



We believe
in you –
so should
you

My
copy

*Guidelines for life and strength for coping
A handbook of alternative care
by young people for young people*

Pesäpuu ry &
Central Union for Child Welfare



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*Guidelines for life and strength for coping
A handbook of alternative care by young people
for young people*

Survivors team
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www.pesapuu.fi/english



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² We believe in you – so should you

This handbook is designed for children and young people who have been placed outside their homes.

The handbook was designed by the Survivors team, which consists of young people actively involved in the development of child welfare activities at Pesäpuu, a Finnish non-governmental organisation. The work of Pesäpuu aims to provide every child and young person in substitute care with an opportunity for well-being, to make their voices heard and to give them a sense of being in charge of their own lives.

In 2010 we organised a I Will Survive Forum, which attracted more than 30 young people in substitute care. **The quotations in this book are by members of the 'Survivors' team and the young people who participated in the forum.**

After the forum, the Survivors team put together this handbook in cooperation with our partners: Maria Kaisa Aula, the Ombudsman for Children in Finland, the Ombudsman's Office, the Central Union for Child Welfare, and the National Institute for Health and Welfare.

"Talk to adults about things that are important to you. It is their job to take you seriously."

"The adult needs to believe in the child, so that the child learns to believe in himself."

"I noticed that after being taken into care, the world wasn't the same anymore."

Survivors' message **to you**

"My friends believe in me - so do my parents, a little. Wish they believed a bit more."

Regards, the Survivors team

Don't be thinking that you can't do it. You can!

You have the right to receive information and get help. We would like to provide you with some information on children's rights and child welfare. The more you know, the better you will know how to act. It is easier for you to understand your experiences and to influence the things around you if you know a little about the matters relating to your own life.

The title of this book was inspired by our experiences: when we were placed in substitute care, we did not believe in ourselves. We badly needed someone to believe in us. We hope this book will help you to understand your life situation better and to make it through the days to come!

This book is your personal guide to the world of child welfare. There is lots to read here. Read one page at a time and reflect on it. Take some time to digest what you have read. Make notes, tick the boxes and answer the questions. If you feel like it, ask a grown-up to help you. Ask him or her for advice and for more information on things you don't understand.

Know your rights and responsibilities and act according to them.



me

Date _____
Name _____
Date of birth _____
Address _____
Phone number _____
E-mail address _____

trusting bitter safe aware
lonely empowered surprised guilty relieved
abandoned tense/nervous desperate different
ashamed confused interested uncertain
survivor alert drama queen valuable relaxed
anxious jealous funny in love
excited strong tired annoyed
happy melancholic bold
hopeful disappointed
out of it myself abandoned
furious envious hungry fearful
listened to healthy angry weak shy
able to cope carelessly
nauseated sad outsider
irreplaceable worried nice adaptable
nuts depressed frustrated institutionalised

valuable

I would like to be

I am now

I am impo



Tick the appropriate boxes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I accept myself as I am. | <input type="checkbox"/> I take care of myself. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have the right to be a child and a young person. | <input type="checkbox"/> I exercise a lot. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I play by the rules if they have been agreed on. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a hobby. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I keep in touch with my loved ones. | <input type="checkbox"/> I sleep enough. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have friends. | <input type="checkbox"/> I eat well. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can influence the way I am. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I treat myself. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not afraid to be angry or cry. | <input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy the little things in life. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My mind feels better if my body is healthy. | <input type="checkbox"/> I am not afraid to show my feelings. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I know how to take it easy. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't need to be afraid. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have someone to talk to. | <input type="checkbox"/> I am not afraid to speak my mind. |

Don't forget to update when your status changes.

rtant, one of a kind

"If you don't know how to cry, learn."

"I talk, yell, clean or do some exercise."

*"I sleep late, listen to music and read.
That's how I keep my spirit healthy."*



UNCRC

The Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children and young people below the age of 18

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child lays down the special rights of the child. All people have the same human rights regardless of their age, ethnic or social origin, nationality, disability, status, etc.

Child welfare or substitute care does not take away your rights; instead, they are there to protect you. The Child Welfare Act of most western countries is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Your family, friends, teachers and other workers will help you to understand your rights. Be sure to tell them what you need and how they can help you!



Tick the appropriate boxes.

According to the Convention, each child has:

- ☐ **The right to be him or herself and be equal with others.**
- ☐ **The right to live and develop at his/her own pace.**
- ☐ **The right to special care and nurturing.**
- ☐ **The right to live in a safe environment.**
- ☐ **The right to express his or her opinion and participate in decision-making.**
- ☐ **The right to know and to receive information.**
- ☐ **The right to learn and go to school.**
- ☐ **The right to play, have leisure time and rest.**

*You have
the same
rights as
all other children.*

The CRC focuses on
“the three P’s”:

Protection, or your right to protection and care.
Grown-ups must take care of children and ensure their health and safety. In addition to safety, you need affection and acceptance from the people around you.

