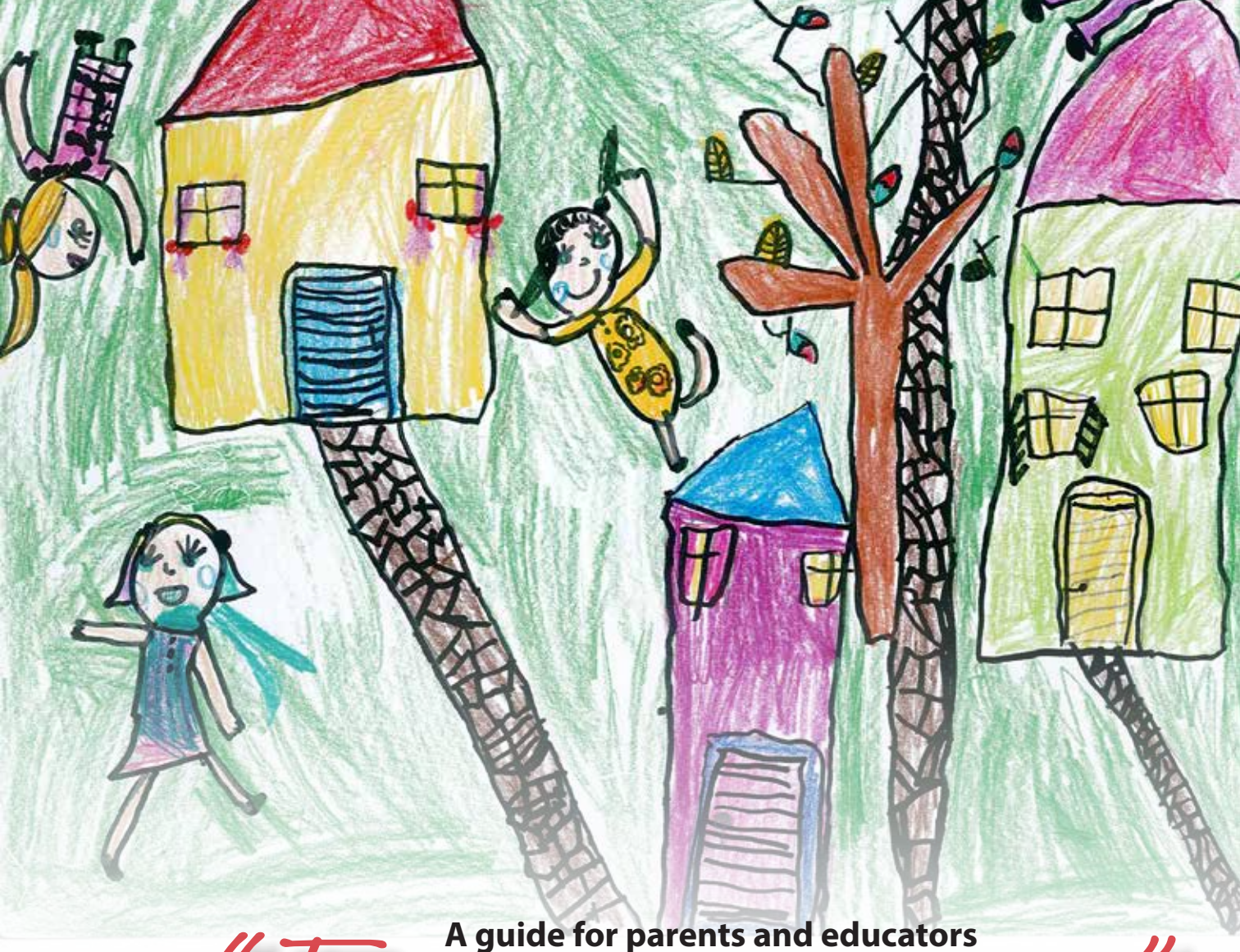

A guide for parents and educators

"From the first day..."

Self-respect is the most important task in a childhood

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NE ovisni ĐIR

This guide was produced as a part of activities in the field of mental health care and development of children in early childhood. The aim of the project "From the first day... Love and discipline" is to draw attention to the importance of setting boundaries and establishing self-control for pre-school children, as a constituent of self-respect.

The carrier of the project is the Department of mental health care and outpatient treatment.

The participants of the project are: Marjan Kindergarten Split, Cvrčak Kindergarten Solin, employees of preschool institutions in the Split-Dalmatia county and the School of Design, Graphics and Sustain Building – Split.

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The first boundary

Everyone is aware of the natural boundaries in the environment we live in. Looking at the sea, rivers, mountains and fields we are constantly reminded of how consistent, useful and important boundaries are. We are also familiar with the boundaries determined and drawn by people, between different territories and countries, so that we know where we are, who we are and to whom we belong.

