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# Parenting

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Module: Protecting Children



Help a Child (HAC) is a Christian, child-focused development organization working with local Partners in Asia and Africa. The Head-office is based in the Netherlands where the organization is known under the name Red een Kind (REK). Help a Child wants every child to have a loving and dignified existence and a promising future.

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## | Information for the Facilitator

**Goal of the Module:** making parents aware of the importance of child-protection, the risks and possible forms of child abuse, and find ways what they can do to protect (their) children.

### *Introduction to the theme*

This module is about child protection. Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. In all countries, in all context, in all cultures.

Through 3 different sessions you will talk and discuss with the parents about child protection in general, the risks for the children, possible signs of abuse and what the parents can do themselves to protect their children.

Talking about child-protection can be sensitive. Good enough parents do know each other pretty well by now, but it is important to emphasis again on this trust relation in the group. No information shared in the group will go out of the group. Everybody should feel free to share personal issues and work together. When you notice parents have difficulties with this, please discuss with them and remind them of the group rules.

### *Important to know*

There are some exercises in the sessions that need some preparations. Be sure you know what to do during the complete session and prepare well. Watch the PowerPoint about Child Protection on the knowledge portal to enlarge your knowledge about this subject.

There might be issues coming up which are beyond your knowledge and skills. Be honest about that, and make sure you know services in or around the community who can help. Think about other NGOs/CBOs specialized in child-protection, think about the counsellor at church, the health clinic, etc.

Also be aware that actual child abuse is not always clear. You have to be aware of the signs, of the possibility, since missing signs can have serious consequences for the child. However, at the same time, the opposite also may have serious consequences: falsely accusing somebody of child-abuse... So always be aware of the seriousness of this. In case of doubts, check with colleagues or with others you trust.

### *Session build up*

Session Title	Content of the session
1. What is child protection?	Getting a clear picture of child protection. Talking and sharing about where, why and for what children need to be protected.

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<b>2. Types and signs of abuse</b>	Knowing the types and signs of abuse, and where to go for help.
<b>3. How are you protecting?</b>	Making parents aware of how they protect their own children by talking and acting.

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# Session 1: What is child protection?



**Goal:** Getting a clear picture of child protection

**Materials:** A flipchart/papers, markers/pencils

**Duration:** About 2 hours

## | Introduction for the Facilitator

### *Introduction to the theme*

One of the most important things for children is that they can grow up without abuse, neglect, exploitation or violence. Child protection means ensuring no harm is done to children. The goal of child protection is to promote, protect and fulfil the right of all children to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. This is clearly described in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. In all countries, in all context, in all cultures. HOW that is being done can be different, but THAT they have that right is universal.

### *Important to know*

Be aware: child protection (and everything that can go wrong) is a sensitive subject. Talk about it in a careful & respectful way, make sure you do not judge and the participants do not judge each other. Try to be sensitive and watch by yourself when you have to intervene in a certain situation. When someone has experiences with abuse, do not force them to speak. Only if they want to share something, then it is ok. And again: be aware that nobody judges.

## | Exercises

### *Welcome*

This is our first session of the module Child Protection, from the Parenting series. In this module we will look at child protection. What is child protection, why and where do children need to be protected from? What are signs of abuse and what can you do? Because our hope for every child in our community (*mention the name of the community*) is to grow up safe and protected. When children are growing up in a safe environment they are able to develop in all aspects and in their own pace.

Before we really start, let's talk through our basic rules again to refresh. What is important to make sure the sessions will go on smoothly?

- Be there at every session. If you are not able to come, make sure people know and will inform you about what happened



- (Bring up the rules you set up with the group at the very first gathering)

Ok, now we can really start. We will start with looking at the meaning of child protection. We will do that in smaller groups, so that everybody will be able to participate.



### **Exercise 1: Child protection brainstorm**

Time: about 15 minutes

1. Divide the group in smaller groups of max. 6 people.
2. Let them look for a place around to sit.
3. Ask them to discuss what they think about when they hear the word 'child protection'. They can write it down on paper (flipcharts) using markers or in the sand, using local available materials like sticks and stones, or remember
4. Let them make their own definition of child protection.

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#### **Feedback to the group**

Ok, so now we have brainstormed about all things in and around child protection. Now it is time to present your outcome.

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### **Exercise 2: Presenting the outcomes**

Time: max. 2 minutes per group

1. In case of flipcharts: ask everybody to come back to the main circle.  
In case of drawing in sand: ask the groups to assemble around the drawing of group 1.  
Let them look for a place around to sit.
2. Let all groups present their definition of child protection and the things they think about when they hear 'child protection'. The other members can ask questions for clarity.
3. Discuss: is it all similar? Or are there differences? What can we conclude about child protection after this exercise?