Max: “I had to be home super early every night, they watched me to make sure I was eating, even when I ran away they came to get me back. Believe it or not, that’s caring.”

Provision, or your right to equal services.
Society must ensure that all children have equal opportunities and access to services regardless of where they live and what the financial situation of their family is like.

Maria Kaisa Aula, the Finnish Ombudsman:

“Grown-ups must ensure that your rights are protected.”

The CRC

*is there
to ensure that*

you

*and all other children
have
a good life.*

Participation, or your right to be involved in decisions concerning your own life.
Grown-ups must listen to children and take their views into account. You have the right to be involved in decisions concerning your own life and to express your opinion on them. You also have the opportunity to influence child welfare and its development.

The Survivors team:

Find your own way to participate in making decisions about your own life!

Lue lisää:

www.lastensivut.fi

Read pages 20-23 carefully!

Child welfare

is all about your welfare,
safety and future.

Child welfare aims to **support and help** families to stay together. If for some reason parents are unable to do this, or if a child or young person does things that are harmful to him/her, it is the duty of child welfare authorities to **guarantee the child's safety and protect him/her**.

In Finland, child welfare is the responsibility of municipal social workers. The Child Welfare Act provides for how child welfare is implemented. Social workers are bound by law and sometimes they have to make decisions that the parents and/or children disagree with. Is it like this in your country?

One of the key concepts in child welfare is 'the best interests of the child'. This means that it's all for your own good. The best interests of the child are not always the same as the best interests of the parents. Grown-ups may have very different ideas of what is good for you. 'In the best interests of the child' doesn't necessarily mean that decisions are made according to the wishes of the child or his/her parents.

We need to look **into the future** when thinking about what is best for the child.

*Child welfare
is all about your life, your future.*

I remember how, at first, I thought that all these decisions were not being made with my welfare in mind. I felt as though nobody cared what I thought about anything.

Now that I'm a bit older, I realise that the whole process was for my own good. Even though I was totally against the whole foster care thing at first, I now realise it was what I needed at the time.

Back then people were making a lot of big decisions about my life, but there was also a lot of reasoning behind these decisions that I didn't understand at the time. Later, when the reasoning was explained to me and I became more mature, I understood that there was a reason for everything.

Henna-Riikka

"Whenever I asked about the rules or something like that, the care givers kept telling us it was the law. I don't know how to read law books, so how can I be sure that that's what the law really says? Where can I get information about what it says in the law?"

Suvi

Find out what the Child Welfare Act is all about!

Ask an adult where you can find out about the law!



What do you think would be in your best interests?
What would help you right now?

Alternative care

You have the right to a safe environment.

Every child needs a grown-up to look after them. It is not always possible for children to live together with their birth parents.

According to the Child Welfare Act, a child must be taken into care if his/her health or development is seriously endangered and there is no other way to help the child but place him/her in substitute care.

The child's health or development may be endangered if the parents face such big problems that they are unable to look after their child. Sometimes a child may do something that is harmful to him or herself.

Children who have been taken into substitute care live in foster families, family homes, institutions or other places of care. A foster family may also be the child's relatives or other people close to the child.

There are many options

- not everyone follows the same path.

Moving away from your home is always a big issue for everybody involved, so it needs to be planned, prepared and carried out carefully. Things can happen quickly and often it is necessary to make an urgent placement.

The authorities make every effort to provide the child with the substitute care that best meets the child's needs. When selecting the place of care, the authorities also take into account the reasons behind the placement, the maintenance of contacts with siblings and loved ones, and the continuity of the care.

Will you lose the right to see your family?

Once you are placed outside your home, it means that social welfare authorities are responsible for your affairs. However, the people in your place of care are responsible for your daily upbringing and care.

You have the right to keep in touch and meet with your family and other people close to you.

You have a say in how often and where you want to meet your loved ones. However, these contacts may be limited if they endanger your health and development. You also have the right not to see them. Share your feelings on this with your social worker and other people looking after you.

Aftercare in Finland

Substitute care is terminated when the child turns 18. A young person may need help and support even after the care is terminated. Municipal social welfare services are obligated to provide the young person with these. This is called aftercare. The municipality is no longer obligated to provide aftercare when the young person turns 21.

I want to see...

