



AIKAMEDIAN JULKAISEMA
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SÄHKÖKIRJA

Supporting **WINGS**

HANDBOOK OF COUNSELLING CHILDREN

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AIKAMEDTA

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an aikamedia

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PREFACE

About the Content of the Book

Originally this book was compiled in Finland in 2012. Thus, the translation of the book includes many issues related to the culture and population of Finland, especially Chapters 2 and 5.

We warmly encourage the reader to be familiarized with the statistics, culture and procedures of one's home country because the practices in Finland might differ from other countries quite a bit.

For reflection and a point of comparison we have left statistics as well as more detailed information about professional help in the book. Think about how you could support a child's spiritual, physical and social development using this book as a tool to help you.

Every child is an individual – every child is valuable.

Supporting Wings / Wings That Support – Handbook of Counselling Children is meant for all those who work with children and are interested in counselling. All adults working with children should get acquainted with the basics of counselling and be able to work in a healing and supportive way. This includes encouraging encounters with the child and compassionate words as the child shares his or her troubles. Blessing the child and praying with him or her is also a part of counselling. Sometimes a child needs a special conversation with an adult that allows him or her to share his or her feelings or events from his or her life. Occasionally, matters that require the child and his or her family

to be directed to get professional help come up during counselling. The Handbook of Counselling Children gives adults tools to work in all these areas of counselling.

The book consists of six major topics. These are Counselling Children, Working with Children, Preventive Counselling, Counselling, When Counselling Is Not Enough (professional care) and Organising Counselling.

The premise of the book is empowering children rather than a focus on problems. The goal of counselling children should be to support healthy growth and development of a relationship with God. This will prepare the child to face life's challenges and crises from which he or she cannot be protected.

Children have enormous potential. They grow, develop and learn continuously. Children are future-oriented and there is more hope in childhood than in a later stage in life. This allows for healing in counselling and the child to continue to live trusting and facing forward. Childhood is also a very sensitive time. Children are dependent on adults and easily harmed by challenges and insecurity in their life. Sometimes the support of one safe adult is enough, sometimes a wider, professional help is needed.

Jesus' teaching about the value of children was very radical in his time. He connected valuing children to the Kingdom of God. We cannot have the correct idea about the Kingdom of God if we do not have the right idea about children. Jesus took a stance in defending the smallest and the weakest. He knew that in an evil world they are the ones who most need a defender.

The National Children's Ministry Committee of Iso Kirja College coordinates and produces material for the children's ministries in churches. This publication has been brought together by Päivi Asikainen, Fida International children's ministry training coordinator; Päivi Isoaho, head editor of Jeos and Noste magazines and children's ministry coordinator of Iso Kirja College;

Tuulikki Laamanen, kindergarten teacher; Riitta Parkkinen, child psychiatrist and psychotherapist; Kristiina Virkkilä, kindergarten teacher; and Markku Virkkilä, doctor of medicine. In addition to the team, some texts have been written by Marjukka Anttila (Children in Need of Special Support), Mervi Robert (Counselling Immigrant Children) and Suvi Hintsanen (Loneliness). The manuscript has been commented by Liisa Pensonen, Mirja Säiniö and Mirjam Virtanen as well as Taina Koponen (Self-expression through Arts and Activities), Nelli Kärkkäinen (Counselling Immigrant Children) and Miika Parkkinen (Counselling Immigrant Children).

Additional material related to counselling can be found in the Safety Instructions of Finnish Pentecostal Churches (Aikamedia, 2008). The following topics are related to counselling: Safe Behaviour, Special Occasions and Facing Them, Confidentiality, Maintaining Performance, Instructions for Making a Child Abuse Notice, Instructions in Case Sexual Abuse of Children Occurs in Finnish Pentecostal Churches, Instructions for Child and Pre-teen Counselling and Child Abuse Notice Form.

Australian pastor, counsellor and trainer David Goodwin has written various books on counselling children and trains children's ministry leaders in many countries. His lifework and materials have made a deep impression on the members of this team, and he has kindly allowed the use of his material for this book. Goodwin's Caring and Sharing course material has been translated into Finnish by Emilia Häkkinen. Goodwin is the primary source for the following chapters: Premises of Counselling (the goals of counselling children), Supportive Networks for Children, Counselling Atmosphere, Communication and Active Listening, Problem solving Model, Supporting Personal Relationship with God and Anger. David Goodwin's material can be ordered from Kidsreach Australia at www.kidsreach.org.au.