Today, we pass or fly over those boundaries more often, easier and simpler, and due to the possibilities of the virtual world it sometimes seems as if the boundaries do not even exist. Of course this is just and illusion and a trap we may fall in, and which may cause various difficulties, inapt behavior and painful experiences. That is why it is important not to forget that our **psychological boundaries** also exist. They determine where we begin, and where another person begins, the carrier of our other **personality**. Boundaries represent the foundation of of our own or anybody's personality and they determine the impressions we give as unique and undividable people.

If we attempt to tell a story about the normal development of a child, we should remember that the first boundary is set by the wall of a mother's womb. Its role of containing and supporting makes it a sort of organizer of the development of the fetus. It would be difficult to imagine that the development of the fetus would be such if it wasn't carried, isolated and protected.

A mother's moves and positions of hugging and carrying a child and holding and protecting it in her arms also have a similar function.

The consequence of the separation related to giving birth is the loss of stability and a firm first boundary. The first boundary a child establishes in relation to the world around it is a **physical boundary**. The experience of this boundary stays on our skin or rather on the surface of our body, which remembers all pleasant and unpleasant stimulus. This type of stimulus continues during birth and later during the first years of a child's life through the nurturing of the body's surface (skin). The first boundary is fundamental and gives us a sense of where our body ends and where the world that surrounds us begins.

At the beginning, a child has the foundation of a mental structure, and an average child is able to search for, find and establish various and numerous boundaries around itself. This is how the child's nose searches for scents, eyes search for a picture, it looks for breasts with it's mouth, and searches for a tangible barrier with its arms and legs. All these momentary boundaries, as well as the fictive ones imposed by autoeroticism, function as a protective mechanism. A child gradually establishes the boundary body-mind-body, with the help of the adults taking care of it. Soothing a child opens the way to self-soothing on the path which leads from omnipotency to reality.

With the growth and development of a child, the adult's need for demanding anything that stimulates and protects a child's development, becomes stronger and more important. From a parent's and professional's point of view, the problem concerning boundaries is much more complex because it is necessary to find essential and adequate methods which create calming, but also necessary limits for a child in its early development.

The purpose of the guide "From the first day..." is to support and help parents and educators in order for them to be more succesful in ever-day activities with children which are on a path from discipline to self-discipline and ensures independence and responsibility in a later period of life of every adult. Producing this guide demanded discipline, which is, among other things, the ability to cooperate with others, without which it would have been impossible to accomplish what has been done.

I would like to thank all those who have succeeded in this, given their contribution, in such an important early period, which is withal: "...the cradle of all human characteristics." N.N. 17 years old – an adolescent pondering over the subject reminded us.

Željka Ključevic,
MD Psychiatrist
Head of the Office for mental health protection, prevention and out-patient treatment of addiction

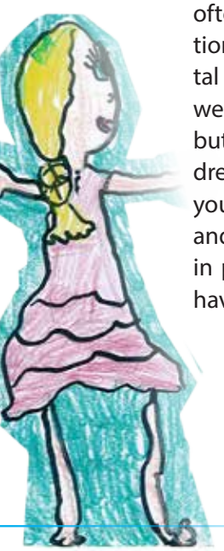
Dear parents and educators!

Children need the guidance and routing of adults even though it doesn't seem this way sometimes. We believe that you have been in situations where you were not able to fulfill a child's wish and encountered difficulties in harmonizing their whishes with realistic possibilities. Barring a child's anger, "getting on its bad side", harmonizing an adults actions in relation to the child, all this is sometimes difficult in small and especially in bigger families and groups.

Setting a child boundaries and rules of behavior is not always simple and we often do not cope very well in these situations. As professionals in the field of mental health of children and young people, we know this subject is not very popular, but we think it is essential both for children and adults. We would like to remind you about the importance of diligence and persistance in upbringing actions and in personal abilities and possibilities you have by offering a good example to your child. It is completely understandable that there are things you are not succesful in, some advice is not easy to implement and does not always give the expected result. Don't let this disencourage you! Reasons for unsuccessful attempts can differ and do not only depend on you, but on the environment, situation, child, its age and temper. An ever-day stressful environment can additionally make the parent's and educator's role more difficult in today's modern society.

This guide shows the characteristics of the **social and emotional development of a child** (the development of emotions and relationships with others) and suggests **adequate methods of setting boundaries**, **determining rules** in accordance to a child's age. Furthermore, it contains **recommendations** which can help a child adopt rules of behavior and contribute to the development of a feeling of safety and self-respect.