☐ my dad

☐ my mum

☐ my siblings

☐ my pet

☐ my relatives

☐ my friends

☐ somebody else, who?

☐ I don't want to see anybody

The best thing about...

my dad

my mum

my brother/
sister

home

I want to see them in
(place)

I want this person to
accompany me (a grown-up)

The social worker

will tell you what your legal rights and responsibilities are.

They will:



- Tell you who makes the decisions and on what things, and who safeguards your interests.
- Provide you with information and protect you from harmful information.
- Find a custodian for you if necessary ([see p. 19](#)).
- Monitor how your contacts with your loved ones are restricted and make the necessary decisions.
- Assess the need to continue the placement at least once a year when drafting a customer plan ([see p. 20](#)).
- Help your biological parents to find help and support.

ASK YOUR SOCIAL WORKER:



1. How often she will be in contact with you?

2. How much time he/she can spend with you?

3. How you can contact him/her?

4. How quickly he/she will return your calls/messages?

5. Where to turn to if you cannot reach him/her?

6. What the name of your social worker's superior is?



You have the right to have an assigned social worker to handle your affairs.

It is the social worker's duty to be up-to-date on what is happening to you and see you in person. He/she is also obligated to provide you with an opportunity for private discussion. The social worker is also responsible for drafting a customer plan (see p. 20) for you. Drawing up a customer plan is an important event, and the decisions made will affect your life in many ways. **So...be there!**



Your social worker is obligated to discuss the decisions with you and explain them to you.

The social worker will discuss these with you openly and frankly, calling things by their name. He/she will explain to you why you were taken into care and tell you what is being planned and what is going to happen next.

The social worker is obliged to assess with you what kind of help and support you need. You have the right to discuss your experiences with a social worker or another professional. Remember that all the people involved in helping you are bound by confidentiality!
"I want to know the facts."

"I want to know facts."



What if your social worker doesn't contact you regularly?

Contact your social worker's superior or the Social Service Ombudsman.
See pp. 18-19.

*The social worker's responsibilities
are your rights.*

Say NO

to a vicious circle of different foster homes or places of care!

It is in your best interests that your place of care remains the same throughout. The same place of care and familiar people around you will make it easier for you to form lasting bonds that sometimes last a lifetime. Having familiar faces around you will make you feel safer and less lonely.

That's just so irritating!

Parents and grown-ups sometimes get on children and young people's nerves! Occasionally we all feel that grown-ups don't understand us and that everybody has it easier than us – or at least has fewer rules and restrictions.

Young people by nature test grown-ups' patience and grown-ups are there to take it and set limits for them. The limits set by grown-ups mean that they care about your safety and welfare. Grown-ups' patience isn't indefinite, however, so a young person should not test it beyond breaking point. Still, strict, overbearing and occasionally irritating grown-ups are better than no grown-ups at all.

You can have many homes

You can influence your own life. One day your place of care may feel like home. Your own actions also have an impact on how successful your placement will be and how you like it there. You would do well to follow the rules and respect other people, both children and adults – as well as yourself, of course.

It is natural for you to miss your home. This change is not easy for your parents either and they need help, too.

Placements don't always last

Occasionally a place of care no longer meets the child's needs or is unsuitable for him/her. If this happens, it may be best for you to be placed somewhere else. It is important to discuss this with a grown-up to understand why this happened and how to move on.

To be strong

I went to a family support centre and from there to a foster family. That family turned out not to be what I needed and after nine months I was moved again. I left my little brother there, along with a lot of other things important to me. I wasn't even told about the transfer until it happened. I was driven a couple of hundred kilometres by car, and there began a whole new life. In an institution (youth home).

At first I guess they all thought I was crazy, The rumours about me told nothing about who I really was, though. Inside I was broken. I only let very few people see how much I really hurt. Six months and then a different institution. Luckily there were familiar faces there, I was still in the same area and at the same school. Another six months and then.... Now where? Both youth homes had closed down. Uncertainty, I was already used to that. I didn't really care where they took me, what they did, I just went along.

I got a new family. People that I knew. I started vocational training. Two years later I graduated as a nurse. I have been living here for the past six months and have finally begun to understand one or two important things.

"Don't

be afraid

to talk about

your feelings

*and trust the grown-ups
around you."*

Perhaps the most important of all is that I'm not ashamed of my past. It's not my fault, and I can't do anything about where I was born. My past has made me a lot stronger I don't let little things get to me and life feels brand new, when you finally dare to live it full-on. You don't have to be afraid of tomorrow, or sorry about yesterday. You can trust to the future and realise that you, with your experiences, are something unique. Still, you don't have to be alone, somewhere, there is somebody thinking over the same things and looking for somebody. Maybe it's you.

