coming up for Dave, she hurries to get out of the way as quickly as possible. She tried talking to him about it, but that tenses up the situation so much, that she becomes too afraid for another escalation.

Dave has been diagnosed with ADHD 3 years ago. Every 3 months, he talks briefly to the child psychiatrist, who does the follow up on his medication.

SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

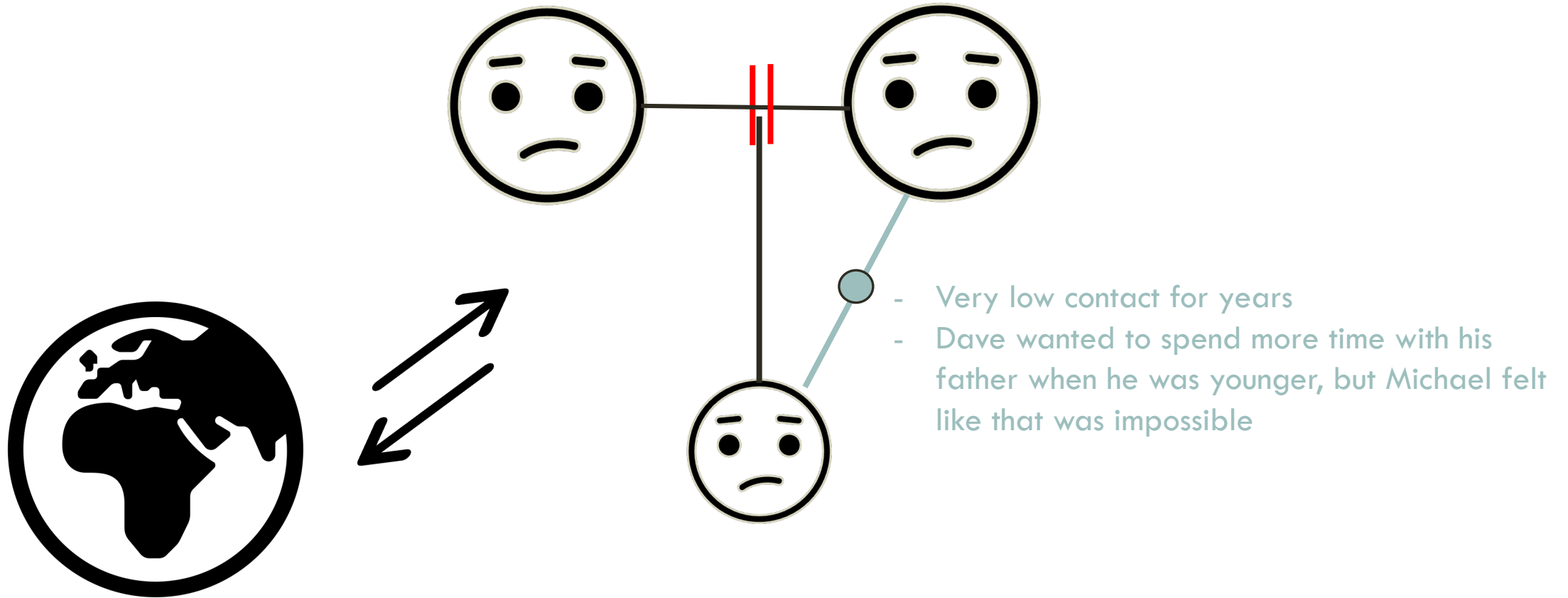


SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING

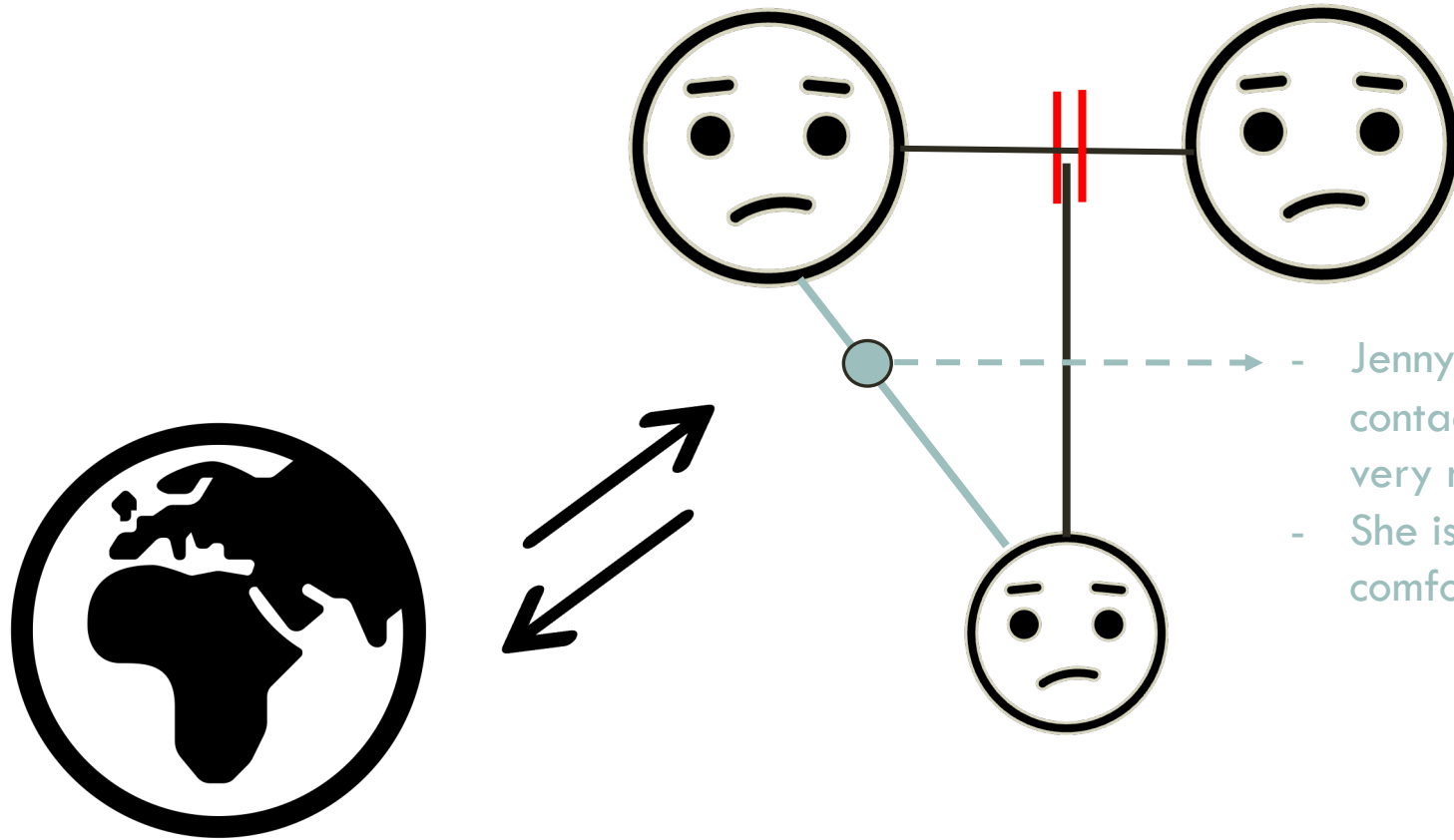


- Very low contact. Jenny does not blame Michael, but feels she can't rely on him. Has been like that for many years, also when they were still together
- Currently: very limited dialogue about Dave

SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING



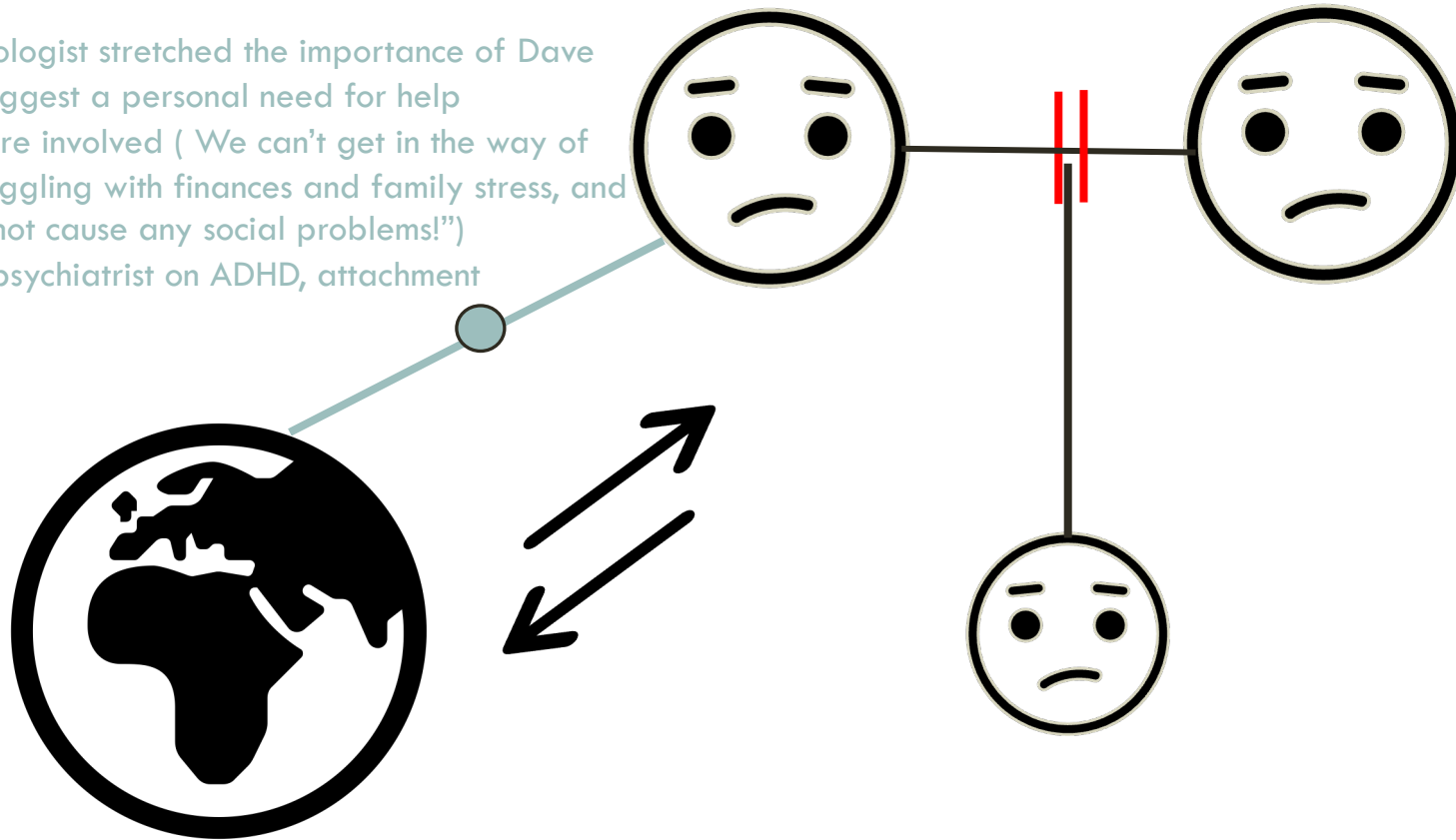
SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING



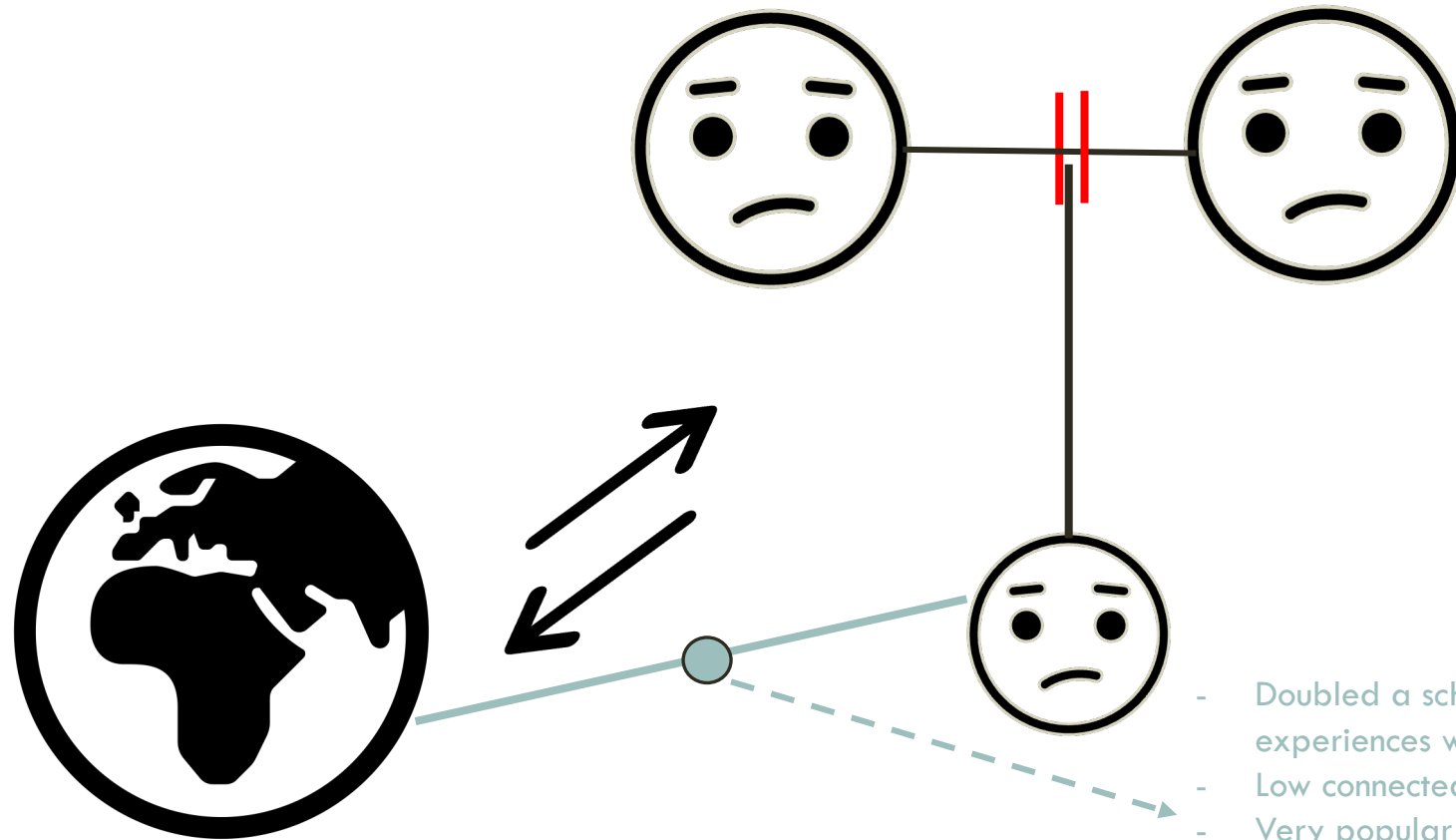
- Jenny walks on egg shells, tries to keep the contact friendly and joyfull, which she also very much craves for.
- She is worried about him not feeling comfortable in his own skin

SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING

- Child psychologist stretched the importance of Dave having to suggest a personal need for help
- No youth care involved (We can't get in the way of families struggling with finances and family stress, and Dave does not cause any social problems!")
- Focus child psychiatrist on ADHD, attachment difficulties

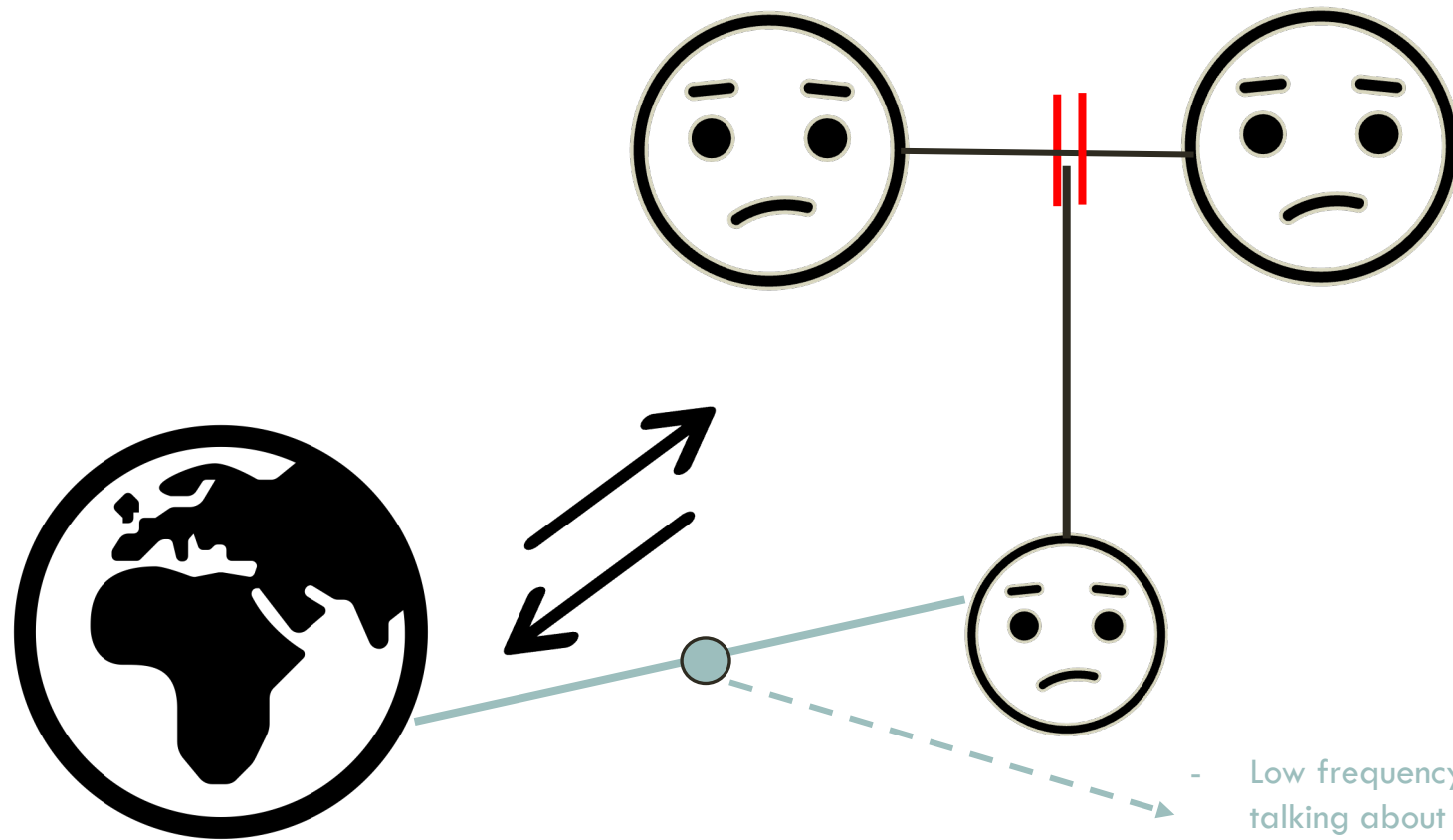


SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING



- Doubled a school year twice (related to divorce and experiences with his father)
- Low connectedness, stuck between ages in friendships.
- Very popular at boy scouts, excels at athletics
- Very pleasant among friends or family.

SYSTEMIC UNDERSTANDING



- Low frequency contact with child psychiatrist, avoids talking about relationships with parents
- Refuses additional professional help ("I am not crazy!")
- No other adults in official 'roles' he is connected to

