

THE TWO SUITCASES

PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE:

The exercise emphasizes what a child brings visibly and invisibly when he or she has experienced complex traumatic experiences and is placed in a residential setting

TIMING:

15/20 minutes

NEEDED MATERIAL:

- 2 boxes, like a shoebox. 1 box represents the visible suitcase, the other box represents the invisible suitcase
- Small note cards to write
- Pencils or markers

HOW TO CONDUCT THE EXERCISE:

Divide the group into smaller groups of no more than five people.

The teacher explains: "please write down on the small note cards what a child that experienced trauma brings with him/her in a visible or invisible way. Empty each box and discuss the outcomes with each other and reflect with each other what this means to your professional approach to these young people."

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:

Young people in care often bring two suitcases with them:

The visible suitcase: they bring at least a few belongings: clothes, toys, pictures, etc. But they also bring an invisible suitcase filled with the beliefs they have of themselves. They may not even be aware of this "invisible suitcase" filled with the beliefs they have about themselves, the people who care for them and the world in general. This invisible suitcase is often filled with overwhelming, negative beliefs and expectations:

- I am worthless
- I am always in danger of being hurt and overwhelmed
- I am powerless

But also about you as a caregiver:

- You are unresponsive
- You are unreliable
- You are, or will be, threatening, dangerous, and rejecting

For a caregiver it is important to know that the beliefs of the young person about you aren't personal. But it is important to understand the contents of the suitcase is critical in order to help the young person overcome the effects of trauma and establish healthy relationships (Grillo & Lott, 2010, pp. 3-25)

If you want to know more about the effects of "the invisible suitcase" for young people please watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8XaYdQfV3A>

This video is made by the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress and it is a gripping film made by young people for young people who have had experienced trauma.



Visible suitcase



Invisible suitcase

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