HELP. *If your rights are violated...*

Your place of care should provide you with a safe environment to live in.

If you think something is not right in your place of care, talk about it with a grown-up. Your foster parents, personal supervisor and your social worker are the people you can share your feelings with.

Every place of care is supervised by municipal authorities and Regional State Administrative Agencies. If you feel that your rights are violated, contact your social worker or the Social Service Ombudsman of your municipality. You can lodge a complaint regarding mistreatment with your Regional State Administrative Agency, the Parliamentary Ombudsman or the Chancellor of Justice.

All placements are supervised by social workers. You have the right to discuss any matters relating to your placement in private with your social worker. The social worker is under obligation to provide you with an opportunity to do this. You may also request an appointment yourself or talk about it on the telephone.

Your social worker or Social Service Ombudsman will help you if you want to lodge a complaint on a violation of your rights.

Did you know that...

You have the right to express your views on child welfare matters once you turn 12. This means that you have the right to an official hearing in matters relating to yourself. You can see the relevant documents and you must be told what kind of decision is about to be made and why. You can object to any decision that has been made and lodge a complaint if you feel it is wrong. The opinions and wishes of all children must be taken into account regardless of their age.

CHILD HELPLINES

The number 116 111

for child helplines is addressed directly to children who seek someone to talk to and provide assistance.

112

Emergency telephone number 24/7

If my rights are violated, I call...



name/agency

Tel.



Your place of care follows the guidelines laid down by the child welfare authorities. If the authorities should visit your place of care, use this opportunity to tell them about your life.

We would encourage you to talk to a safe adult about things that are important to you. Don't be all alone with your thoughts!

Tell someone if you are hurt or abused, but talk about the good things as well.

Don't give up! Help is at hand.

BE INVOLVED *in planning your life*

Grown-ups have to listen to you and ask you for your opinion when weighing up any options. You can influence the decisions by telling them what you think.

A **customer plan** is drafted for every child who becomes a customer of child welfare services. The plan includes the following issues relating to your life:

- What were the reasons behind the decision to place you outside your home?
- What are the goals of the placement?
- How can child welfare authorities help you and your family?
- What kind of support do you need?
- What things does the plan aim to change?
- How often are you allowed to see your birth parents and other people you want to see?
- What can you do and why is it important to you?

By **thinking about these things on your own**, you will find out how you really feel about them. Write down what you think. It will be easier for you to talk about these things if you have thought about them first. Show the people around you that you know what's happening! This all happens before you meet your social worker. You should have a plan B in case not everything turns out like in the movies.

Before meeting your social worker, discuss the things that are important to you with the grown-ups in your place of care. For example, tell them what you want to achieve and what kind of situation you want to be in in two or three months. Set intermediate targets together: what do you think you can achieve and when? Setting targets for yourself will help you to move on in your life.

Stop for a while and think about what your

TOP 10
targets are?

"Create just the kind of future for yourself you want to!" <3"



*you,
your parents
the grown-ups in your place of care
the social worker* = *a team*

Do your bit The grown-ups in your place of care and your social worker have to be able to trust you. Together, you, your parents, the grown-ups in your place of care and the social worker are a team. You are in it together. You should all have the same target.

However, you often hear people say, "Everything the social workers and nurses do is just the opposite of what I want". You should remember that they are unable to support you unless they know that you will fulfil your own obligations.

It is vital that every team member does their bit as well as possible

The team is your safety net.

Ask for help!

Take advantage of the professional skills of the grown-ups around you. Be aware of your rights and responsibilities. It is much easier to hang on to your rights if you know something about them. Don't trust the views of one person only – you need to actively search for more information. **You should always have more than one perspective!**

Be honest with yourself

Sometimes an older and wiser person may know better than you what's best for you. It's difficult to see yourself through the eyes of another person and this is why you may miss something important. You don't have to tell everybody everything, but at least be honest with yourself and decide, **what you want from your life.**



Top 10

*preparing yourself
for an important meeting*

- 1** *Think about* what topics you would like to be covered in the meeting. Think about what things are important to you right now and in the future.
- 2** *Set targets* for yourself and think about how to reach these targets. If you have a good plan, it's much easier for your social worker to support you.
- 3** *If you don't understand* what is being said, ask somebody to explain it as many times as you need to understand.
- 4** *Have the right attitude!* The meeting is supposed to be a cooperative effort for your own good, not against you. The grown-ups working for your own good are not your enemies.
- 5** *Discuss your plan* with grown-ups to let them know what you think. This will ensure that the things that are important to you are dealt with.