CHANGING THE DYNAMICS OF THE INTERPLAY: MOVEMENT IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS



STRENGTHENING
PARENTAL AGENCY

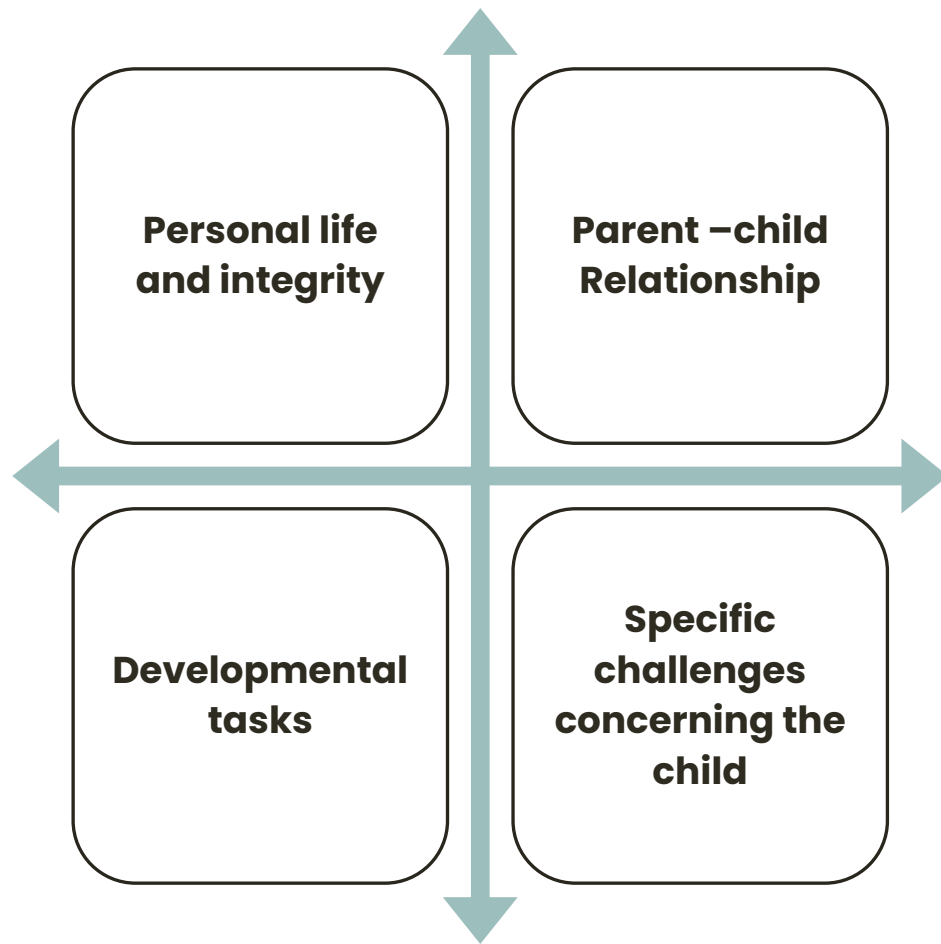


STRENGTHENING SOCIAL
SUPPORT



STRENGTHENING
PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

STRENGTHENING PARENTAL AGENCY

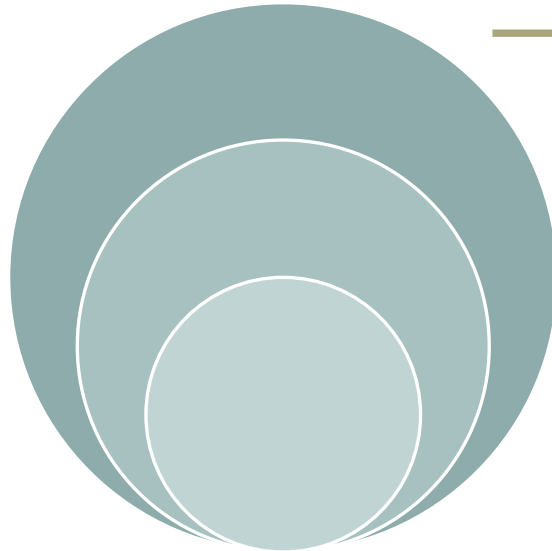


Supporting parents in reconnecting with their own, personal voice and perspective on different crucial aspects of parenthood. This encompasses both the ability to re-establish distinctions between these domains and recovering a viable, sustainable orientation towards the future

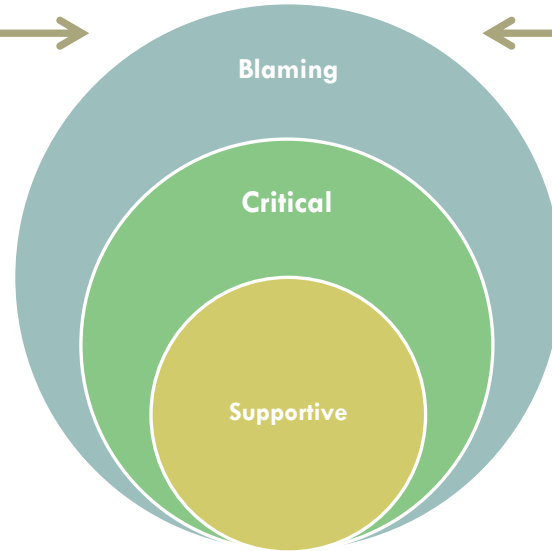
STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SUPPORT



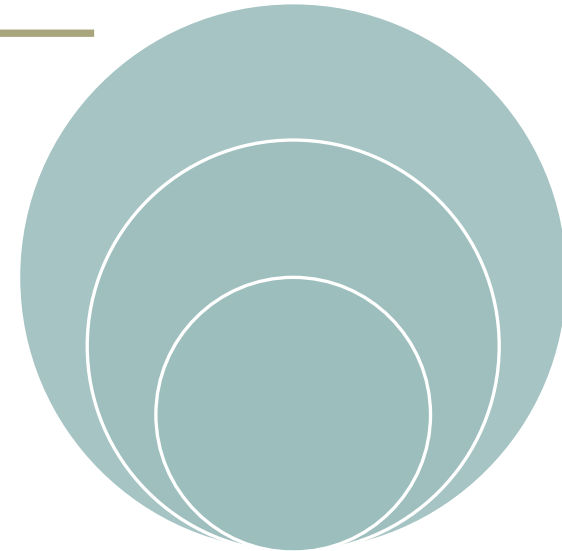
Who is important?



Who can be supportive?