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#### **Feedback to the group**

Thanks for sharing everyone! Now we have a clear view about child protection, let's zoom in into our community.

Children might be facing risks in different areas of our community. There might be dangerous roads, a dangerous well, a drinking joint where drunk men linger around, or an unpredictable neighbor or even a drunk or violent father in their own homes.

There might also be places where children feel safe, or where they can go to in case of issues. Maybe a nice playground where they can meet friends, or at the church where there is this nice woman it is easy to talk with, or at home with their mum or aunty...

For every child this might be different of course. But to get a general feeling of how things are in our community, it is good to do the next exercise with each other.

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### **Exercise 3: Community mapping**

Time: about 40 minutes

1. Let the group draw a map of their community. They can draw on sand, using all kind of sticks and little stones they find around. Or if a flipchart is available, they can use markers.
2. Ask them to draw the map of their community: where is the school? Their homes? The church? The roads? The well? The clinic? Etc. (However, do not use red or green markers for now)
3. Then ask them: where in your community would children feel not safe? Where would children feel scared or sad? They can use the red marker now when using sand, they can select one type of material (grasses, or dark sand or just simply putting a cross in the sand at the places children will not feel safe).
4. Ask them to think about the reasons for that. For instance: the roads are dangerous. Why? (cars drive fast, no speed humps etc.)
5. Now let us look at the places children like, the places where children will feel safe. Indicate these places with a green marker or with clear material, like sand or a circle drawn in the sand.
6. Ask them to explain the reason: what makes it safe for them?
7. When done come back in the big group and present to each other.

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### **Feedback to the group**

Thanks for working together everyone. We have now a clear overview of safe and unsafe places for children in our community. Has it always been like this? Or was it different when you were young? Let's have a look at that in the next exercise.

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### **Exercise 4: When you were young**

Time: about 40 minutes

1. Split up in groups again. Make groups of max. 5 people. Give each group a paper with the next questions (or write them on a flipchart). Let the groups discuss about the questions (for about 20 minutes).
  - Did you feel safe when you were young? Why (not)?
  - Who protected you when you were young?
  - What were risks when you were young?
  - Where did you feel safe when you were young?
  - Where didn't you feel safe when you were young?



- What was hard to protect children back in those days?
  - What are good aspects of the past when you were young that you want to use in protecting your own children?
2. Gather everyone again. Who wants to share? Talk with the groups about the headlines of the answers. Is it all similar? Or are there differences? What can we conclude about how we have been protected as a child? (for about 15 minutes)

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### ***Feedback to the group***

You can see that child protection can be a little different for everyone. But most important is that children are supposed to grow up without abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, so that they can develop themselves well and in their own pace.

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### ***Closure***

We have now a clear picture of child protection. We are at the end of the first session. Next time we will look at where children need to be protected from and what kind of abuse and signs of abuse do exist.

*Close the gathering with a song, dance or prayer.*

## **| Homework**

For next time, I would like you to do the following at home: look around in your community. What do you see? Are there children at risk? Do you know of possible child protection issues/abuses in your community? How can you see that? Next time we will talk about that.

## Session 2: Types and signs of abuse



- Goal:** To get to know types and signs of abuse & where to refer to
- Materials:** A flipchart/papers, markers/pencils
- Duration:** About 2 hours

### | Introduction for the Facilitator

#### *Introduction to the theme*

In general, it is hard to provide data about the abuse of children, because many cases are not reported. Many children suffer from different types of abuse. Violence may have a lifelong impact on children. It affects their physical, emotional and social development and destroys families and communities. Beyond the harm caused to children, violence undermines the economic development of a society due to the long term negative consequences on physical and mental health, and education and employment.

This means children really need to be protected, the right to protection is defined in Article 19 of the Convention of the rights of the child: 'the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence'.

#### *Important to know*

It is possible while working on different types of abuse, people are getting touched by the topic. Maybe because they have been abused in the past, or maybe because they know someone that is being abused at this moment. Make sure have time to talk with them and make sure you know people or organizations (church, other NGOs/CBOs, women's leader etc.) in the community you can refer them to. Or make sure you have some time afterwards to talk with them.

### | Exercises

#### *Welcome and recap*

Welcome everyone! Last time we talked about child protection. We spoke about the safe and unsafe places for children. The homework last time was looking and analysing your community and signs of issues in your neighbourhood. I hope you are getting more aware of where (your) children need to be protected from. Is there anyone who discovered something that he or she wants to share with the group?