The authors



„At home, mom and I make an agreement and listen to each other"
Lara, 6 years old

Determining the rules

Discipline in its broadest sense includes guiding and routing a child and determining rules and boundaries of behavior. The term "discipline" has a negative tone and is often identified with "punishing". **Discipline is not the same thing as punishing**. It is based on **interrelations between a child and adults, but also on every-day praising and instructions** for the child in situations like feeding, sleeping, hygiene habits, games and relationships with children their own age and adults.

Punishing in its foundation does not contain emotional motivation, does not arouse pleasant feelings, causes a child to feel fear and anger and does not allow it to learn from its own mistakes.

In the first years of its life, a child is exposed to strong influences of its environment which later reflect on its psychophysical functioning. At this age, children do right and wrong things for and because of its love toward the parents. By setting clear rules, parents show that they care about the child, that the world is a safe and predictable place.

After introducing rules within the family, it continues in kindergarten groups with an emphasis on the **importance of harmonizing** upbringing influences on the child. In the preschool period, a child can sometimes demonstrate spite, contempt, it has a mind of its own. That is why it is i**mportant to begin setting boundaries as a process of learning in a child's early childhood**, which requires time, constant practice and a lot of patience. The process must be on-going at all times, and not only when the child is misbehaving. Only then can we expect a change in behavior, results. This process also helps in **building and maintaining self-respect** because it gives the child an opportunity to accomplish things and develop skills. On the other hand, establishing a child's self-control is one of the biggest achievements in parenting.

It is good to know that the preschool age offers a unique chance for learning!

„It is not good when you are forced to listen." ,
6 years old

At the age from 0 to 12 months

During the first year of its life, everything is focused towards the child and its needs. Enjoying in every-day and repetitive activities such as changing diapers, breast feeding, putting the child to sleep, in a relaxed atmosphere feelings of trust and safety are formed. **A child develops trust in itself and in the person taking care of it, which is the base for healthy attachment.** At the same time, every child learns how to adapt to the environment with its own strength and abilities. Through playing and sucking its thumb (seven-eight months) the child tests its "strength" of self-comfort, and by crying it is showing that it needs help from its mother or environment. In the following months the child learns how to organize its personal needs with the demands of its surrounding by sleeping, being awake and crying, while the mother or person caring for the child pays attention to **the balance between soothing and self-soothing**.

By maintaining a continuous rhythm of activities, parents guide the child concerning feeding and sleeping, at a time when it suits other members of the family, when and if it is possible. At the end of the first year of a child's life, it is possible to adjust the child's daily rhythm with the family's needs and the child can join in in other family activities (visits, outings, travelling...)

At the end of the first year of a child's life the need for basic rules and boundaries set by adults in relation to the child rises. The curiosity of a child which has started walking demands that adults adapt to the newly acquired skills and needs of the child. Also, it is necessary to adapt the rooms in which the child independently moves in and researches in.

What can help?

Every-day activities like feeding, changing, nurturing and playing should be followed by physical contact, voice and smiles. These activities develop trust, attachment and good conditions for both the mother's and child's adaptation.

It is important to recognize the child's needs, methods of soothing, the characteristics of its temper and to adapt to them. Some children require rocking in your lap, whispering or singing, and others just require closeness and a gentle touch!

A crying child is not always just hungry or wet, **relie on your intuition** for recognizing what the child needs, listen to it. Gradually delay your reactions to the child's crying, try to see if it will calm down by itself. When a child's attention is caught by looking at an object, when it is calmed by listening to your voice or music, by playing with its blanket, sucking its pacifier or thumb, its is developing its skills of self-soothing. **Stimulate and enjoy those short but successful skills. They are the beginning of the skill to manage feelings in all future situations, in which the child will feel agitated.**

Loud sounds, colors, lights, a lot of people, loud places - shopping malls can be quite stimulating so children should not be exposed to them too often.

Respect the child's need for resting because it gets tired easily and quickly. When a child gets tired, it will look away, turn its head, it will seem uninterested or wonder asleep. **When it comes to establishing and stopping contact, let the child lead.**

„It is something imaginary."

Marin, 4 years old.

At the age from 1 to 3 years

Going into the second year of its life, the child has an emphasized need to discover its surrounding which includes possible "dangers". The child climbs, runs, jumps, becomes familiar with its environment and there are many reasons for setting the first distraints and boundaries. This is when the child should be taught to be distrustful towards things that represent a real danger. Adults forbid certain activities and prevent danger ("ouch"; "no-no"). **It is important that the child fulfills its need for moving and researching in manner that is safe for it, and acceptable for its environment.** In this development faze, the need for independent activities appears. It is desireable that you support the child but not do the activities instead of it. A child needs help eating, but you should not feed it all the time, because this is how you stimulate its first small, valuable attempts to become independent.

