Think and Act: Reflective Tool for professionals working with families (TART)
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Introduction

This tool, **Think and Act: Reflective Tool for Professionals working with Families** (TART) (hereinafter TART) has been created within the framework of the Erasmus + Grow in Family Today project (hereinafter GIFT) (2018-FR01-KA202-0488115) with the participation of 4 European countries (France, Spain, Italy and Romania) represented by 4 entities and/or professional services that attend families in vulnerable situations (Caminante-FR, Consell Comarcal del Vallès Occidental-ESP, Casa di Ramia-IT and Holtis-RO) and the universities of 4 European countries (Pau et Pays de l’Adour University-UPPA-FR; Barcelona University and Lleida University-ESP; Padova University and Verona University-IT; Iasi University-RO).

Within the framework of the GIFT project, two previous intellectual outputs have been created that are antecedents to and complement this current output. The first of them "Growing in family today: the challenge of diversity" addresses the issue of the family and the exercise of parenthood in the family today from the perspective of diversity, and identifies the main challenges in terms of intervention, defined by the components of the aforementioned partnership. The second output, entitled “Representations of growing in family today” focuses on the view held by families, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, as well as professionals, of what it means to grow in a family today. Both intellectual outputs are antecedents of this third intellectual output and contribute valuable elements to nurture the reflective processes that are proposed here.

TART intellectual output has a clear applied orientation and arises from the need for professionals who deal with families in vulnerable situations to value the cycle "action, reflection, research, action.” TART is intended to promote the reflection of professionals on the interventions they carry out, the methods they use and their adaptation to people and situations considering them from an ecological and systemic perspective. The elements on which reflection is proposed result from the analysis of the opinions of 39 professionals, 33 young people and 26 mothers and fathers from the four countries, collected through focus groups (to consult aspects of the methodology for collecting information in the focus groups, consult IO2). The analysis was carried out after a process of intense work that was divided into different phases. The first was dedicated to agreeing on the dimensions and sub-dimensions that emerged from the discussion groups and was carried out in person during the 3rd learning week of the project, in October 2019 in Iasi (Romania). Later, in a second phase, each country worked internally with the data of their country, grouping it by sub-dimensions. This was followed by the third phase focused on design.
This third phase consisted of refining the sub-dimensions which were considered essential for the professionals to focus on, the definition of the design of the tool, as well as the drafting of guidelines for evidence-based practice from the research. During this third phase, four virtual meetings were held between June and December 2020. Finally, the fourth phase was that of validation by professionals external to the project.

The result of the intense exchange between the members of the project has given rise to TART, a collaborative and consensual intellectual output to guide reflection on key issues related to practices of accompaniment for families in vulnerable situations. The contextual and multidisciplinary differences that characterise the four participating countries have been taken into account to configure a versatile tool to be used from different cultural or professional contexts.

This intellectual output has been structured into six parts:

0. The introduction.

1. The first part, refers to the objectives and methodological aspects of TART, where the intentions and how to use the tool are explained.

2. The second part, presents the three large dimensions and the associated sub-dimensions that reflection is centered on.

3. The third part, presents the specific questions to promote reflection grouped in the three sub-dimensions.

4. The fourth part, contains the reflective diagrams where reflection would be represented.

5. The fifth part, presents the guidance and reading references that have been provided to both researchers and professionals of the GIFT project to fuel reflection and guide interventions to consider contributions from research.

We hope that this third intellectual output encourages the professional to reflect and that he or she finds elements of interest for the advancement of professional practice.
Purpose, objectives, and methodology
Think and Act Reflective Tool for Professionals working with Families (TART) is a tool to promote reflection among the different professionals who deal with families in situations of vulnerability or that are at risk, with a clear intention to improve professional practice and nurture the desire to continue improving through knowledge of their strengths, but also of their weaknesses and, in this way, encourage the desire to continue training and nourish their practices with the evidence from research.

Reflecting on family intervention, regardless of the service, helps the institutions and the professional to advance in interventions. For this reason, its main objective is to promote reflection by professionals regarding their practices of accompaniment or intervention with families in vulnerable situations who are attended by their services. The purpose of reflection is twofold: on the one hand, to help identify aspects for improvement of these practices and offer guidance for it, and on the other, to transform professional reflection into the design of planning strategies in different areas, for example, training, supervision, etc. so that they have a positive impact on the improvement of practice.

The IO3 aims to help organise and articulate reflection by the professional who works with families in situations of vulnerability or that are at risk and encourages professionals to continue questioning themselves about the processes of accompanying families with a broad, systemic, and ecological perspective.

The content of TART (IO3) is focused on a series of specific challenges of attention and intervention with today’s families in Europe. These challenges are listed in the previous IO by describing situations (IO1) and mentioning the main challenges that were identified by the professionals, parents, and young people (IO2).

**Why?**

The IO3 aims to help organise and articulate reflection by the professional who works with families in situations of vulnerability or that are at risk and encourages professionals to continue questioning themselves about the processes of accompanying families with a broad, systemic, and ecological perspective.