1.

COUNSELLING

CENTRAL TERMS

The following are central terms for this book: counselling, preventive counselling, counselling and therapy. They are defined as follows:

Counselling

Counselling means the support offered to a child in his or her needs from a Christian basis. Counselling considers the general features of child development at different ages in the different areas (mental, spiritual, emotional, social and physical).

Support is given both in the changes related to normal development and in special situations and crises. Counselling that supports a child's development aims to prevent changes belonging to normal development from becoming serious problems and helps the child to process changes related to special situations and crises.

Counselling is divided into preventive and counselling.

Preventive counselling

Preventive counselling includes all interaction and activities that enhance a positive self-image, holistic development and relationship with God. In other words, Christian education is preventive counselling that aims to support the child holistically.

Counselling

Counselling is supporting and helping the child in special situations in which the child needs a counsellor. In other words, counselling is needed when something has happened in the child's life that has hurt or broken his or her well-being and emotional life.

Therapy

Psychotherapy is professional activity that aims to increase mental health and functionality. Psychotherapy is given by people trained in psychotherapy and with enough experience, such as psychologists, doctors, trained nurses, social workers or theologians.

Pastoral counselling is Christian therapy done by a professional that combines both therapy and pastoral counselling methods to help the child. This publication does not cover pastoral counselling.

PREMISES FOR COUNSELLING

Counselling children is always goal-oriented activity where the adult supporting the child considers the child's needs and life situation holistically. The goal of counselling activity is to involve the child in a process where he or she can find and adopt tools to manage his or her inner being. It also increases the awareness that one can affect one's own well-being. In order to achieve positive and lasting changes, special attention is given to also support the adults near the child as well as other factors in the child's environment.

The goal of counselling children is

- to give the child an opportunity to speak and to be heard
- to help the child process problems, changes and stress
- to enhance the development of the child's spiritual life and relationship with God
- to support the growth of the child's self-esteem and personality as well as the development of self-image
- to guide the child to relearn things
- to help the child find healthy boundaries
- to cause positive change in the child's behaviour
- to develop the child's problem-solving and decision-making skills
- to develop the child's social, emotional and safety skills
- to help the child to find the meaning of life or give support in special needs
- to support the child in surviving in situations where, despite expectations, the environment does not improve or problems reoccur.

Children have a right for spiritual wellbeing

Finland is subject to obey the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that was formulated in 1989. According to the CRC (cf. Appendix, Convention on the Rights of the Child), a child has the right for special protection and care. A sufficient amount of the resources of the society need to be reserved for children and children need to be given a chance to participate in decision-making concerning themselves according to their age and maturity.

According to the convention, a child's holistic wellbeing consists of physical, mental, social and spiritual areas. It is the same idea as in Christian view of humans. Based on this, a child's spir-

itual life is supported by building the child's holistic wellbeing and by complying with the rights of the child. Preventive counselling protects the rights of the child. Counselling takes action in situations, where the rights have been breached. The aim of the rights of the child is to protect, not only the child but also the counselling adults by giving them clear boundaries for counselling.

The following are excerpts of the children's rights and some examples on how to apply them to counselling.

Article 12

Children have a right to express their own opinion in all matters concerning them, and they must be accounted for according to the child's age and maturity.

- Children have a right to be heard in the church and in children's ministries.
- Adults have the responsibility to plan activities in a way that enables participation of the children.

Article 14

Children have a right for freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The government must respect the guidance the parents give to children in executing this right.

- Children have a right to rely on God and make decisions based on their own conscience.
- Children have a right to ask the church for help in their problems when they need it.
- The opinion of the parents must be respected in all matters regarding their child.

Article 18

The parents have the primary and shared responsibility for bringing up their child and the child's development in accordance with the best interests of the child. The government must support parents in bringing up their children.

- The parents of a child have the primary responsibility and right to decide also on matters of counselling children.
- The parents have a right to receive support in Christian education of their children and counselling support for themselves and their children.

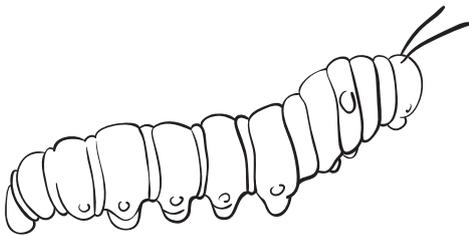
Article 39

Children that have been mistreated must be helped to recover and to reintegrate in society.