A child constantly tests boundaries, so determining rules becomes more complicated. Spite and disobedience, refusing to obey commands, are natural ways of strengthening its will and developing independency ("me", "mine", "no"). This development necessity manifests itself as a child's disobedience so parents and educators have to forbid certain things for the first time. **Setting boundaries can be difficult for parents as well as for educators, if they take it personally and not as a way to help the child.** All these types of behavior can be expressed during the process of adopting hygiene habits. **When a child learns how to execute hygiene tasks independently, it means the child has acquired control over physical functions.** That is why adopting hygiene habits represents one of the first demands and important accomplishments for both the child and parent.

What can help?

A child this age should not be left without the supervision of an adult! Dangerous things should be out of reach, and the child should be physically prevented to misbehave (move it away from something, take something from it). In preventing unacceptable behavior it is helpful to plan ahead. Before going to the store, make an agreement with your child about what it can and cannot have. Be aware of the child's psychological and physical state. A child which is tired, hungry or sleepy cannot handle certain situations which can be exerting, such as waiting in line and similar. In these situations, you should plan to bring something that can amuse the child (a toy, picture-book, ect.)

When you forbid a child from doing something, you must attract its attention (kneel next to it in order to make eye contact, touch it) **and clearly state what it must not do.** The child will comprehend your concern and restrictions easier if the verbal ("ouch", "no-no") and nonverbal messages (gestures, facial expression) are balanced. A child can get confused by a restriction followed by a smile and will not understand what is expected of it.

After numerous restrictions, it seems as if the child "does not hear you" anymore, so instead of restricted activities, suggest the child's favorite activities which it is allowed to do. Use the word "no" only when it is really necessary. Give the child different options when it is possible because in this way you are setting a boundary, but at the same time giving the child some independence. When getting dressed in the morning, determine a selection of clothes the child can choose from.

When you see that the child is ready to adopt hygiene habits, take initiative, ask if it wants to go to the toilette, take its diaper off and be patient because this process takes time.

Everybody taking care of the child should be coherent in the demands they have concerning the child.

Setting the first restrictions and bans does not mean you do not love your child and that you are not successful in this demanding faze of your child's development. Even though it is not always easy to face the challenges related to your child's disobedience and spite, keep in mind that this is necessary for the development of the child's personality and self-respect.

At the age from 3 to 6 years

A child this age starts thinking about its own behavior and feelings and also about the behavior and feelings of other children, which represents the beginning of emotional intelligence. The child develops a sense for equity and consideration, caring for others (altruism) and the capability to share other peoples experiences (empathy), which guides the child's moral development.

Moral development includes recognizing and caring about the feelings of others ("the boy is crying because he misses his mother") and becoming aware of how the child can influence the feelings of other children with its behavior ("The girls is crying because I took her toy").

The socialization of a child in a group of children its own age in kindergarten is the base for the first social experiences and rules which the child accepts. **Rules represent a chance for children** to establish a balance between its own wishes and the needs of other people.

A child learns that society expects certain things from it (peers, educators), and so it adopts the rules of the group it belongs to. This is the faze in which the child starts recognizing its own disobedience and the consequences of its behavior. **Due to the fact that accomplishments and skills help the development of self-respect, it is crucial that you give the child a chance to correct its mistakes.**

What can help?

Family rituals (lunch time, games, relaxation, sleeping) need to become a component in the childs every-day life. In contrast to busy routines, the child needs quite and calm activities (talking, reading stories). This will help the child in situations like going to bed, it will calm down easier and drift asleep. Use these situations during the day for communication during intimate family moments.

Explain to your child that rules are followed **because they are fair and acceptable to everyone**, and not because they are set by older and stronger people ("give the toy back because I told you to").

Your requirements should be appropriate for the age, situation and character of your child. Unreasonable demands, which are not realistic can contribute to a child's poor self-respect. This is when demands turn into criticism and as a result the child becomes spiteful and disobedient. A child has the need to be accepted for what it is, sometimes restless and disobedient, and not always what the parents want the child to be. Praising is very important, necessary and essential in the upbringing of a child. When you use praising constantly, the child may feel insecure and continuously seek confirmation, approval and praises before each independent decision.

Take advantage of situations when **desirable behavior can be turned into a game** ("who will get dressed first"). Children will accept this, learn quicker, because games are a spontaneous activity which every child enjoys. **Help your child** recognize its own misbehavior and find a way to improve it ("Do you understand what happened?", "How can you fix it?"). Encourage your child to apologize to others, to the person it "caused damage" to. **This is how a child shows it cares about someone elses feelings and becomes responsible for its own behavior.**

Setting boundaries at the preschool age

Setting boundaries at the preschool age includes stopping a child misbehaving, calming it down and reinstating emotional balance. After it calms down, a child should think about and understand the consequences of its misbehavior and this is followed by negotiating possibilities of fixing the damage. This is how a child learns how to prevent the same or similar mistakes in its future behavior.