**What?**

The content of TART (IO3) is focused on a series of specific challenges of attention and intervention with today’s families in Europe. These challenges are listed in the previous IO by describing situations (IO1) and mentioning the main challenges that were identified by the professionals, parents, and young people (IO2).
1.2. Target population, who for?

Reflective action is part of the ethical work of professionals, but also of institutions, in favour of improvement and a quality approach to intervention. The recipients of this tool are the various professionals who work with vulnerable families.

Who for?

The tool can be used both by the direct care professionals themselves to address their own practice, as well as by professionals who are dedicated to supervising teams, or by professionals who guide the professional practices of university students.

1.3. Methodology: When? And, how?

This reflective practice can occur at different moments of the intervention: prior to the start of the intervention, in the diagnostic phase, during the intervention or at the closure. Thus, in each of the phases, reflection can focus on a key process of the intervention. For example, in an initial phase, when the professional is asked to work with a family, reflection can focus on the preconceptions we have about the family or what a professional should do, and how the family intervention is organised from a professional teamwork perspective; In a diagnostic phase, reflection can be focused on understanding how the family operates, the dynamics and motivations that the family has to act in a certain way, but also on what can be offered from the service carrying out the intervention to respond to their needs and problems; In the intervention phase, reflection can focus on how bonds with professionals are created to facilitate the family’s involvement in the intervention process or on the consequences of the intervention on the professional; from a case ending perspective, on how and when to raise the idea of case closure; And from a case-closing perspective the focus of the use of TART tool can be on how to evaluate the case from an initial, procedural and final perspective.

TART can also be used when the institution or service deems it convenient to reformulate a strategic line of intervention and mobilise the entire institution towards a reflective approach. Finally, it is also considered that TART is a tool that can be used when welcoming a new professional or internship student into an institution or service. The formulation of reflective questions and the debate that is generated, helps people who are joining the team, or who are being trained, to carry out explicit reflection on fundamental issues of accompaniment or intervention with families.
Reflection is organised into 3 diagrams, according to the focus of reflection:

1. Focus on young people and children
2. Focus on parents
3. Focus on professionals

The use of diagrams allows systematic, participatory reflection (this can be done individually or in a group), which is reflected in an immediate and visual way. These diagrams allow us to visualise the opinions and evaluations of professionals on aspects that have been identified on a European level in this project (IO1, IO2 and IO3) such as important challenges in the intervention with families. With participatory reflection, professionals can easily contribute and share their reflections and assessments with the rest of the professionals in the team.

The first step is to decide which of the three diagrams you want to reflect on. Subsequently, the section on which you want to start the reflection is selected. The area where you start can be chosen based on the professionals’ criteria. For example, because they initially think they need to reflect on a particular area or because they are faced with a new case in which one of the dimensions of the diagram stands out.

Each diagram is completed by answering a series of questions. Next, the professional, either individually, or in a team (depending on the mode that has been chosen) draws a point on each section of the diagram, further away from the centre if their assessment of the aspect is positive (if they include it in their intervention or they consider it very important for the intervention), and closer to the centre (value 0) if it is negative (they do not include it in their intervention or do not consider it important). When the assessment is finished, the points will be joined together, so that a very visual reflection map is formed of our strengths or areas for improvement.

The three diagrams are complementary, providing a systemic and an ecological view of the intervention.

Once the questions have been answered and with the diagram for reflection complete, the professional may ask:

1. Now that you have completed the IO3, what surprised you about your answers?
2. What three things would you like to improve that are within your control?
3. How exactly will you make these changes (personal and professional)?

After formulating these questions, the guidelines can be consulted to design an improvement plan.

The diagram can be used again after a while to follow the evolution of reflection and improvement processes, making it a dynamic process.

How?

Reflection is organised into 3 diagrams: 1. Children and youth; 2. Parents, and 3. Professionals. In each of the diagrams, questions are suggested, grouped by key aspects of the intervention.

Preferably, they are carried out in a group to promote professional exchange. Professionals choose a diagram to initiate reflection, and value each section from 0 to 5 depending on whether they wish to include it or not. As a result of joining the dots, a graph appears.

The three diagrams complement each other and together form a systemic and an ecological view of the intervention. The graphs show the strengths and areas for improvement. The questions after each diagram help to design the lines for improvement that can be assisted by the guidelines. The process with the diagrams can be repeated to follow the evolution of the reflection and the improvement of processes.

1.4. Format

There are two versions of TART, a concise one and an extensive one. The concise version is a pdf that summarises the fundamental aspects of TART and facilitates its completion. The long version, in addition to the above, allows you to consult the definition of the dimensions and sub-dimensions and adds extracts of sentences from the discussion groups to each of these definitions, as well as the guidelines for practice.
2. The dimensions and sub-dimensions of IO3
According to GiFT members’ answers to the questionnaire, the dimensions shown in table 1 are those selected to be included in the IO3.