- Children have a right to receive immediate and long-term counselling help when they are mistreated.
- Children have a right to recover as an equal member of the group among the church.
- The church cooperates with other professional helpers.

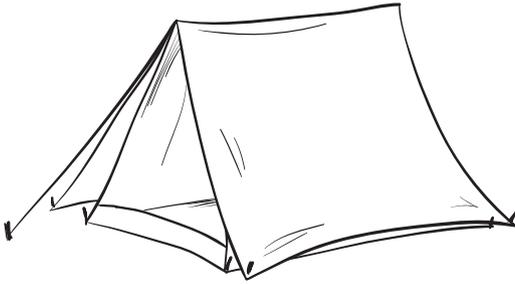
Supporting networks for children

The way a caterpillar becomes a butterfly describes the goal of counselling well which is to support a child in growing into a healthy, unique adult.



The caterpillar represents the child. It is small and vulnerable and needs protection around it in order to grow healthily.

There are many dangers along the path of the caterpillar, and without a safe environment they will harm and slow down the growth of the caterpillar.



The tent around the caterpillar is like a supporting network around a child. It consists of various parts, such as family, relatives and friends,

day care, school and hobbies. The church is also an important part of the network. It is like one of the canvases of the tent.

The aim of the network is to make sure that the child can grow peacefully in a safe and supported environment. It gives them good tools for growth and supports and helps even when harmful things have already happened. Even one safe adult can make a difference for a child.



The butterfly represents a child that has grown and healed among a safe supporting network. A small caterpillar becomes a beautiful butterfly ready to fly. A child grown in a healthy and safe environment steadily becomes an individual, whose wings carry.

The path to becoming a butterfly can vary and last a very different time for each child. The counsellor should see each child as a caterpillar,

whose growth into a butterfly he or she aims to support in the best possible way.

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- Convention on the Rights of the Child. In <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
- Fact Sheet: A Summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

COUNSELLING SESSION AND METHODS

Counselling session

Counselling session with a child takes place either spontaneously or at previously arranged time. Counselling may be a short, compassionate reaction or chat in between playing, doing crafts, singing or when a child explains or otherwise expresses his or her needs, joys and worries. With school children, a good chance for counselling conversation might open up when doing something together. In children's events and camps a counselling session is often a conversation and a moment of prayer. It is also possible to agree on a specific counselling conversation with a child.

There is no legal requirement to inform parents of a counselling session, since children have a right to share about their life to an adult they feel is safe. It is the responsibility of the adult to decide whether there is reason to inform parents of things that came up in a conversation, and what consequences telling or not telling would have. Counselling should always be held in a public facility or, upon agreement, at the child's home if the child is sick, for example. A counselling session should be arranged in such a way that it is calm and the counsellor has a visual and aural contact with another adult.

A counselling conversation may be needed on many different situations. A child carer might notice that the behaviour of a child has changed. For example, a child who used to be happy and calm starts having bursts of anger or separates him- or herself from others. Changes and problems in a child's family, such as divorce or unemployment of a parent, as well as sudden crises, such as the death of a family member, are things that might be eased when a child processes them in a counselling conversa-

tion. The topic of the conversation may also be current questions related to spiritual life, or, for example, guilt.

COUNSELLOR

A counsellor is a safe, Christian adult that the child can easily approach and trust. He or she receives the respect and trust of both children and adults. A counsellor is an adult who is strong enough and balanced, who can listen to all levels of problems and worries of children and act accordingly. Even when shocked by the child's story, a counsellor does not act horrified or retreat from the child.

The counsellor is empathically and lovingly present in a counselling session. By listening and asking questions he or she aims to support the child in his or her circumstances and help him or her solve problems. The counsellor encourages the child to make his or her own choices and solutions. In this way, the child learns to bear responsibility for his or her choices. The adult may clarify things by asking questions. He or she tries to really understand what the child thinks, how he or she feels and what kind of meanings the child gives to the events. Thus the counsellor tries to see the world through the eyes of the child.

Appreciating what the child tells and affirming his or her experiences increases the child's trust in the counsellor. The counsellor may, with good reason, disagree about how the child should have acted, but in a counselling occasion the counsellor will never judge or moralize. In these situations, he or she will continue by defining the problem and mapping out choices and consequences. Good advice is valuable, but quickly, "too easily" given advice is rarely helpful.

Confidentiality is the basis of counselling. Matters that come up in a counselling conversation will stay between the counsellor and the child. However, when working with children, there