Now let us have a look at where children need to be protected from.



### **Exercise 1: Dangers in the environment of children**

Time: about 30 minutes

1. Split up in groups of max. 6 people. Other groups than the last gathering, mix up.
2. Give every group a paper and a marker.
3. In 10 minutes every group writes down everything they know about where children need to be protected from. What sorts of abuse do exist? Give some examples of the type of abuse. What kind of danger is there in the environment of a child?
4. Gather everyone together again and let each group share their list of things children need to be protected from (max. 3 minutes per group).

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#### ***Feedback to the group (take your time for this one!)***

As we can see, there is a lot of possible danger children need to be protected from. All these things can be divided in five categories (while sharing this information with the group, write down the terms at a flipchart when possible):

- a. Physical abuse: (Failure to prevent) physical injury or suffering.
- b. Neglect: The persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger including cold or starvation, failure to carry out important aspects of care resulting in the impairment of the child's health or development.
- c. Emotional abuse: Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioral development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection.
- d. Sexual abuse: Sexual exploitation of a child including all forms of sexual activity such as rape, incest and pornography.
- e. Exploitation: Abuse of a position of vulnerability or trust for commercial or sexual purposes.

Try, together with the group, to put their answers under one of the categories. What kind of abuse is happening in the community?

It is important that we as parents, but also as part of the community, learn how to recognize signals of abuse. In the next exercise we will talk about the signs of abuse.



### **Exercise 2: Signs of abuse**

Time: about 30 minutes

1. Split up the group in 4 groups. Give every group a flipchart and a marker (or let every group find a place with sand where they can write in).
2. Now give each group their 'own' subject: 'physical abuse', 'neglect', 'emotional abuse' or 'sexual abuse'. Now let them think of possible signs of children when they are suffering under that kind of abuse (15 minutes).

3. Gather everyone together and discuss their answers. Use the text below at 'feedback to the group' to adjust and correct the signs at the sort of abuse (15 minutes).

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***Feedback to the group (take your time for this one!)***

At first, before we discuss all answers of possible signs of abuse: be aware that every child reacts differently if there is something wrong! When children show some of these signs there is not always something wrong, and not always caused by abuse. And yet if a child is suffering from abuse, it might not show one of these signs!

So, be careful and do not jump to conclusions. When you are worried about a child and see some of these signs, first talk with somebody about it and keep an eye on the child, before you take action.

***Possible signs of physical abuse:***

- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts
- Improbable excuses given to the injuries
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Showing distrust of adults
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Being aggressive towards others
- Being passive and compliant

***Possible signs of neglect:***

- Frequent hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Inappropriate clothes
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance of school
- Low self esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing

***Possible signs of emotional abuse:***

- Highly anxious
- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Extremes of passivity or aggressions
- Alcohol or drugs abuse
- Obsessions or phobia's
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention seeking behavior
- Lying

***Possible signs of sexual abuse:***

- Physical indicators (general and in genital and anal area's)
- Age inappropriate sexualized behavior
- Highly anxious
- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder
- Extremes of passivity or aggressions
- Alcohol or drugs abuse
- Obsessions or phobia's
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Attention seeking behavior
- Lying



### **Exercise 3: Where to go?**

Time: about 20 minutes

1. This exercise can be done with the whole group. You as the trainer can write down all the answers.
2. Where can you go when you are worried about a child? In case you see some of the possible signs, what do you have to do? (prepare this one for yourself too, search for organizations & persons in your community where you can get help)
3. Collect everything on a big list. Talk with the participants, did they already know all places or did they learn something new?

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#### **Feedback to the group**

It is always good to discuss suspicions. Are you the only one who sees these signs or are other people also worried? Do not jump to conclusions, but keep your eyes open wide.

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### **Exercise 4: Make a song**

Time: about 40 minutes

1. Let the participants divide themselves in several groups. Now give them the task to make a song about why children have to be protected from any form of abuse.
2. Give them space to practice and get everyone together again after about 20 minutes.
3. Let everyone perform their self-made song in front of the group.

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#### **Feedback to the group**

Thank you for all those beautiful songs! It is important for you as parents and for children themselves, to be aware of abuse and what you can do to stop it.

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#### **Closure**

Thanks everyone for being here today. It was good to dig deeper into different sorts of child abuse, so we know where we have to protect our children from. Also now we can be aware of abuse because we now know possible signs that children can show.

## **| Homework**

For next time, I would like you to think about what you can do as a parent. What can you do to prevent abuse? And what can you do if abuse does happen? We will talk about that next time.