"Ways to set boundaries" which are sometimes used, **that do not help but rather they make the situation worse** are physical punishment, embarrassment, humiliating the child, withholding love by threatening to abandon the child, comparing the child to other children, depriving it of food, forcing the child to go to bed and similar.

Boundaries in the child's every-day activities?

Difficulties in setting boundaries most often appear in situations **when adults have to interupt activities which are pleasant for the child** (playing with peers, watching television, telling stories) and demand the child starts a new, less pleasant activity (going to bed, brushing their teeth, picking up their toys). A child will accept a change easier if it is announced. The announcement has to be clear, decisive and definite in order for it to be effective ("10 more minutes of playing and then we have to get ready for bed").

A child should be familiar with the consequences of misbehavior ("if you break your toy, you won't play with it anymore"). Don't try to "save" your child from the consequences, but don't lecture it either! Help a younger child pick up its toys, and an older child should do this itself when it finishes playing. If the child refuses to do this, it won't be able to play with its toys for a while. **Depriving a child of certain** privileges is effective when it involves something a child really likes (watching cartoons, favorite games), but should never be deprived of something necessary (food, sleep). You should be careful that the depriving of privileges immediately follows the misbehavior and that it has a limited duration and is appropriate for the age of your child.

If the child is not putting itself in danger with its misbehavior (throwing itself on the floor, screaming) then the behavior can be ignored. This is especially evident during tantrums when a child does not get what it wants. Tell the child: "When you calm down we can talk about what you are allowed".

Time-out is used only when all other methods have shown to be unsuccessful. It is effective when you need to stop inappropriate behavior (like a physical conflict between children). There should be an arrangement concerning the time-out place, behavior which is inappropriate and the duration of the time-out (it is recommended that the number of minutes is equal to the number of years of the child). Choose a place that will not be interesting to the child, where there are no toys, so it can think about its behavior. **After the time-out encourage your child and stimulate it to behave appropriately.**

How can stories for children help?

It is important to know that, except for conscious, intentional actions of adults, a child adopts most things in an indirect way – by imitating its parent and other important close people, but also characters from their favorite cartoons, fairy tales and stories.

Guidance through stories **contributes to the maturing** of a child, in a different way than when adults directly say what the child has to or must not do. Apart from the external, visible, there is an internal, invisible growth and development. The same way the child learns to walk and talk, it learns to cope with personal emotional events, anger, tantrums or painful disappointments.

Stories help children how to:

"cope with misfortune and sad faith" - experience its first injustice, deal with sadness and anger.

"endure unbearable oppression" - conflicts with elder brothers, sisters and peers.

"face reality" - adopt rules and ways of solving problems.

"find their way out of a deep dark forest" - deal with the difficulties of growing up and finally grow up.

„It is an agreement between children and people.."
Luka, 6 years old.

The Three Little Pigs

In the story **"The Three Little Pigs",** the pigs build houses from straw, wood and bricks. The first and second pig build their houses quickly and without effort so that they can go play as soon as possible. The third pig is able to postpone the need to play, can forsee the wolf's intentions and therefore decides to build his house from bricks. The pig is able to postpone its need for pleasure (playing) and adapt to the requirements of its environment (prepare for the arrival of the wolf). That is how a child abandons its former, immature ways of functioning and moves on to more mature ones. Although the child wants to be secure and protected like the third pig, it understands the indirect message of the fairy tale: that all three pigs are the same – children, but on different development levels. The houses the three little pigs are building represent man's historic progress, but also the internal progress of every child. **This story teaches a preschool child that it should not be lazy and take things likely. It should always make an effort and be patient and persistent.**

The Slipper Cat

In the story **"The Slipper Cat"** despite adult warnings, children do not take care of their slippers and do not put them back in their place. When the cat takes the slippers from them, the children start looking for them and worrying about them. This story gives them the possibility to correct inappropriate behavior and children can learn from their mistakes. The slipper cat takes the slippers but it also teaches a child to take care of its things and put them back in their places. This is how a child learns how to take care of itself and its things, it becomes independent and responsible.