In a meeting I am

23



brave, patient, anxious, relaxed, sensible, open,
direct, frustrated, sincere, persistent, violent,
fair, in tears, calm, cautious, helpful, content,
determined, attentive, cooperative, tenacious,
hopeful, quiet, absent-minded, lonely, uncooperative,
talkative, angry, frightened, insecure,
something else?

and I would like to be

6 *Know your rights and responsibilities.*

7 *Do your bit:* don't let them down when they trust you!

8 *Be honest and open* both to yourself and others.

9 *Don't be asleep,* when decisions that concern you are being made!

10 *You have the right to see your social worker in private*
without the presence of your parents or the grown-ups in your place of care.

Who do I tell?

You don't have to be ashamed of your background in alternative care.

"I don't talk about my background to people I don't know. You don't have to tell anyone about your background if you don't want to. If you want to talk about yourself, you can. It's up to you how much you tell, and who you tell it to."

*"The most difficult thing was telling my friends.
I finally realised it was the right thing to do."*

To some people I tell everything, to others, only a little. It all comes down to trust."

*"Small problems can become very big if you
don't talk to anyone about them."*

"Nobody's problems are too small to talk about."

*You can
be proud
of
who you are!*





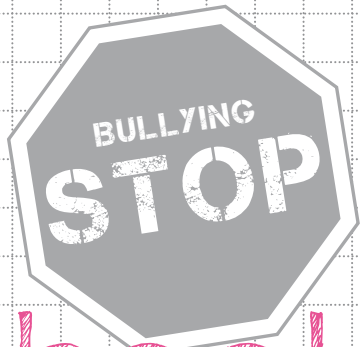
"Even during your time in alternative care you can lead a reasonably normal life and there is no shame in it.

At first it felt difficult to tell people that I live in care, because I was afraid of how they would react. Once I understood and accepted the things that had happened, and the fact that I had been taken into care, I was able to see that I didn't need to be ashamed of myself or my background.

I have a right to my own life and background, I can be just the way I am and I don't need to worry about what other people think."

Suvi

*"You
don't
have to tell
everybody
about it."*



School

"It made me really unhappy when I had to change schools and I had to leave all my friends behind. At first I was frightened of what people would think of my background. It hasn't been easy, I've come up against all kinds of stuff. Little by little, it's getting easier."



My school:

My class:

*The most important
thing at school is:*

"Vili"





Tick the appropriate boxes



- ☐ I had to change schools.
- ☐ I don't care which school I go to.
- ☐ I can concentrate during lessons.
- ☐ I need help with my homework.
- ☐ I've been bullied.
- ☐ I have friends at school.
- ☐ The teachers are aware of my background.
- ☐ It's nice to start at a new school.
- ☐ The others accepted me as part of the group.
- ☐ I've managed to keep up with the others in my schoolwork.
- ☐ I'm lonely.
- ☐ My place of care cooperates with my school.
- ☐ I'm studying for myself and my future.
- ☐ Something else?



HOMEWORK :


Learn by
heart the
title on
pages 6-7

You can't always take food for granted.

"In my foster family, the fridge was always full of food. I would wake up to find a full breakfast waiting for me: yoghurt, bread, cereals and milk. When I came home from school I didn't have to worry about whether there would be anything to eat in the fridge. When I was small and living with my biological parents, all too often I had to make my own food or sit staring at an empty fridge, wondering what I'd eat today. Now I don't have to worry about that anymore."

Saara

My favourite food:

 Eat every 3-4 hours,
except at night.



Food

You don't always feel like eating, and sometimes you just want to wolf it down. There is a connection between eating and your emotions. Some people eat because they're sad, while others can't eat a thing if they're upset. Sometimes you're so nervous or frightened that your tummy is upset, you feel sick and you can't eat. You can survive without food for a couple of days but if you keep doing that, you'll end up in hospital.

TIPS

If you don't feel like eating warm meals, try eating salads or cold sandwiches.
If you're feeling down, treat yourself to some warm soup or pasta.
Accept food when it's offered to you!

Sleep rhythm is important

"Sleep separates night from day. Sleep brings order to both your mind and your body. If your sleep rhythm gets mixed up, things can go badly:

It was a winter's Friday night. I decided I would play computer games late into the night since the next day was Saturday. I played for as long as I could and then fell fast asleep. When I woke up I looked at the time and saw it was 9.30. I thought: 'OH NO! I'M GOING TO BE LATE FOR SCHOOL! GOTTA GO!

I threw on whatever clothes I could find and off I went. When I got to school all the lights were out and there were no bikes in the bike stands. I called my friend on the 'phone: 'What class do we have now and what room is it in?' My friend answered: 'It's quarter to ten Saturday night, there is no school!'