## Session 3: How to protect your child?



**Goal:** Make parents aware of how to protect their own children

**Materials:** A flipchart/papers, markers/pencils

**Duration:** About 2 hours

### | Introduction for the Facilitator

#### *Introduction to the theme*

In this closing session we would like to focus on the parents themselves. How are they protecting their children? What can do they to protect their children? There will be a role play, where parents can practice with prevention and response skills in some realistic situations about abuse. And very important too: what can parents do to protect their children from harm? Here are some examples in case the parents need some 'push':

- Prevention physical harm: check harmful places and objects in and around your house: fireplace, matchboxes, but also sharp things like knives, or broken glass can harm children. Think also about the dangerous road, the river, a deep pit... or think about the hard labour small kids have to do, carrying heavy jerrycans of 20 liters.... And think about beating children.... (there will be a separate session(s) about this later)
- Emotional harm: the language you use as an adult: are those words of encouragement? Or words of feeling useless and not worthy? The stick pains, but words pain sometimes even more... Think also about 'Neglect' here: are you there for your child? Or you leave it alone the whole day and has to sort out him/herself?
- Social harm: think of bullying, bad peer groups, excluding from the group or from school, favouring one child above the other...
- Sexual abuse is in fact harming a child at every level: physical, emotional and social...

What can parents do in case it happens? They first and for all should listen, be open, comforting, not condemning or blaming the child for putting him/herself in a risky situation or so. They can even before that, make sure that children feel so comfortable and safe with their parents, that for sure they will inform their parents if something is wrong...

There are also things which can be done in the community. Child protection committees who help the victim, community leaders and police who are dealing with the perpetrators, good laws or by-laws etc.

And since this is the last session of this module, there will be an evaluation: what did the parents learn from this module? And what will they put in practice, what is their plan?



### *Important to know*

Talking about their own way of protecting their children makes parents very vulnerable. Other parents may think differently about some subjects. Be aware of the 'no judging' rule and keep an eye on the conversations.

## | Exercises

### *Welcome and recap*

Welcome again! I am glad to see you here again. Last time we talked about sorts of abuse and signs of abuse. We also talked about where you can go with your worries. Let us now look at a few possible scenario's. We will do role plays/drama in small groups.



### *Exercise 1: Play it out!*

Time: about 50 minutes

1. Split the group up in 4 groups. Each group has to select a leader (who is able to read).
2. Give each group their own script (see below). Let them prepare the story in their group (10 minutes), they are free to add things to the story, as long as the head line is still clear.
3. Let every group act out the drama-play in front of the rest (about 5 minutes per group).
4. After each drama-play, talk about which possible signs of abuse you have noticed. Ask questions: what do you do? Who should you share it with? What if your neighbour does this? Is it something that can happen to you? (about 5 minutes per group)

#### **Script 1**

Mother is cooking. She has been working the whole day, her husband is nowhere to be seen. Her youngest children are in the house, they are tired and they cry a lot. Then her older boy comes home from school. He tells his mother that he lost his schoolbag and everything that is in it. The mother gets really angry! She worked so hard to get him a schoolbag and school stuff so he could go to school!! She is really mad and starts yelling. The boy tries to run away but his mother gets him and hits him several times with a big stick. How could he be so stupid?! The boy gets scared and after his mom lets him go he hides in a little corner.

### Script 2

John is going to school. He had to learn about geography today and now he is scared that the teacher will choose him to answer his questions. He did his very best at learning, but he is not good at geography. He is a little nervous when he enters the classroom, he tries to find a place in the back of the classroom so the teacher probably will not ask him a lot of questions. But when everyone sits, the teacher calls his name. "John! Can you tell me: which river runs through Egypt?". John doesn't know the answer... Also the answers to the rest of the questions John doesn't know. At the fourth question he can't answer the teacher starts yelling. He yells about how stupid John is, how he isn't capable of anything, how he will never finish school! John looks down at his feet and tries to make himself very small.

### Script 3

Sarah wakes up and looks around. She thinks it is time to go to school. She stands up and walks outside, her mother is still sleeping. Her school uniform is really dirty, but her mom refused to wash it. It smells a bit. When she walks into the classroom she sees that she is late, all children are already working on maths. The teacher waves to her and says that she has to sit down really quick. The teacher is worried about Sarah. Often she comes late to class, and she always wears her dirty school uniform. There are some holes in the uniform and the teacher saw that Sarah is really, really thin. He wonders if she gets any food at home... Or maybe there is another problem?

