

A reflective guide to exile-sensitive practice in foster care

The Practical Guide of the FORM-project



by University of Kassel

In my presentation, I will focus on...

- + our psychodynamic approach to therapeutic foster care for foster families with unaccompanied minors
- + the Practical Guide's 10-point programme
 - + based on the theoretical assumptions presented in the Conceptual Model
- + the usability for the foster care workers in their practice
- + the importance of relationships at the core of the guide

- + the *guide's aims* to strengthen the the ability to regulate, mentalize and symbolize and to build and strengthen bonds as a safe ground for the children and youngsters

The practical guide's main aims are...

- + to be used as a structured handbook or as a reflective reminder
- + to help winding down from challenging moments
- + to nourish professional resources
- + to open thinking spaces to reflect on case dynamics

- + to gain new perspectives on the individual needs to be handed back into the relationship of the family encounter

Our perspective:

- + working with children and their families confronts us with the hurtful truth or unimaginable, which the social worker also encounters while engaging in support for foster families
- + designing a supportive programme which may help foster care workers to navigate through challenging moments of their work with foster parents and their children with a background of flight
- + psychoanalytical view
 - + aims to recognize the psychodynamics of relationships
 - + is relevant when it comes to recognizing that the unconscious is part of human life
 - + aims to engage on helping the foster parents to remain a safe basis for their foster children
 - even if there is no words or understanding by now

The Practical Guide's 10-point training programme

Introduction:

- + contextual level (the working environment, it's structures and preconditions)
- + foster families (kinship- or non-kinship-fostering)
- + the target group (the foster care worker)
- + usage of the 10-point-programme

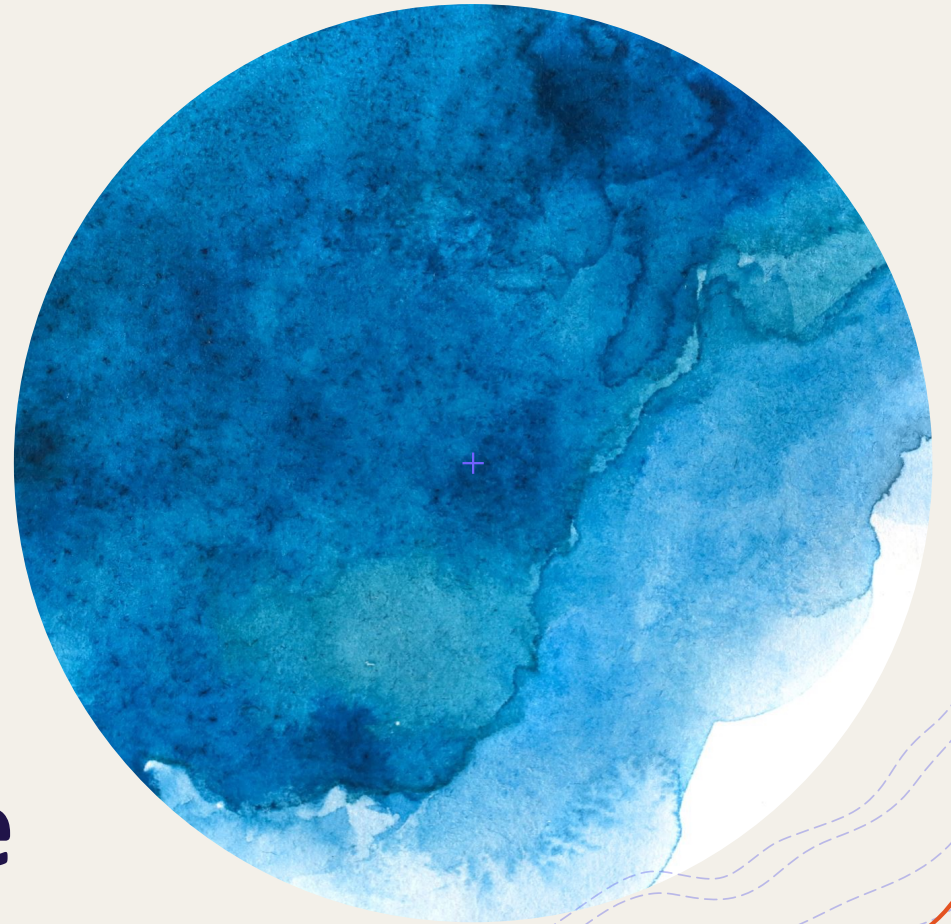
The 10-points:

- + **knowledge-based theory of the Conceptual Model and definitions of basic psychodynamic concepts**
- + **case example and case discussion**
- + **aspects of the professional attitude**
- + **collection of reflective questions**

Practical section:

- + framing elements, inspirational lists, how-to-lists, toolkits

The 10-point training programme



Point 1: Specificities of complex trauma and its psychodynamics within foster families

- + acknowledging the context of the fostered minors as a starting point
- + acknowledging the specificities of complex trauma and its psychodynamics within foster families