The Wolf and Seven Little Goats

In the story "**The Wolf and Seven Little Goats",** the little goats stay home alone. Before leaving, their mother instructs them and warns them not to open the door. The wolf tricks the little goats, they open the door for him and he eats all of them except for the youngest little goat. When their mother returns she kills the wolf and saves the children. Leaving children alone is the subject of many fairy tales and represents the parent's wish that their children become independent, but also the child's wish to test their independence, which can sometimes frighten them. This story satisfies the child's natural curiosity, especially the one due to their parent's restrictions (don't open the door, don't go there, don't look through the key-hole). This is the base for future intellectual curiosity, and for the need to become acquainted with the external world through new experiences. **A child learns that the thing parents forbid them from doing actually represent real – external dangers because of which rules must be followed.**

Stories for children educate adults too!

Stories give you a chance to fantasize, escape, get comfort and recover. Optimism is also present as well as hope in the future because they show that the process of growing up has begun and is unstoppable. The youngest child is often the heroe of the story and can solve the problem, which is no longer a privilege of bigger and older ones.

The heroe of the story faces danger as well. A child can feel threatened in reality at a time when their parents, which where full of love until then, start demanding order, tidiness and independence.

In every story there is a wolf, witch, stepmother, a dangerous character that the child battles. Battling the characteristics of the evil character, the child battles its own laziness, anger, disobedience and messiness.

An important aspect in fairy tales and stories is the quest for the thing that will help the heroe. The quest occurs inside the house (the slippers symbolize this), but also in the external world (hidden spaces and forests symbolize this). Its whole childhood, a child searches for and finds ways to become independent and grow up.

Cooperate:

„ it takes a village to raise a child! “

(proverb)

Instead of a conclusion...

If you understand why your child is disobedient, you have made a huge step toward solving the problem. It helps a child when you show you understand its feelings: "I know you're sad, angry and similar."

A child will often "test" you because this is part of growing up. When you say or promise something, then you have to keep your word. Consistent messages and actions of adults is one of the most important features of raising a child.

If you feel that you have done something wrong, calm down, apologize to the child and explain how you will resolve the situation next time. **Learn to observe mistakes** (your own ones as well) **as a chance to learn!** A child always learns the most just by looking at you.

Sometimes you might need to talk to a professional, because even just one talk can help you with your dilemmas. Can a child do everything you expect it to do? Be aware **of your child's development capability, and of some natural limitations**.

What has research shown?

Educators are considered qualified to set rules and advise parents. They express the need for additional knowledge and skills in order for the balance and cooperation to be better. They believe that parents should consult with them more often concerning a child's behavior. (according to research "Testing competence for disciplining children at the preschool age", 2011)

Young people believe that their parents are not succeeding in setting boundaries and rules within the family, and rules of behavior outside the house are even less under parental influence. A large number of parents does not approve, but has not clearly forbidden the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and other things related to risky behavior (according to ESPAD research, 2011).

What do parents say?

"Asking the children to do something they don't want to, this is often a dad's obligation... I always remember my father's "firm hand"."

Ante

"You make an agreement, you stick to it and establish a balance with everyone at home, that is how it should be."

Ivan

"Discipline makes me wonder more than any other parental obligation: Am I doing this right...?" *Bruna*

"Disciplining a child means teaching it to behave in accordance with rules within the family or community."

Marijana

"All this is nice...but how can we implement it?" *Maja*

"I know I need help first". *Sanja*

"Discipline is consistency in executing certain tasks." *Jakov*

"Discipline is maintaining order." *Alen*

What do educators say?

"It›s a harmony without too many words, (when you achieve it)." *Vita*

"A cocktail of love, authority, fairness and consistency." *Maja*

"Discipline is life...you can›t live without it." *Silvana*

"Discipline is when you count to ten..." *Olga*

"Discipline is a universal necessity, equally important for each child although a "universal recipe" for enforcing it doesn›t exist." *Josipa*

"Children easily become aware of the need for discipline. If they reside in a place with no boundaries, they will easily spot the situations which demand certain rules. Sometimes, parents do not recognize the need for setting boundaries, so when there finally comes a need for this, both the children and parents are shocked." *Darija*

What do young people say?

"Discipline is when you cool down and thi nk." *Stjepan, 17 g.*

"Discipline in my family is like sneezing. It surprises you, comes and goes." *Katarina, 21 g.*

"Work, oder and my dad." *Marina 16 g.*

"Discipline is when you come to terms with yourself, and then turn to other." *Luka, 16 years old."*

It can be useful for an individual and for society, if it is enforced. In my family it is not enforced! In my family discipline equals punishment, it's of no use." *Ela, 15 years old..*

"I'm late to school, I always put of cleaning my room, I avoid lunch and forget to do my homework. This is all the opposite of discipline." *Ivan, 11 years old.*

"It is supposed to be responsibility, and that doesn't suit me." *Matea, 16 years old.*

(focus group, Center for Mental Health of Children and Youth

"The thing that most people lack in life."

