

Family Justice Center
One Safe Place for Hope and Empowerment




The impact of destructive parental conflicts on children and their families

The role of parental availability & mother child emotion dialogues

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One *Safe Place for Hope and Empowerment*






What do we know:

- Prevalence
- Destructive conflicts
- & direct consequences

What did I study:

- Parental availability
- Mother-child emotion dialogues
- Children in High Conflict Divorce



Prevalence

Interparental violence



- 13% of 12-16 year – NL
- 16% of all children – US

High conflict divorce

- 4,5% of all children – NL est.
- 8 – 12% of all children – international

Blink et al, 2011
Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009

Spruijt & Tis, 2007
Kelly & Emery, 2003

Destructive conflicts

- Frequent
- Intens; hostility, abuse and coercion
- Unresolved


Harold & Sellers, 2018
Hetherington, 2006




Consequences


- Well-being
- Psychosocial development
- Psychopathology
 - Internalizing symptoms
 - Externalizing symptoms
 - Posttraumatic stress symptoms
 - Attachment problems
 - Personality development

Yu et al., 2016
 Schoemaker et al., 2017
 Harold & Sellers, 2018



Underlying processes

Direct: reactions of the child
 Indirect: spill-over effect of the parental relationship to the parent-child relationship



Direct reactions

- Emotions
- Physiology
- Cognitions
- Behaviour


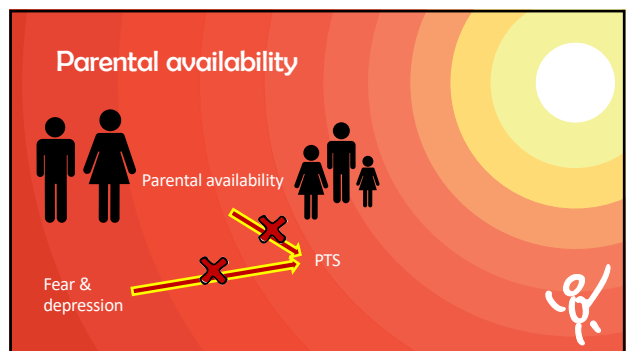
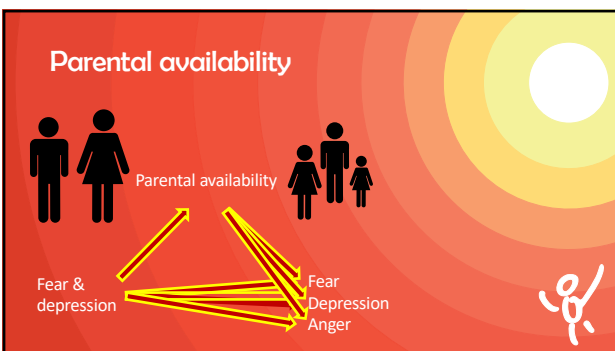
• Emotional security, Davies & Cummings, 1994




Spill-over effect

- Parental availability
- Mother-child relationship

• Visser, 2016





Emotion dialogues



80% unsafe

Less mutual involvement
Less mutual explanation and exchange
Little development in the stories



47% unsafe

Less cooperation children
Mothers less safety

Visser, et al., 2016

High conflict divorce

- High well-being
- Good relationship with father and with mother
- High risk posttraumatic stress disorder
- Space between parents



Safe family =




Destructive conflicts

- Signs of Safety
- HCD; No Kids in the Middle

Turnell & Edwards, 1999
Lewick & Visser, 2015

Treatment parents

- More available
- Talk about emotions

Trauma-related treatment children

Strong family relationships

- Family therapy

Merci

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