

parents and suffer from separation anxiety. Be reliable and predictable. If you have to go somewhere where you cannot bring your child, explain where you are going, when you will be back and who will take care of him/her when you are gone. And, very important, don't make promises you cannot keep.

Some situations may trigger fear or anger in your child, sometimes to such an extent that it loses control. Discuss with your child how he/she can find help when he/she feels panicky. Going to teacher might be one tip or go to you or going to your spouse. Or perhaps the SOS method works for your child. The S represents Stop, take a deep breath and count to ten. The O represents Orientation, focus on the here and now instead of on what might happen. The second S represents look for Safety with a person, or having a hug, or by going to a safe place.

Most children do very well without professional help. Yet, it may be that despite your best efforts, your child continues to act out on a daily basis, preventing him/her from functioning normally. In that case, it may be helpful to look for professional help. You can best do that by talking with your family doctor, who can both help you find the right professional, and also support you as a parent.

**Last but not least:** you too may find it hard to deal with everything you have been through. Parenting can be even more challenging than usual. So it's important to also take good care of yourself. If you feel you are overwhelmed by it all, try to find the help you need.

## IN CONCLUSION

Raising children isn't easy under the best of circumstances, but when you both have been through so much, it can be quite a challenge. And it can be even harder when you are in a foreign country where the customs about raising children are different to what you are used to. Taking care of your child's daily needs is absolutely important, but more is needed for the wellbeing of your child. He/she needs someone who listens, who understands, who provides safety and a sense of security. And your child needs someone who will gently correct him/her. When you are at your wits end, you can ask trained professionals, who are pledged to confidentiality, for advice.

Perhaps you are afraid that your child will be taken away from you, if you indicate that there are problems. You don't have anything to fear in this regard. When you express concerns about your child, you only show your love and commitment. In the Netherlands we really appreciate that. Children will only be taken away from their parents in extreme cases, when they are being physically, emotionally and/or sexually abused.

### COLOPHON:

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[www.kinderpostzegels.nl/leskist\\_ouders](http://www.kinderpostzegels.nl/leskist_ouders)

## WITH SUPPORT OF PARENTS, A CHILD CAN OVERCOME MOST PROBLEMS

*Your child is very clingy*

*Your child cannot sleep and is having nightmares*

*Your child doesn't want to play with other children*

*Your child doesn't want to go to bed*

*Your child is lashing out and does not listen*

*Your child cannot concentrate at school*

*Your child cries a lot*

*Your child is afraid of new situations*

*Your child is very quiet and withdrawn*

*Your child starts wetting his/her bed again*



**KINDERPOSTZEGELS**  
voor kinderen door kinderen

# GUIDING TIPS TO HELP YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

**You have been in a war and have seen atrocities that are fixed in your memory. This can cause a huge amount of stress. Perhaps you have been able to talk about your experiences with someone, or you have learnt how to deal with them. Or perhaps you have blocked out the bad experiences. Your child has also had a lot to deal with: living in an unsafe environment, then having to go on a dangerous journey, constantly having to move from place to place and attend school where a strange language is spoken and where customs are different. This is a lot of stress for a child to deal with and as a result your child may be behaving differently than usual. You can see some examples of these behaviours on the cover of this brochure.**

Children's responses to what they have been through often comes later. Their behaviours may be difficult to understand, especially if they are occurring when things seem to be settling down for you and for your family. The build-up of stress can affect the normal development of a child. For example, it can prevent him/her from doing well in school and in extreme cases it can even damage the brain. However, most children have an amazing ability to overcome negative experiences. We call this resilience.

It is important to strengthen resilience. This can happen when children have the support from adults they feel safe with, such as parents or schoolteachers. Their support helps children rebuild their self-confidence and their trust in the world around them, so that they will be able to enjoy doing things again just like any other child. Research shows that support from a trusted adult such as a parent often has a better effect on children than support from a psychiatrist or psychologist.

In this brochure you will find some tips that can help you strengthen the resilience of your child and prevent or resolve problematic behaviour. They are intended especially for children between 6 and 12 years old.



- 👉 A child interprets the things that happen to him/her differently from grown-ups. Please take your child's worries and fears seriously. Encourage him/her to talk about the things that bother him/her. Answer questions honestly and clearly. Try to come up with solutions together to deal with difficulties.
- 👉 Help your child identify and name his/her feelings, for instance by talking about daily happenings. You can also use children's books as an example. Or you can make a game of it by letting him/her guess the feelings expressed on the faces on a mobile phone or computer screen. This can help your child talk about feelings and about situations he/she is having to deal with.
- 👉 A consistent daily routine, with regular times for eating, sleeping, playing and going to school gives children a sense of stability and security. Try to follow such a daily routine as much as possible.
- 👉 Give your child plenty of affection and positive attention. Take time to do things together such as reading a story, playing games, or having a picnic in the park with the whole family.
- 👉 Children who have witnessed many atrocities and who have been through a lot of hardship can develop a negative view of the world. Help your child to see and experience positive things. Point out nice and helpful people to your child.
- 👉 Give your child positive attention when he/she behaves well, for example, when he/she is listening, is being helpful, or is sharing his/her toys. A compliment or a pat on the shoulder enhances self-confidence, makes your child feel recognised and promotes the behaviour you want your child to develop.
- 👉 School is important for your child's development. At school he/she learns the new language, expands his/her knowledge and learns how to interact with other children. You can encourage your child by showing interest in school and asking about what he/she has learned and done at school. Don't put

too much pressure on your child to perform well academically at school. Remember that everything may be strange and it will take time for your child to adjust. The most important thing is that your child enjoys going to school and learning there. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to your child's teachers. If you don't speak the language well enough yet, there may be people who can translate for you. Or perhaps 'google translate' on the computer can help.

- 👉 New situations, like a new school, can be very threatening for traumatised children. You can help your child prepare for school by explaining what it will be like and visiting the school with him/her in advance so that your child can gradually become familiar with it.
- 👉 When your child acts out or doesn't behave him/herself, try to stay calm. Tell him/her that you understand its anger, but be upfront that the behaviour is unacceptable: *'I understand that you are angry, but hitting other people is not okay'*, for instance. That way you help reduce his/her stress. When he/she still refuses to behave, take him/her aside and explain why you are doing this. Put him/her in a chair next to you without paying attention to him/her for a couple of minutes. When he/she has calmed down again, he/she can continue playing. Usually this approach is more effective than sending a child out of the room or hitting a child.
- 👉 If your child does something that is really not acceptable don't wait too long before you respond. This way you will prevent the situation from getting out of control. Be very clear about what is acceptable and what is not. Teach your child that unacceptable behaviour has consequences.  
**For instance:**
  - breaking things = clean it up.
  - fighting over toys = a 5 minute time out
  - hurting someone = sit away from the others for a while
- 👉 For the child you are a safe haven in an unsafe world. Children who have had to flee their hometown and country, usually are over attached or clingy to their