A booklet for children of parents with an alcohol problem

`When your parent drinks too much...`
• VAD
• How to enhance resilience of the children?
  – A group program
  – A campaign
  – An information-do booklet
VAD

- association for alcohol and other drug problems
- umbrella organization
  - 75 associated organizations who are member of VAD
- Goals of our work:
  - to prevent problems arising from alcohol and other drug use in society
  - to support qualitative care-and-cure facilities when problems arise
  - to deal with problems resulting from drug abuse in an appropriate way and to do all this in an evidence based way, based on study and research
A Group program – 2002

• intervention program for children and their parents ‘Families under influence- powerful families’
• 4 important issues
  – psycho education
  – cognitive and social skill training
  – coping with stress
  – mixed feelings and look after yourself
• 5 sessions of 2 hours for the children and
• 3 sessions of 2 hours for the parents (patient and partner)
• Sessions take place during and after the treatment of the patient
A group program: implementation

• Where?
  – in other inpatient institutions (psychiatric hospitals)
  – outpatient institutions (centre for mental health)

• How?
  – courses for counsellors
  – working group
  – spread the materials
    • Study of literature and evaluation - done by the Catholic University of Leuven - of the pilot group
    • A scenario how to implement a group program for children of parents with alcohol problems.
    • A teen workbook for children older than 12 years
    • A junior workbook for children younger than 12 years
A group program: evaluation

- Evaluation of implementation

**Positive:**
- children who follow the group sessions are very positive and they appreciate the contact with their peers
- also the counsellors are enthusiastic and are willing to work with this group of children

**Difficulties:**
- It is very difficult to organise a group program for children of parents with alcohol problems especially in the outpatient centre but also in the inpatient centre.
- Only the children of parents who were in treatment were relatively easy to reach, but....
Campaign “When your parents drinks too much…” 2005

- to reach as many children of parents with an alcohol problem
- Information and support about
  - it is not their fault
  - cannot be solved by the children, it isn’t their responsibility
  - a lot of children
  - important to take good care of themselves
  - important to talk about the problems and about their feelings.
Campaign
“When your parents drinks too much…”

- Materials?
  - a poster
  - a leaflet with important massages for children of parents with alcohol problems
  - mini website as a starting point for additional information

- How?
  - Spread posters and leaflets
  - Inform as many partners (press, counsellors, prevention workers,...)
Information booklet for children of parents with alcohol problems
Information booklet for children of parents with alcohol problems

• to inform the children and support them
  – to understand the problems

• to encourage children to talk about the parent who drinks too much.

• This booklet seeks answers to questions such as:
  – Why does my father or mother drink too much?
  – When is alcohol a problem?
  – What is ‘too much’?
  – How is it that my father or mother did not stop drinking?
  – Will I get problems with alcohol when I grow older?
  – How do I deal with alcohol?
  – How do I deal with my feelings?
  – What can I do?
  – How do I talk about it?
  – How do I stand up for myself?
  – How can I get a different view on my experience?
  – Where can I get help?
Information booklet for children of parents with alcohol problems

• For each question
  – information is given by quotes of children.
  – an assignment
  – a good to know quote
  – tips on what children can do
  – a reference to a website or a book, a novel

• give children information without using too much words and sentences.

• booklet can be used
  – as ‘a self-help booklet’ for the children
  – individual coaching context by counsellors and primary care providers.
Information booklet for children of parents with alcohol problems

- You can download this booklet for free (only in Dutch)
  - www.vad.be
  (http://www.vad.be/media/28269/vad09_koap_ow11finaal.pdf)

- can be ordered in a printed version for 1 € / a booklet.
- launched in November 2009
  - and until now we sold almost 2900 booklets.
  - and .....downloads

**In the future**

- a booklet for children of parents with alcohol problems between 8 and 14 years.

- We will also make a booklet for children of parents with (illegal) drug problems.
Als je ouder drinkt

Waarom drinkt mijn vader of moeder?

Wanneer is alcohol drinken een probleem?

Wanneer is veel ‘te veel’?

Hoe komt het dat mijn vader of moeder niet stopt met drinken?

Krijg ik later ook problemen met alcohol?

Hoe ga ik om met alcohol?

Hoe ga ik om met mijn gevoelens?

Wat kan ik doen?

Hoe spreek ik er over?

Hoe zorg ik goed voor mezelf?

Hoe kan ik anders denken over wat ik meemaak?

Waar vind ik hulp?

Tips
Why does my father or mother drink too much?

Good to know:
many possible reasons why someone may have a problem with alcohol but children aren’t responsible for it.

Tip: In some cases, stress or other mental health problems may lead a person to drink

Referred to a Dutch website for children with a parent with mental health problems

Question for yourself:
What do you think what the reason is?
How is it that my father or mother did not stop drinking?

Quote of a child:
‘I don’t belief that my father will stop drinking’

Good to know:
- there are a lot of children who have a dad or mom with an alcohol problem
- It can be really hard to stop drinking. A person might change for a while, but then have a day or week when they start drinking again. This is called a “relapse,”
Will I get problems with alcohol when I grow older?

“my father is an alcoholic and my grandfather too, will I been the next?”

Information
- kids may be more likely to have an alcohol problem if a parent does
- most kids will not follow in their parent’s footsteps and have a drinking problem
How do I deal with my feelings?
Stress can cause confusing feelings. Kids may feel: - worried or scared, angry, sad, embarrassed, guilty or ashamed, hate,...
All these feelings are normal. Even scary feelings are OK.

Assignment:
Recognizing how a parent's problem drinking makes you feel.
How do I deal with my feelings?

Examples about how to deal with negative emotions.
- talk to a close friend
- write down what you feel

Assignment:
Write how you deal with negative feelings:

Reflected to a Dutch website www.drankjewel.nl
What can I do?

- Kids are not the cause no matter what is going on at home. The child can’t control or cure the problem.
- Important for kids to find people they can talk to. Kids can talk to adults they trust, such as the other parent or a grandparent, teacher, counsellor or family doctor.
- The assignment: write down the names of the adults they trust and can talk to.
How do I stand up for myself?

- There are a lot of things kids can do.
- It’s important for kids to find something they enjoy and to spend a lot of time doing it.
- It’s good to spend time with other kids who like to play sports and do fun and healthy things.
- Join in family celebrations and rituals.

The assignment:
What do you do about sports and things with friends or on your own? Make a week list?
Where can I get help?

[www.dedruglijn.be](http://www.dedruglijn.be): (the Drug Line)

**The Drug Line** is an anonymous telephone information service for all questions or problems relating to alcohol, drugs or medicines.

- referred to **websites:**
  - A-lateen
  - Advice centre for young people
  - A Dutch website for children with a parent with mental health problems
Redactie
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AFZ Sint Lucie, Sint-Niklaas
FZ Bethaniënhuys, Zoersel
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Vormgeving
www.funcke.be

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