



General National Association "DE KNOOP".

Association for parents/educators of children and (young) adults with attachment disorders/Basic-Loss-Syndrome.

Goals to be achieved are:

- \* Offering support by means of information, mutual contacts and special interest meetings.
- \* Giving more publicity to this issue in social and therapeutic public health services, the media and the government.
- \* Trying to get more attention and acknowledgement for the serious problems that occur from attachment disorders/Basic-Loss-Syndrome in the fields of specialists and scientific researchers.
- \* Trying to increase expertise

Attachment disorders/Basic-Loss-Syndrome.

In this leaflet you will find ten characteristics of the so-called Basic-Loss-Syndrome (BLS), as described by Geertje van Egmond in her book "Bodemloos bestaan, problemen met adoptiekinderen" (Basic Loss, problems with adopted children). Ed. Ambo/Anthos Amsterdam. ISBN 90 63 1703 4.

Many parents/educators of both adopted and biological children will immediately recognise (several of) these characteristics. In adopted children these (behaviour) disorders can be explained by the fact that the child has not or only partially been able to engage and build a healthy mutual bonding with its mother/father/grandparent/educator in the earliest period. The cause of the deficiency is considered due to deep emotional and affective deprivation and neglect in early childhood, before the adoption.

However, the characteristic symptoms, as we know them, do not prevail only in foster- step- and adopted children, but also in (biological)own children, even when they were wished for, loved and were never neglected by their parents.

In these cases there have to be other possible causes. Nowadays several experts consider it possible that some attachment disorders/Basic-Loss-Syndrome might have a genetic or medical cause.

As a parent you may have felt a shock of recognition seeing the symptoms that are exposed here. Perhaps right after your baby was born you already experienced the feeling that something wasn't okay. Some babies seem to refuse any contact, physical or emotional, with their mothers. They almost literally seem to refuse to be touched or hugged. They cry a

lot, without a logical explanation like hunger or a wet diaper. These babies are not able to relax and have difficulty to fall asleep. The parents become more and more desperate and feel powerless because in the end they don't know what to do. Also while growing up, the child gives them a feeling of: 'This child doesn't want us, the overall feeling is one of fighting and resistance, both figuratively and literally.' This feeling gets even more painful when this struggle stays unnoticed by other people in the environment. 'Why do you make such a fuss, nothing is wrong, with us the child is sweet and cheerful!' Insecurity and despair are growing, in combination with feelings of guilt, family stability is falling apart. Coping daily with the child's misbehaviour may become so exhausting that the relationship between the partners begins to suffer under the pressure. You cannot handle the problems any longer.

You are desperately in need of help and support.

First of all you need the right diagnosis. Where can it be found? Moreover, the whole family needs professional help. Who can you turn to? It is very difficult indeed to find the right professionals who can give you adequate help. All sorts of frightening questions pop up: What is going to happen? Does our child need therapy? Is the whole family in need of therapy? Suppose people advise us to place our child in an institution, are we obliged to agree? What is hanging over our heads?

In reality we find out that for parents it is mostly a long and difficult process to find the right diagnosis and an adequate treatment or therapy. As a result of all these problems there is a big risk for families to find themselves more and more in an isolated position.

We are glad that that the General National Association De Knoop can help and support you! This association is a safe place, where you can find support, advice and encouragement. Other parents in our midst know the problems from within their own families and in the safe haven of our gatherings you can share your personal story and feelings without shame. Ideas and useful tips can be exchanged and gradually parents trust each other and become partners in coping with their problems.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BASIC LOSS SYNDROME

1. There is no 'base' in the child's existence (no ties of affection in the very earliest phase of life).

2. There is no 'line' in the child's life, which results in hardly any feeling about time and space; the world remains unstructured. And this, is the cause of learning problems which are often of a very specific nature: a total lack, or very little understanding, of numerical concepts, an inability to understand the abstract, poor concept of the word picture and the fact that learning material does not sink in

3. The child's conscience and sense of morality have never had a chance to

develop.

4. There is no self-awareness; and neither is there a basic trust in adults, which results in the inability and/or deeply-rooted fear of creating relationships with others.

5. There is a strong tendency towards making superficial and easily changeable relationships. This makes the family problems very difficult for those in the outside world to recognise. The 'see' nothing, or very little, and this even includes professional therapists.

6. The child shows survival behaviour, and this is done by shamming. He tries to hold his head above water by keeping the world around him totally under control. He is brilliant in observing, weighing-up and manipulating the people around him. He spends a great deal of his energy in this, which means that learning achievements and creativity, for example, lay behind.

7. The intimate and emotional ties within the family are considered to be threatening. The family's plea for a relationship based on mutual trust is difficult for the child to understand, and causes confusion. The child then sometimes gets the feeling of being different, of inadequacy and of loneliness.

8. The very earliest experience—maybe even before birth—of being 'repudiated', 'unwanted', 'rejected' and 'disposed of', is credibly damaging. An escape from this fundamental pain is sought in compulsive destruction, which is either directed towards himself (self-mutilation) or often towards others (mother). Other known expressions of such aggression are physical violence, acts of cruelty towards animals, (compulsive scoffing of food, stealing, destruction, telling lies, insomnia, provocative sexual behaviour and running away. One usually notices an insatiable need for attention.

9. In all that he does, the child usually acts according to feelings of desire and lust, and hardly exercises any restraint or recognises boundaries.

10. The Basic Loss Syndrome, and all that has been written about it, is not something which only applies to specific countries, neither to certain age-groups, nor skin colour or cultural background.

A team of specialists is advising De Knoop. Together we work on developing research. We take great effort in trying to draw the attention to this issue in the media and in politics.

Would you like to know more about De Knoop, or talk to someone (confidentially and no strings attached) on the phone, don't hesitate to contact: per e-mail: [info@deknoop.org](mailto:info@deknoop.org)

The General National Association De Knoop focuses on the following targets:

- \* Parents and caretakers of biological/foster/step and adopted children with attachment disorders by:
  - information and documentation
  - mutual support and exchange of experience
  - (special) gatherings and meetings
- \* (Young) adults with this specific disorder, seeking for support
  - look above
- \* Caretakers in both residential and ambulant settings
  - see above, also
  - public relations
  - informative meetings
  - exchange of experiences
  - data registration
- \* specialists and scientific areas
  - exchange of information and documentation
  - stimulation and development of specific diagnostics en treatment
  - informative meetings
- \* media and politics
- \* related organisations