Warre

Sleep

SLEEPLESSNESS = you can't fall asleep even if you try or keep waking up at night or too early in the morning.

It's difficult to fall asleep if your mind is racing with thoughts and feelings. Try to talk about these things during the daytime with a grown-up.

TIPS

Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day and getting enough sleep makes you feel better. Avoid coffee, tea, cola and chocolate before going to bed. Take care of your personal hygiene and make sure you have a good bed, pillow and blanket. The right temperature, some quiet music, a calm environment and dim lighting will help you fall asleep.



Many ways to express your thoughts and feelings

Relaxing

Try to find a place where you can feel safe and be yourself. It can be just a couch where you can relax and enjoy listening to music or watching a film. Relaxing will help you calm down. You can just stop for a while and gather your strength. Do something you enjoy.

Self-expression

We are all creative and you don't need any special skills to express yourself. It's easier for you to do this when you're relaxed and feel safe. You can survive even painful experiences if you find a channel to express your thoughts and feelings.

Let them hear and see you!

When you express your thoughts and feelings to other people, they will see and hear you.





Find your own way of doing it.

Don't be afraid to express yourself.

Don't hold your thoughts and feelings inside,
just let them out!


“At first going into care felt difficult, but as I got to know new people, I got used to it.”

“Sometimes a decision will seem very wrong and cruel, but when they explain it to you, you understand that it’s for your own good.”

“Everything is possible as long as you keep believing and keep trying.”

*Relationships
should help you,
not hurt you.*

My ways of
expressing
my thoughts
and feelings:

- 
- ☐ Sports
 - ☐ Talking
 - ☐ Music
 - ☐ Writing
 - ☐ Alcohol/substances
 - ☐ Dreaming
 - ☐ Crying
 - ☐ Humour
 - ☐ Something else?

A decorative border at the top of the page consists of a row of circles in various colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, black) and patterns (solid, scribbled, striped).

Survival,

an alternative to giving up

None of us can choose where we are born, but we can all decide what we would like to happen and which way to go.

Every child and young person in substitute care has been through difficult times. It is possible to make it through these experiences, however. We want to encourage you to look into your past to be able to believe in the future. We want to encourage you to talk about your experiences to people you can trust, so you can let go of the guilt, anger, sadness...and let go of giving up.

You may find this page annoying. You may find it difficult to believe that your experiences can actually become a resource for you!

“The little boy made his own little mistakes, learned from them, and didn't make the same mistakes again.

It makes no difference where you come from in life, as long as you have the will and the strength to fight. Life is full of situations where you have to make a choice, and you can either choose well or choose badly. If you stop and think for a while about where you are going, and what you want to do when you get there, you often find you are able to make a better choice, and avoid a lot of pain and heartbreak.

I was lucky, though, because things happened in my life that helped to steer me right.

I decided when I was a little boy, that instead of just giving up I would show everybody. I would show them that I can get along in this life. For myself, I can say that I got through the whole foster care thing

”

Sami

Dont't panic, there are many ways of coping!

Everyone has their own favorite ways of coping with bad experiences and strong emotions. There are many ways to get relief. *Tuija Matikka, Tiede magazine 4/2006, Page. 38-39*

People:

How are you in contact with other people? Who helps you cope?

Imagination:

Imagination reflection and creativity. Does imagination help you?

Working things out:

How do you work out problem situations? Do you gather information, do you make a list of how you would like things to be?

Belief:

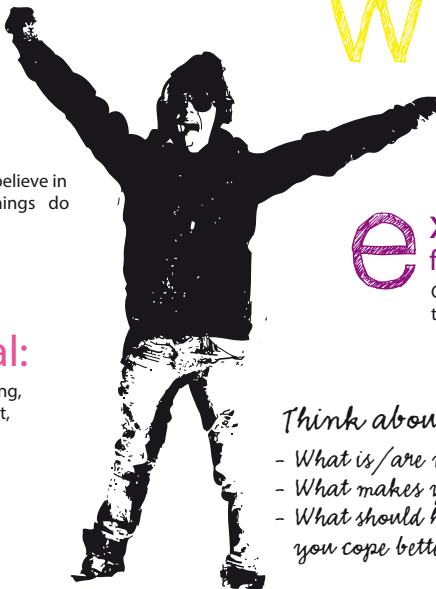
what do you believe in and what things do you value?

Expression feelings:

Crying, laughing, sulking, telling, drawing

Physical:

Eating, drinking, exercise, sport, sleeping...



Think about these things:

- *What is/are your ways of coping?*
- *What makes you feel better?*
- *What should happen to make you cope better?*

I'M BETTER THAN MY REPUTATION.