"It is the boundaries in life within which we must reside in order to leed a more successful life as possible."„

"For me, it is the cradle of all human characteristics."

"Discipline should be all around us, wherever we are, because, in other words, discipline is mutual cooperation."

(pupils from classes 3a. and g4b. - School of Design, Graphics and Sustain Building – Split)

And the children said...

"It means that you can hear with both ears what someone is saying to you." *Marija, 6 years old.*

"It is really nice to play by yourself, because then nobody bosses you around." *Lovre, 6 years old.*

"We should be careful what to listen to." *Lara, 6 years old.*

"You must listen, but sometimes you don 't!" *Lara, 6years old.*

"When the teacher in kindergarten tells you to tidy the doll corner, but you don't really feel like it.." *Nikolina, 5 years old.*

"When you do something nice, when you stand up and give your seat to an elderly man in the bus." *Duje, 6 years old.*

"That is when everybody follows the rul es." *Nina, 6 years old.*

"That is when you practise like your coach tells you to." *Luka, 5 years old.*

"When you listen to your mother and father." *Lucija, 6 years old.*

"Something is correct when it is correct and straight." *Roko, 5 years old.*

"My sister always bothers me and by this she is breaking a rule." *Luka, 6 years old.*

"It is something to imagine." *Marin, 4 years old.*

"A rule means that you can start playing." *Hanna, 4 years old.*

"Discipline, that is various sports." *Jana, 6 years old.*

"You have to be with good people if you are proper, and not with bad ones (they lie and steal)." *Lara, 6 years old.*

"Those are rules which must be followed. We have to follow all of them, but I don't follow the one about lunch." *Lovre, 6 years old.*

"It is an agreement between children and people." *Luka, 6 years old.*

The guide "From the first day..." is extremely important for understanding the social and emotional development of a child "from their first day" onwards, and also for parents and educators to manage better in their demanding roles.

The authors pointed out the importance of observing three subperiods in the life of a preschool child: the first year, from its first to its third year and from its third to its sixth year. Certain characteristics of each period are listed and this should help parents and educators in understanding and satisfying a child's needs and in establishing mutual trust.

The important issue of discipline, or rather setting boundaries, found its place in this small but very useful guide. If boundaries or rules do not exist, discipline is pointless and does not contribute to the acquiring of desireable behavior and distinguishing desireable and acceptable behavior from undesirable and unacceptable behavior. In every development period you need to wisely set the boundaries so that they do not disable the child's development, but that they support the child in developing self-respect and self-discipline. This guide is very valuable on that path.

At the end of the guide are three stories. The authors obviously know that children absorb messages, advice and restrictions much easier when they come from a heroe from a story, rather than from parents or educators, that it is possible to find comfort in stories and that the story characters can become their friends which raise their level of self-confidence and motivate the child to engage in useful activities.

The authors of this guide succeeded in the most difficult task – in a concise form, important messages are clearly and intelligibly presented which parents and educators can use as guidelines and pointers when they face doubts and dilemmas concerning upbringing.

Split, 23. 02. 2013. god.
Dr. sc. Mirjana Nazor, Psychologist

Before twenty years or so, I met a group of young professionals from Split, enthusiasts which in the midst of the war chaos decided to change something in their lives and in the lives of their surrounding. They dedicated themselves to learning about children, family and themselves. At the beginning they seemed like enthusiasts, but today they work, write and are known for their accomplishments in their work with young people. I am repeatedly joyed and fulfilled with pride with each of their successes.

When the authors of this guide decided to work on such a difficult and sensitive subject such as the relationship between parents and their children in the period of setting boundaries, learning, obedience and discipline, it seemed that this would be challenging especially at this dishevelled and unstable time. I was worried that they wouldn't be able to present the true dimension of the problem. It concerns upbringing, and it is not only based on the parent's knowledge and managing but also on their feelings and personal experience, connections with their own parents when they were children and attitudes in the society and environment they live in. After I read the text I came to the conclusion that they had fully succeeded. Moving parts of the guide were written in cooperation with children because their comments often depict a problem the best.