The 10-point training programme

Point 2: Self- and affect regulation

- + finding back to a state of calmness in moments of emotional turmoil
- + as a basis for building (new) attachment relationships

Point 3: (New) attachment relations

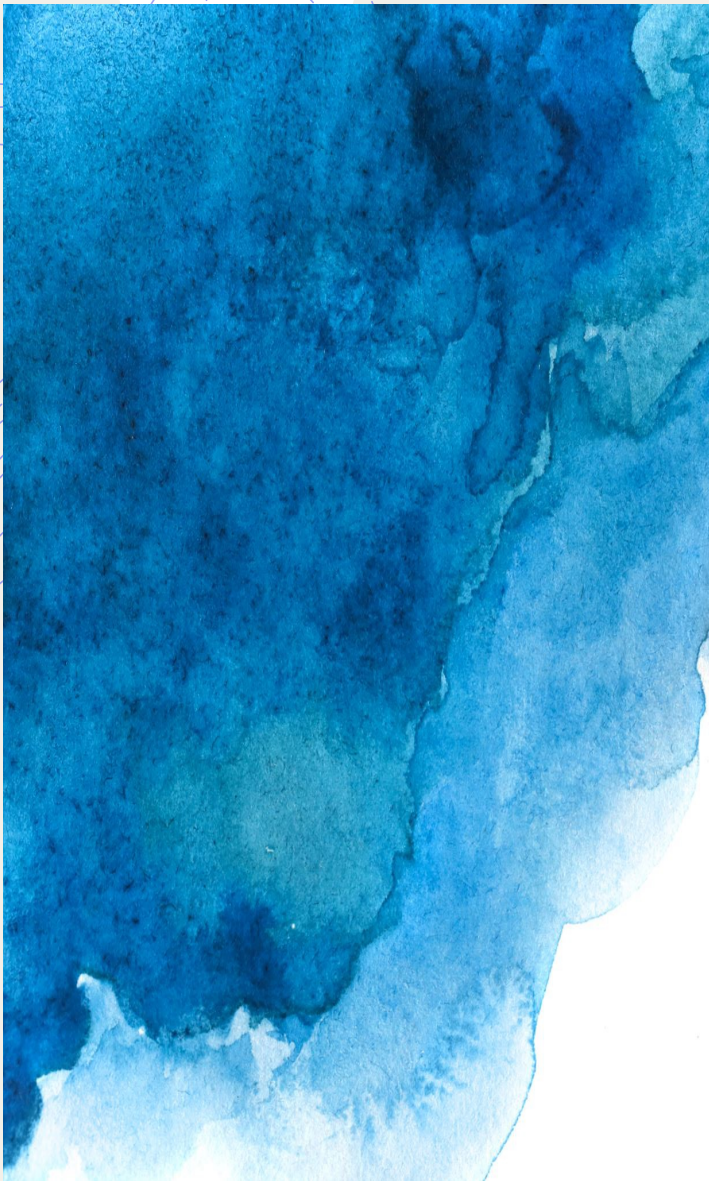
- + stable care figures
- + support in difficult moments in relationship

Point 4: Mentalizing state of mind and self-reflection

- + ability to process from affects to emotions and connect thoughts with meaning
- + environment that protects from a new breakdown of attachment relationships

Point 5: Symbolizing and finding a narrative

- + give meaning to certain behaviour, expressions and affects
- + opening safe spaces for children to express



The 10-point training programme

Point 6: Getting in touch with hidden expressions of relational losses and dysregulation

- + inner stress, fears and anger find their expression in various ways
- + recognizing the meaning of a child's certain behaviour

Point 7: Biopsychosocial loops

- + threatening experiences may interfere with current relationships
- + child may get stuck in circles and fall out of the relationship again

Point 8: Identity and autonomy

- + youngsters who are contouring their identity
- + testing autonomy need a safe background

Point 9: Developmental psychology

- + trauma can effect the child's and youngster's development
- + nourishing relationships at the heart of working with foster families
- + witnessing stance and acknowledgement



Point 10: How do you work with your network of foster care organizations

- + working within a network as a basic element
- + a reflective stance and the acknowledgment of (difficult) emotions by making use of team-resources
- + a basis which helps the foster care workers to navigate through challenges
- + gaining new perspectives

Maintaining relationships

- + **Regulating**: regaining a minimum level of calmness to begin to work on reconnecting
- + building and maintaining relationships as a safe ground
- + emotional understanding leads to recognition of the child and to relief through the relationship
- + **mentalizing** to help processing emotions and to learn that there are ways to overcome hurtful emotions
- + supporting the children to express themselves on a **symbolic level**
- + creating a safe space for reflection, to regain balance, to open new perspectives and to evaluate certain situations
- + importance of **reflective spaces** for the foster care workers
 - + relief and support for the care workers
 - + help to gain understanding of the (inner) needs of the fostered minors

Thank you!



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