You may feel guilty about your situation.

YOU MAY FEEL GUILTY ABOUT THINGS DONE BY OTHER PEOPLE.

There may have been things in your life that were not up to you to decide.

You don't have to worry about grown-ups' problems. Their problems are theirs, not their children's. You are not responsible for their actions.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT FEELING BAD FOR SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE ELSE DID OR SAID.

WHAT YOU HAVE READ ABOUT ME ISN'T TRUE.

"I feel guilty when I get yelled at for no reason."

INNOCENT

"THROWING BLAME IS POINTLESS."

"I've been blamed for pretty much everything, even stuff I haven't even done."

**IN SOME SITUATIONS IT'S
NECESSARY TO FEEL GUILTY.**

INNOCENT
UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

"If I'm guilty, I'll admit it.
I don't like lying."

You can learn from your own
actions. Take responsibility for
your actions.

**FEELING GUILTY
IS HUMAN.**

**WHY DO PEOPLE SEE US
AS WEIRDOS?**

BELIEVE US.

*Nobody has the right to harm
anyone in any circumstances, not
even themselves.*

36 "I had just been taken into care and I was all broken inside, so was my Mum. It felt as though it was a crime to feel happiness. But then I realised, that if a moment comes along where I can feel happy, it's ok to show it, and I have the right to feel and show happiness"

Why?

What,
is it that makes her drink
What
is that power she can't resist
What,
just four little letters.
That,
leave me crying again.

Why?
You cannot answer me.
Why?
A truth I cannot see.
Why,
just three little letters.
Cos,
you let me down again.

Saara

Feeling anxious?

Symptoms

You may feel anxious for many reasons. Things may have happened to you that cause the feelings of confusion, fear, anger and sorrow. Together, all this can make you feel bad in a way you can't really describe. You may feel powerless and it might seem that you have lost interest in everything. Accept the help and support of grown-ups around you. It will help you overcome your anxiety.

Thoughts

Your self-esteem will plummet if you feel bad all the time. You may feel you're useless and worthless. There's nothing to be ashamed about in feeling bad, it's not wrong! Once you're able to understand your thoughts you're on the road to recovery.

Feelings

Your feelings may vary from happiness to sorrow, from love to hate. Many things can make you cry and there is a lump in your throat. Get to know your feelings one step at a time – this way you will learn to understand who you are. You can make your feelings more bearable by talking about them with someone. Your life will be easier once you know how to live with your feelings.

Allow yourself to enjoy life and feel joy

You may feel that you're not interested in what's happening to you and you can't concentrate on school or your everyday life. Allow yourself to feel joy. You're worth it.

*"Don't forget to talk, it'll
make you feel better."*

*"You may find that there is a reason
behind your symptoms and they may go
away once things get better."*

Write about or draw the
things, feelings and events
that are connected with
your anxiety.

What gives you joy
and strength?

WHO CAN I
CONTACT IF
I'M FEELING
BAD?

"Dream. If nothing else, dream that you have a dream"

Room

for your dreams

"Let's believe in dreams! Everybody has to have a dream. If you don't have any dreams, make some up!"

Tommi Liimatainen, manager of the band Negative

About my dreams....



- ☐ Somebody has to teach me how to dream.
- ☐ I am taking action to make my dream come true.
- ☐ I need help to make my dreams come true.
- ☐ There's no need for dreaming.
- ☐ A dream will sustain you.
- ☐ I have a definite dream.
- ☐ Nobody knows about my dream.
- ☐ I want to share my dream with:

"Young people are
the messengers of hope"

Childrens' ombudsman
Maria Kaisa Aula

WON'T LET GO

"Only the sky is
the limit."

Everybody has the right to dream.

You shouldn't be ashamed of your dreams.

You have to live for what you believe in.

You have to have dreams.

You can change your dream.

Your dream may be in a box, sleeping.

It doesn't matter if your dream is big or small, it is still important.

Don't give up, make your dreams come true

Set yourself targets.

Work to reach your targets.

Accept support from other people.

You can also escape into your dreams.

*Somebody has to believe in dreams, especially when
you don't have the strength to believe in them yourself*

Your parents or other grown-ups around you are there to help and
support you to make your dreams come true.

Nobody has the right to criticise your dreams.

Nobody has the right to take away your dreams.

"A dream has room for other people as well."

"Your dream can help others as well as you."



Don't give up

You never know what the future holds in store, one day your life can be turned upside down, that's what happened to me.

My mum was a single parent, everything was fine until she had a collapse. It was impossible for me to live with my mum anymore. They started looking for a place for me to live until I turned 18.