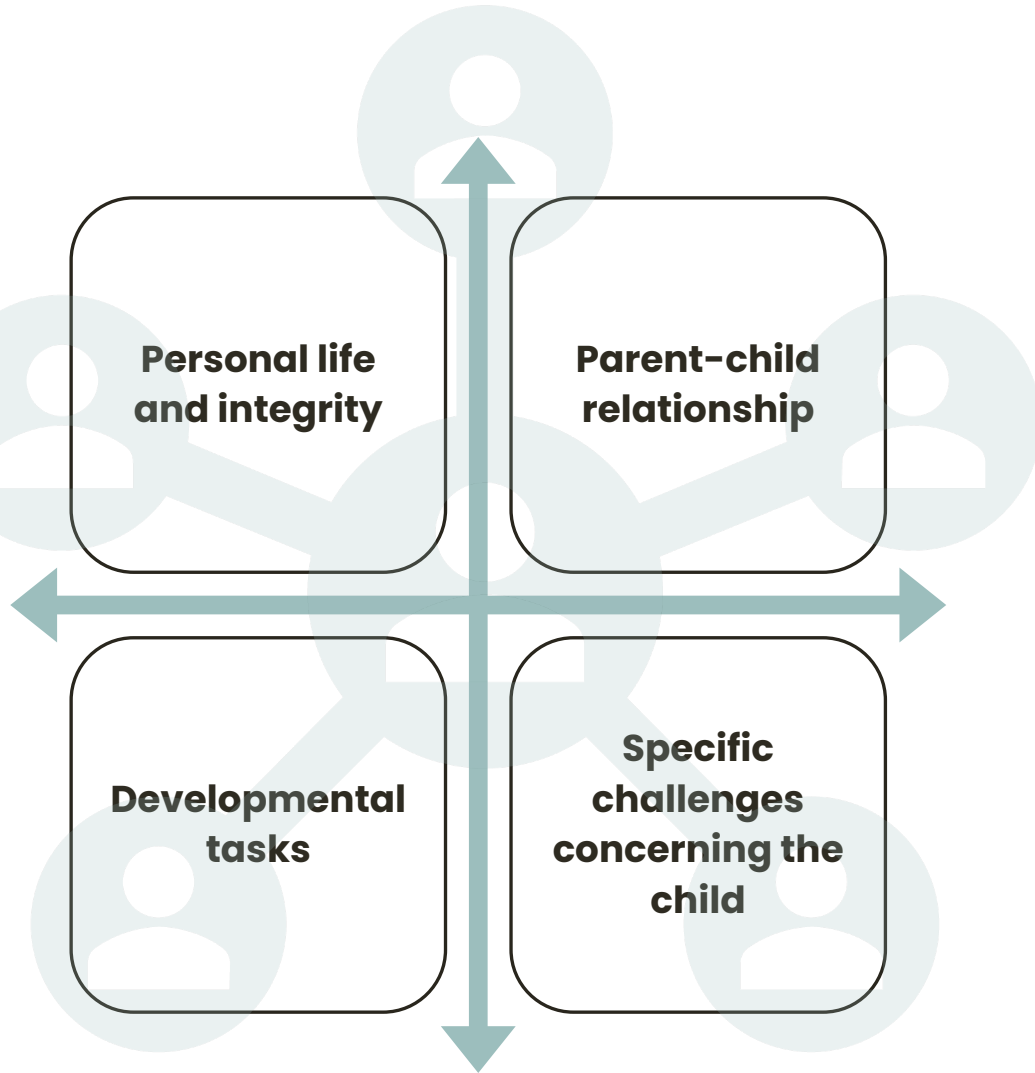


Who is aware?

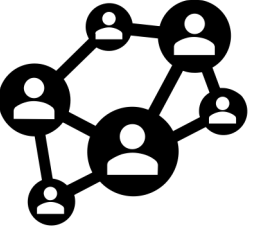




STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SUPPORT



- Raising awareness on violence and integrity (*focus on reintegrative shaming processes*)
- Providing behavioural, relational en emotional boundaries
- De-escalation and mediation of stressful moments and topics
- Supporting a 'caring dialogue' between parent and child
- Looking out for siblings



STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SUPPORT

Network meeting

1. Outlines for the meeting
2. Relational context and assessment of information
3. Additional outlines and information
4. Talking about the violence and its effects (*compassionate witnessing*; Kaethe Weingarten)
5. Action orientation and collaboration (*appreciative witnessing*; Kaethe Weingarten)
6. Substantive agreements and practical commitments
7. Future communication and process evaluation



STRENGTHENING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

- Merging the experiences with and risks of CPVA within the (current) professional framework of care
- If not already in place: providing the parent with professional help that continuously works from a parent-centered perspective, providing reflection and knowledgeable support to help navigate these difficult challenges
- Multidisciplinary collaboration: covering all bases *but* making sure they don't inadvertently facilitate CPVA
- In case of high risk of (future) CPVA, it is of high importance that a professional within the multidisciplinary framework takes on the responsibility to remain vigilant for any signs of incidents
- If needed: upscaling professional support: a societal responsibility for family safety *includes* parental safety!

4. WHAT CAN YOU DO?

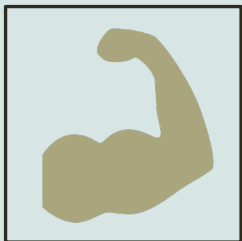
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

<https://forms.gle/tMLnfrCMq71RcWbJ8>



ENG: What information or insights sparked your interest? What was new or remarkable that made you think?

NL: Welke informatie of inzichten hebben je geprikkeld? Wat was nieuw of opvallend dat je aan het denken zet?



ENG: Within the scope of your professional environment, what possibilities do you see for yourself, your team and your organization to enhance support for families confronted with child-to-parent violence?