Parenting is not an easy job, but it is promising. One of the first words a child says and later consciously and purposely uses is "No!". They protect themselves from the things they do not like and come from the outside, most often their parents. Words are important in development because for the first time your child can express its attitude. Parents will not always be fond of this. When we disagree with the child or want to make them listen to us we must remember that I child will listen to us only if it trusts us. It is important not to demand perfection from a child, which we ourselves are not capable of achieving. Sometimes you need to ask yourself if maybe the child is right. Be cautious, children manage extremely well when there are several important adults around them and they easily get what they want when family members are not coherent. Excessive discipline may make your child obedient and make your life easier, but it is not certain that this will help your child manage better in a group in kindergarten or school... You will wonder thousands of time about the best way to solve a problem. Every situation is specific, and even the best advice doesn't always help. You know your child best. If you are guided by emotions and reason and if you are building trust in the relationship with your child, everything will be alright. Using economic terms: you will get back what you invested. With this guide the authors wanted to help in managing some seemingly simple situations, and I believe the guide will prompt you to think and that you will find some innovative answers.

Zagreb, 7. 03. 2013. god.
Prof. Vesna Vidovic, M.D., PhD, Psychiatrist

„It means that you can hear with both ears what someone is saying to you.“
Marija, 6 years old.

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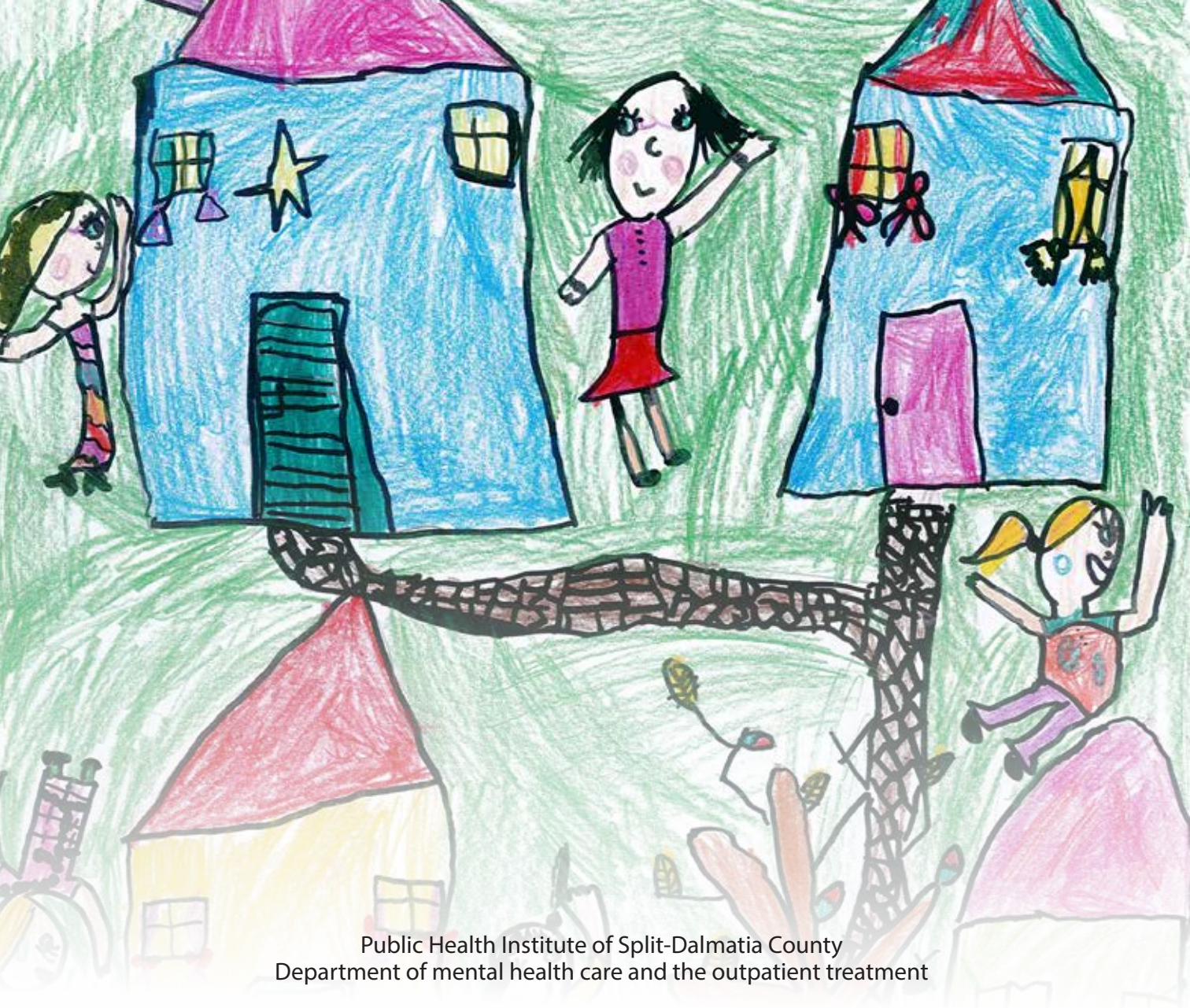

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