Luckily I found myself living with my aunt instead of in an institution. It was hard to begin with, but in time things began to change as I started to adjust to the changes and new rules.

Life gives and life takes.

"Koolia"



Survivor

Before me lay a long hard road
When my childhood home's door slammed shut
in my face.

Crying, screaming, howling.

Pain, longing, rage.

My little mind just couldn't see

Why my childhood home was closed to me.

No easy choices, a crooked road,
But I promised myself, I won't give in!
With the help of good adults, God and
prayer. What happened to me just made
me strong.

Saara



My story:

41

"The life story
of every child
and young person
in substitute care
is
unique."

Your support network!?

*Family,
relatives,
foster family*

Each tag contains the following fields:

- Name: _____
- Date: _____
- Telephone number: _____

*Friends,
teammates*

Social worker

Name: _____
 Office: _____
 Responsibilities: _____

*Supervisor,
grown-ups around you,
support person*

Name: _____
 Office: _____
 Responsibilities: _____

Doctor, therapist

Name: _____
 Office: _____
 Responsibilities: _____

*Teacher, school
welfare officer, school
psychologist*

Name: _____
 Office: _____
 Responsibilities: _____

Name: _____
 Office: _____
 Responsibilities: _____

Name: _____
 Office: _____
 Responsibilities: _____

Name: _____
 Office: _____
 Responsibilities: _____





Peer support

*is about being together,
learning, sharing information
and experiences.*



There are
thousands of us.

You're not alone.

P4Youth



Power4Youth promotes peer connection where young people with alternative care experience can feel the support of a peer group who understand and share a common bond. This can be expressed in many ways and for each group and country, it's different! Power4Youth works as the European youth in care network and also supports national development of formal and informal groups.

A peer is a person who you connect with, based on something you have in common. It can be because you are of similar age, background, ethnicity, gender, care experience or other things. A peer group is a collective of peers who use these common characteristics to create a shared culture or solidarity.

Sometimes the group comes together to for the purposes of education, information, support, exchange, training or leadership. It doesn't matter about why or how you come together but that you can support each other and benefit from the interactions. It also means, you're not alone. That's the power of peer!

www.Power4Youth.net and www.Facebook.com/Power4Youth

SELVIITYJÄT

– young people involved
in the development
of child welfare

*"This is what
I want to do."*

Did you know that if you're reading this book you're an expert? You've got loads of valuable information and experiences of child welfare, of what is being done right and what things should be changed. So don't underestimate your experiences or opinions!

Most of all, we want to encourage you to plan your own life. To be brave and speak your mind even if nobody asks for your opinion. We also want to encourage you to look at child welfare from a wider perspective: to be involved in the development of substitute care at a local or even national level. We believe that you've got plenty to share with other young people who are in the same situation as well as the grown-ups working in child welfare.

*"Being peers
can change
the world
by helping
one another."*

*"Take a risk!
Be brave! (: "*

Peer support and development work is amazing. It gives you the opportunity to meet new people, share your own experiences and learn from the experiences of others. You're part of a group who knows what you've been through. You don't have to explain or feel rejected because of your background. You can be who you are and realise that being different will just enrich your life and your past doesn't have to determine your future. You can choose a direction for your life.

The "Survivors" team is a child welfare development team within Pesäpuu ry. www.pesapuu.fi

Write your web
links on child
welfare here!



Thank you!

For ideas, thoughts and stories

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Pesäpuu ry:

e-mail: toimisto@pesapuu.fi
www.pesapuu.fi

Central Union for Child Welfare:

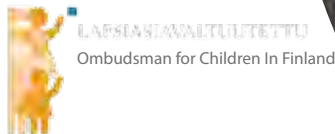
e-mail: toimisto@lskl.fi
www.lskl.fi



Thanks
to RAY.



LASTENSUOJELUN KESKUSLIITTO
CENTRAL UNION FOR CHILD WELFARE



We believe in you – so should you

For a guide for adults visit www.lskl.fi/usus

*"When young people use their voice,
there is nothing more beautiful.*

*When young people lose their voice
there is nothing more tragic."*

The Guide for Adults is written for the loved ones of children and young people older than 10 and child welfare workers. The guide can be used when discussing the themes introduced in the young people's handbook. No official procedure is necessary for discussion of life events and situations. For a more practical approach to the issues of children and young people we have provided you with checklists and helpful questions.

The guide also includes letters written by young people to their loved ones, social workers, foster parents and grown-ups in their place of care.

The guide was written by a team of
Finnish experts and it was edited by the
Survivors team.



You're valuable!

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