NL: Binnen de context van je professionele omgeving, welke mogelijkheden zie je voor jezelf, je team en je organisatie om de ondersteuning voor families geconfronteerd met kind-oudergeweld te verbeteren?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

<https://forms.office.com/e/RyLC8QaQCm>



WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR RESEARCH?

Delen kan via

- Flyers
- Sociale media
- Netwerk
- ...

Ooproep getuigenissen helpen verspreiden



OPROEP GETUIGENISSEN

"Mijn kind domineert het hele gezin ..."



BEN JIJ EEN OUDER EN HERKEN JE JEZELF IN DEZE SITUATIES?

Je kind overschrijdt regelmatig jouw grenzen

Je hebt/ had een moeilijke relatie met je kind die tot hevige of zelfs onveilige situaties heeft geleid

Je voelt/voelde je soms machteloos, onrustig en misschien zelfs bang van het gedrag van je kind naar jou toe

Je voelt je soms 'geterroriseerd' door je kind

DAN BEN IK OP ZOEK NAAR JOUW GETUIGENIS


Via een wetenschappelijk interview EN/OF Via een kwalitatieve enquête



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OPROEP GETUIGENISSEN

"Mijn broer/zus domineert het hele gezin ..."



BEN JIJ EEN BROER OF ZUS EN HERKEN JE JEZELF IN DEZE SITUATIES?

Je broer/zus overschrijdt regelmatig de grenzen van je ouder(s)




Je broer/zus heeft een moeilijke relatie met je ouder(s) die al tot hevige of zelfs onveilige situaties heeft geleid

Jouw ouder(s) voelt/voelde zich soms machteloos, onrustig en bang van het gedrag van je broer/zus


Jouw broer/zus is wel vaker gewelddadig naar jouw ouder(s) en soms ook naar jou

DAN BEN IK OP ZOEK NAAR JOUW GETUIGENIS

Via een wetenschappelijk interview EN/OF Via een kwalitatieve enquête



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DOCTORAATSONDERZOEK VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR RESEARCH?

<https://forms.office.com/e/z0NPnCgxmD>

Onderzoek kind-ouder geweld: Inschrijving focusgroep professionals



Deelnemen aan een focusgroep voor professionals

Datum	Uur	Thema
Di 23/01/2024	10.00 – 11.30u	Hulpverlening op maat van de ouders
Do 25/01/2024	14.30 – 16.00u	Hulpverlening op maat van de kinderen
Ma 29/01/2024	10.00 – 11.30u	Rol politie en gerechtelijke actoren
Do 02/02/2024	14.30 – 16.00u	Good practices

- Duur: 1,5 uur
- Digitaal via Teams
- 5-8 deelnemers per focusgroep
- Elke professional die in zijn job af en toe of wel vaker te maken krijgt met kinderen die gewelddadig zijn naar hun ouders
- Die geïnteresseerd is om ervaringen, noden, best practices en vragen & bedenkingen hierover te delen

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- Holt, A. (2015) Working with adolescent violence and abuse towards parents: Approaches and contexts for intervention.
- Beckers, W. (2019). De orkaan Felix. *Ouderschapskennis*, 22(3).
- Beckers, W, Jakob, P. & Schreiter, M.L. (2021) Mattering and parental presence in systemic therapy using nonviolent resistance: the utilization of of imaginary methods. *Family Process*, 61(2)
- Beckers, W., Jakob, P. & Schreiter, M.L. (2022) 'Mijn kind haat me'. Over het gebruik van verbeeldende methoden in systeemtherapie met Geweldloos Verzet. *Tijdschrift Systeemtherapie*, 34(2)
- Beckers, W. (2023) Interpersoonlijke invariatie als systemische taxatie - een houvast voor de samenwerking met ouders van zorg mijdende jongvolwassenen. Deel 1: een conceptueel kader. *Systeemtheoretisch Bulletin*. 41(2)
- Beckers, W. (2023) Interpersoonlijke invariatie als systemische taxatie - een houvast voor de samenwerking met ouders van zorg mijdende jongvolwassenen. Deel 2: proces en attitudes. *Systeemtheoretisch Bulletin*, 41(3)

Kind-oudergeweld en oudermishandeling: Gespecialiseerde handvatten voor een verborgen probleem

Concrete handvatten om ouders te ondersteunen in een proces van de-escalatie, begrenzing en zorg. Vergroot je inzicht en vaardigheden in de problematiek, versterk je professionele omgangsvormen en interventies.

2 daagse workshop o.l.v. Willem Beckers. 16 + 30 april 2024



Child^{to} Parent Violence and Abuse

A Practitioner's Guide
to Working with Families

Helen Bonnick