### Script 4

Caroline is working at home, together with her mother. They are working in the kitchen and preparing the meal for tonight. At school, maths is a difficult subject for Caroline, so two months ago uncle Ben offered to help her and teach her in maths every week. He said he is really good in maths and he invited her to come to his home.

But since Caroline is going there, her mother thinks she is acting a bit weird. Her mom asked her several times if there is something wrong, or if she wants to talk, but Caroline says everything is fine. She decides to ask it one more time: "What's wrong Caroline? You are so silent!". "Hm, everything is fine" Caroline answers. "How are the math lessons with uncle Ben going?", mother asks. "Ok", says Caroline. Mother stands up to get a clean pot for the vegetables and when she walks by, she lays her both hands on Caroline's shoulder. That scares Caroline and she bends in. "Are you sure?" mother asks. "Hmm... I have some homework to do" and Caroline disappears to go to her secret corner and cry.

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### **Feedback to the group**

Talk with the group about the drama-plays. What did you see? What kind of abuse did you see? What would be the best reaction to the child?

In the next exercise we are getting really personal. We are looking now at your own situation and how you can protect your children. How can you ensure your children grow up in a safe place?

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### **Exercise 2: Child protection in your home**

Time: about 35 minutes

1. Split up in groups of max. 6 people.
2. Let every group find a place to sit down. Give them pens and papers.
3. First, let them brainstorm in their small group. Let them write down what they can do for their children so they can grow up in a safe place and develop well (about 10 minutes).
4. After that, let them brainstorm in their small group about what they find difficult in providing their children the best place to grow up. How do they handle the child when it has done (again) something he/she was not allowed to do? (about 10 minutes)
5. Gather everyone together again. Let the little groups share their answers with the other groups. What can they do? And what do they find difficult? Are there similarities? Do they have advises for each other? (about 15 minutes)

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### **Feedback to the group**

(Take your time for this!) Thanks everyone for sharing. This can be a difficult subject so we talk about it in little groups. Do not be afraid to share something with others. We are all parents and everyone here has children. Everybody knows it can be really difficult to always do the best for them, make time for them and be nice to them.

Let us look together at what are possible things you can do to protect your child.

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### **Exercise 3: Protection, what can be done?**

Time: about 30 minutes

1. Split the group in 4 groups. Provide each group with a flipchart and marker and at least 1 person to write. The groups get different questions and they have to list everything they, as parents can do.
  - Group 1: What can you do to prevent physical harm of your child?
  - Group 2: What can you do to prevent emotional harm of your child?
  - Group 3: What can you do to prevent harm done by others, by peers or other people?

- Group 4: What can you do as parents and community to respond well in case something happens, in case child-abuse happens?
2. Every group presents their ideas. The others can add to that, so together you get a long list of practical ideas parents can do themselves? (15 minutes)

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### ***Feedback to the group***

I think it is really good that we are sharing about these topics. Raising children isn't an easy job, so it helps when we share and can inspire and help each other. Thanks for your openness everyone!

This is the last session of the module 'child protection' so in this last exercise I am curious about what you have learned from the sessions.

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### ***Exercise 4: What did we learn?***

Time: 10 minutes

1. Gather everyone together again in a circle for a group talk.
2. Ask the group members what they have liked in this module. Ask questions as what they have learned, what they will share with others, etc. Is there something they have missed in this module? Make sure everyone gets a moment to share their experience!

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### ***Feedback to the group***

Good to hear from everyone about what they have learned the most. I want to thank you very much for everything you shared with each other, it only brings you further.

### ***Closure***

I think it was a good decision to go for this module. There are more modules we can follow. Let me know what you think is interesting!

*Close the gathering with a song, dance or prayer.*



## Sample sheet for keeping the Records - Parenting Manual

Name of the module:

Name of the facilitator(s):

Date:

## Attendance list

[illegible]

Questions? Contact Help a Child: [childdevelopment@redeekind.nl](mailto:childdevelopment@redeekind.nl)



## Group Evaluation

*At the end of the module, evaluate the module together with the parents. Discuss these questions below and write down the answers that come forward.*

1. What have you learned from this module?
2. Did you miss anything? What else would you have liked to learn about this theme?
3. Do you already use something you learned in other modules in your daily life? If so, how and what were the results? If not, what is keeping you from using it?



4. What can you do after this module as parents in your family?

5. Question for all parents: what can you do after this module as a group?

Other comments:

**Please share this document with the Child Development Desk: [childdevelopment@redeekind.nl](mailto:childdevelopment@redeekind.nl). We want to hear about your experiences so we can optimize the Parenting Modules!**