

NETHERLANDS - Dappere Dino's (Courageous Dinosaurs)

Country	Netherlands
Target area	Secondary prevention through peer group process and play therapy
Practice owner	Independent not-for-profit research organisation

Short summary description of the practice

Worldwide, many children experience parental separation and divorce. This can significantly impact their well-being and emotional and behavioural functioning and calls for prevention. Courageous Dinosaurs was created to bring this issue to the forefront. The programme is based on theories of play therapy, developmental psychology, stress and coping resilience promotion, and research on risk and protective factors. Central to the group sessions is a dinosaur hand puppet named Rex. Group leaders use Rex to give words to divorce-related thoughts and feelings. Rex is the same age as the participants and shares his experiences about his parents' divorce. He is also an important role model in practicing problem-solving skills. In addition to puppet play, group leaders use many creative materials and games.

Overall goal and specific objectives

The overall goal of the initiative is to prevent divorce-related problems in children. In particular, specific objectives of the programme are: 1) creating a supportive group environment; 2) facilitating identification and appropriate expression of feelings; 3) promoting accurate understanding of divorce-related concepts and clarifying divorce-related misconceptions, 4) enhancing children's problem-solving skills, and 5) enhancing children's perceptions of self and family.

Indicators

Research (Klein Velderman et al.) has tested whether Courageous Dinosaurs would (1) increase participating children's positive functioning, (2) improve their emotional and behavioural functioning, and (3) enhance their well-being.

Target population

Children aged 6 to 8 years old who are experiencing parent separation or divorce and are not currently in therapy or receiving other mental health services (excluding routine preventive psychosocial care) and for which there is permission by both parents who have custody rights.

Methodology

Courageous Dinosaurs offers a supportive peer group environment. The group training consists of 12 weekly sessions of 45 minutes each.

Main outcomes

Courageous Dinosaurs is based on theories of play therapy, developmental psychology, stress and coping resilience promotion, and research on risk and protective factors. Dinosaur hand puppet Rex plays a central role in the group sessions. Group leaders use Rex to give words to divorce-related thoughts and feelings. Rex is the same age as the participants, and he shares his experiences about his parents' divorce with them. He is also an important role model in practicing problem-solving skills. In addition to puppet play, group leaders use many creative materials and games (e.g., reading books, board games, posters, picture cards, and role play). Courageous Dinosaurs was based on a module of the Children of Divorce Intervention Program - CODIP developed in the United States (Pedro-Carroll et al.). It was translated and culturally adapted to the Dutch context. Research findings (Dutch Quasi-experimental study by Klein Velderman et al. and previous US studies by Pedro Carroll et al.) support further implementation of Courageous Dinosaurs to support children's positive functioning and well-being and to decrease emotional and behavioural problems after their parents' divorce.

Funding

"Local governments are responsible for bearing the costs incurred during the implementation process".