

SYNTAGMA

*Psychology Mediation Coaching
Training Consultancy*

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON PARENTS & CHILDREN IN CHILD ABDUCTION CASES

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HOW TO MAKE THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN MEANINGFUL

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It's easier to build
strong children
than

to repair broken men

Frederick Douglass

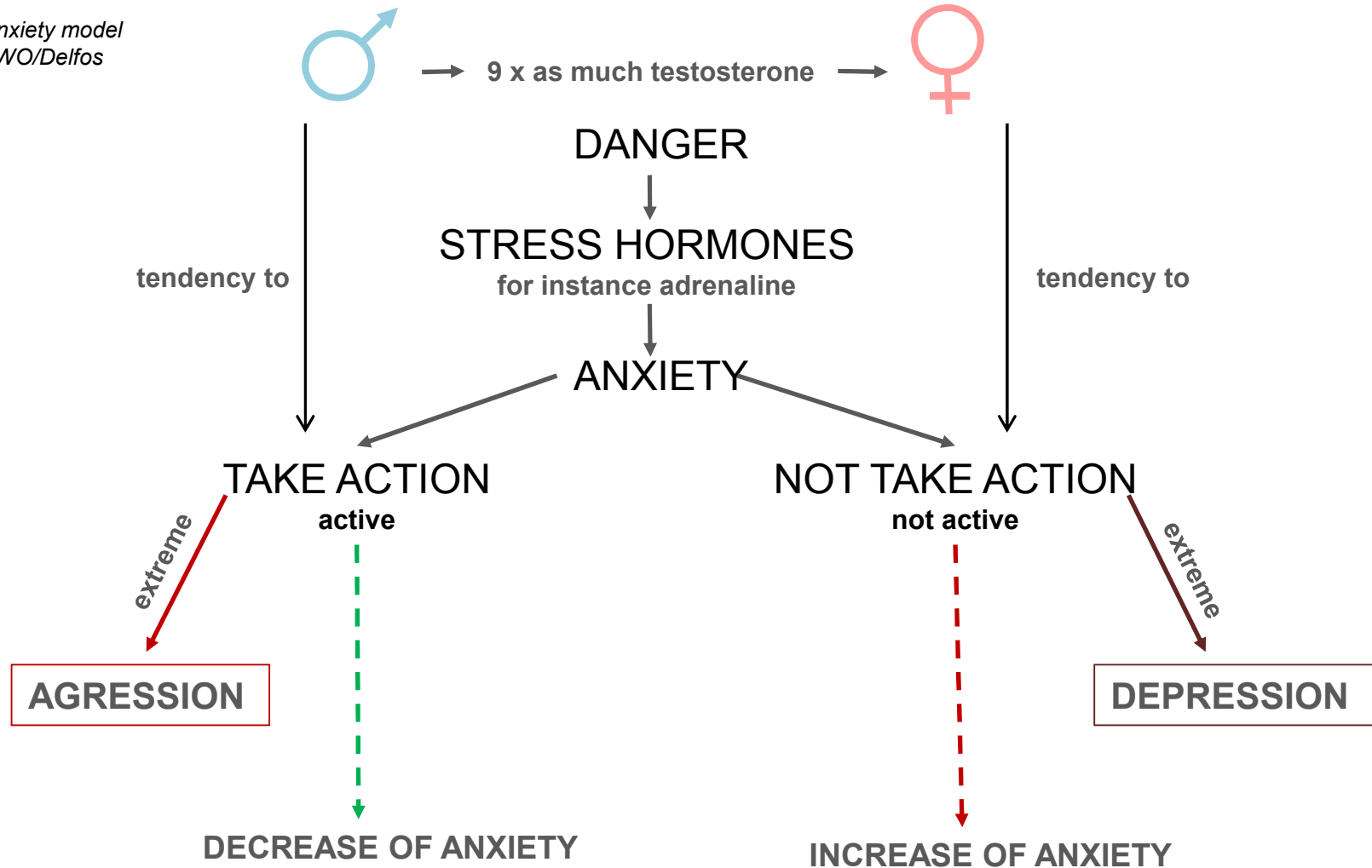


OUTLINE

- ❑ Introduction
- ❑ Danger & Anxiety
- ❑ Developmental Questions
- ❑ Trauma & Impact
- ❑ The voice of the Child in the Dutch System
- ❑ Indications for treatment / help / therapy
- ❑ Closing & Questions

THE ANXIETY MODEL (M. F. Delfos)

The anxiety model
PICOWO/Delfos



VYGOTSKY

Two zones of development:

1. The zone of actual development
2. The zone of proximal development

| Important developmental tasks of the child from birth up to the age of 5 years | |
|--|--|
| Autonomy | Eating independently, becoming toilet trained, being able to mobilize help |
| Motricity | Moving freely and independently |
| Intellectually | Independent thinking, analysing, organising, understanding space and distance, abstract thinking |
| Communicatively + Linguistically | Communicating using language |
| Adjusted & Social behavior | Attaching others to see oneself and making attachments |



DEVELOPMENTAL DAMAGE

Different kinds of problems at different developmental stages;
Several mechanisms can be discussed speaking about trauma:

- Traumatic sexualisation
- Betrayal
- Stigmatisation
- Powerlessness and/or preoccupation with control
- Negative self-evaluation
- Chronic perception of danger or injustice
- Dissociative control over awareness
- Impaired self-reference

CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMA (1)

Pervasive Traumatic Experience (PTE)

- a pervasive influence on the development of the child
- affects the general functioning of the child in more or less all developmental tasks:

Onset is in early childhood and continues in adulthood

Developmental Traumatic Disorder (DTD)

- The younger the child, the broader and more long lasting its effects
- Damaging the developmental task the child is in process of mastering

CONSEQUENCES OF TRAUMA (2)

Types of Danger

External & Internal *physical* danger

External & Internal *psychological* danger

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Frequent distressing recollections (flashbacks)
- Nightmares about the traumatic event
- Avoidance of reminders of it
- Exaggerated arousal in response to noises or other stimuli

- Occurs after/in a traumatic experience of being severely injured or threatened or seeing someone harmed or killed (f.i. soldiers) and rape, kidnap and torture victims

ABDUCTION, DIVORCE & SEPARATION

- More distress
- Hostile personal relationships
- Less financial and emotional support
- A worse view of their parents as role models
- Worse health
- Less satisfaction with life

ABDUCTED CHILDREN

Degree of trauma is related to

- The age of the child at the time of the abduction
- The treatment of the child by the abducting parent
- The abduction's duration
- The child's lifestyle during the abduction
- The length of separation from the left-behind parent has a great influence on the emotional impact on the abducted child
- The support and therapy received by the child after recovery

Symptoms (following recoveries from abductions):

- Emotionally suffering from the experience
- Grief and rage toward the left-behind parent in addition to “mental indoctrination” prepared by the abducting parent
- Emotional distress, such as anxiety, nightmares, mood swings, aggressive behaviour, guilt, distrust of authorities, fear of personal attachments, etc.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF THE CHILD

PRESSURE COOKER METHOD

The Netherlands

- Maximum of three sessions of three hours within 2 (weekend)days
- Parents can reach an agreement about the habitual residence of their children and/or international care and contact-arrangements

PRESSURE COOKER METHOD

Thursday: Preliminary hearings court The Hague/Mediation
Bureau present; after referral directly formal intake

Friday : Intake-conversations / child-conversation

Saturday : Crossborder mediation (Session 1 & 2)

3 hours – preliminary talks – caucus

3 hours – striving for solutions / drafting concept
agreement

Sunday : Crossborder mediation (Sessions 3 = final session)

3 hours - finalising agreement by coordinator and
signing by parents in presence of mediators

THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

Child conversation with children of three years and older by an independent “third” crossborder mediator (child-specialist):

- Permission of both parents is needed
- Report of the child-conversation is read during the 2nd session of the mediation
- Often an emotional eye-opener for parents

TREATMENT

[Alfred and Shadow](#)

- Maximize the child's sense of safety
- Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotion
- Help children make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences
- Address the impact of trauma and subsequent changes in the child's behavior, development and relationships
- Coordinate services with other agencies
- Use comprehensive assessment of the child's trauma's experiences and their impact in the child's development and behavior to guide services
- Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child
- Provide support and guidance to the child's family and caregivers
- Manage professional and personal stress, often called vicarious or secondary trauma

HOW MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS CAN HELP

- Support
- Assess need and provide care
- Consider confidentiality and privacy issues
- Advocate for trauma-focused treatment
- Take care of yourself

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO LEARN

- Understanding the variety and complexity of children's reactions to traumatic events, and how reactions unfold over time
- Developing practical predictors of psychological outcomes
- Increasing our repertoire of evidence based treatments for children and families and knowing which type of treatment is optimal for different individuals or groups
- Disseminating evidence-based treatments for children and families

TO BE!

Thank you for your attention



Questions?

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OUTLINE

Why Mediation?

ABDUCTION

Public Opinion: there's no risk or harm if the child is in the physical custody of one of his parents

The experience of abduction can be emotionally traumatic to both children and left-behind parents.

It's particularly damaging in cases in which force is used to carry out the abduction, the child is concealed, or the child is held for a long period of time.