**Interventions with children and young people**

- Focus on children and Young people:
  - Role of the children
  - Active listening

- Empowering the child or young person

- Enabling bonds with the children and young people

**Interventions with families**

- Family participation in making decisions

- Respect, empathy and non-judgement as the core values of the intervention

- Social support and community network and accompanying families respecting their rhythms and trajectories

- Empowering families

**Professionals that work with families**

- Knowledge and professional training

- An open mind to understand the family

- Flexibility of intervention within the institutional framework

- Ability to interpret family actions

- Management of the time of the intervention

- Network to facilitate and enhance professional work
2.1. Intervention with children and young people

A Focus on children and young people

This dimension focuses on the central position that children and young people occupy in the intervention. This centrality is analysed based on two principles: the place given to children and young people in this intervention and actively listening to them.

The place or role of the child and young people refers to the position the child or adolescent occupies in the intervention, considering that they must be an active agent of their development and, therefore, must be able to access all that information that is important for their development and well-being, adapted to their needs and appropriate to their maturity, and thus to be able to take part in situations that affect them personally or as a community.

Active listening refers to the space provided for the child or adolescent in the intervention, considering that they must have spaces and opportunities to meet and express themselves freely (Space), they must be heard by adults (Audience), and they must be considered as part of the intervention and influential actors in it, where their opinions and contributions are part of the argument and the proposal for changes, solutions, etc.


B Empowering children

To empower children is to guide them to feel valued and happy with who they are; to feel capable to try new things; to allow them to have a say in their lives and make choices that affect them; to bounce back from whatever life throws their way; and to develop a sense of self-respect (adapted from Oxford Dictionary).

C Enabling bonds

Positive bonds for the child or adolescent are considered as those close or distant relationships that the child or adolescent maintains or has maintained with people around them, be they family, friends, professionals, etc. and in which affection, support and limits have a
place, being a point of support for their well-being and physical, mental, emotional and social development. Therefore, simultaneously supporting adolescents to build and maintain bonds with parents, friends, teachers, and mature adults in the community can facilitate their whole-person development (Lee and Lok, 2012, p.4).

2.2. Intervention with families

Family participation in making decisions

The participation of families in the decisions that affect them is ensured through collaborative work for the joint understanding of the situation, expectations, the definition of areas of change and the assessment of the effects of the decisions made and the actions taken. Such collaboration allows families to see themselves as subjects of change.

Participation requires the firm conviction on the part of professionals and the protection system that: a) families have the right to participate in decisions that affect them; b) families are competent to make decisions provided they have the necessary information and support; and c) decisions made within the family are more likely to be successful than those imposed by external agents (Burford and Hudson, 2002).

Respect, empathy, and non-judgement as the core values of family accompaniment and/or intervention

A professional relationship of accompaniment and/or intervention is built on the interrelation of three fundamental values: respect, empathy, and an attitude free from judgment. The established professional relationship is a key element in the process of change, it could be said that the relationship is the means through which changes occur. Social support, community network and accompanying families respecting their rhythms and trajectories.

Social support, community network and accompanying families respecting their rhythms and trajectories.

The action of accompanying and/or intervening is not directed only at the family unit, the ecological and contextual view of the family’s reality
IO3. Think and Act: Reflective Tool for professionals working with families (TART)

suggests identifying, assessing, validating, and using the resources present in the close contexts of the families, in order to establish connections and social and community ties that will support, help and sustain the necessary changes.

Empowering families

The perspective of empowerment in the accompaniment and/or intervention with families emphasises their capacities and self-determination. All families, despite their adversity, are considered to have abilities, skills and knowledge. That is why the empowerment of families begins by focusing professional action on the strengths and possibilities present in families and on identifying the elements for change that are present in them, although they also need help to do so.

2.3. Reflective practice for professionals working with families today

Knowledge and professional training

This refers to a set of skills and knowledge (learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others and learning to be) that mark the focus of professional intervention. This set of knowledge that a professional has, traditionally comes from two complementary perspectives: one from social pedagogy and the other from psychology. Each of them marks the place the subject is speaking from. However, it should be remembered that it is not only about the training acquired but also about how the acquired knowledge is applied and the ability to adapt the theory to professional practice.

An open mind to understand the family

This refers to an open, listening, empathic, impartial, and non-judgmental position that seeks to understand the family’s situation, beyond personal convictions. All human beings tend to maintain learned behaviours based on our knowledge and lived and transmitted experiences. To understand how a family works, the set of norms, values, and beliefs that it holds must be understood, in order to
accompany the positive changes in family dynamics. In order to interpret and understand the functioning of "the other", we must allow our way of seeing life to expand in order to adapt and to improve our relationship with the families.

### C Flexibility of intervention within the institutional framework

This refers to the ability to adapt to various circumstances to adjust the intervention to different situations or family needs. Professional intervention is marked by the institutional responsibility that each professional must put into practice in their job. Therefore, it is essential to know what objectives must be met in order to mark the way forward to achieve them. Although the institutions mark the final goal, the way forward or the way to get there is shaped by the adaptability and imagination of the professionals.

### D Ability to interpret family actions

This refers to the aptitude and expertise that professionals display to analyse and interpret the actions and decisions of families. All actions have an objective or explanation. As professionals we must try to understand the motivations that lead people to act in a certain way in order to know the hierarchy of values behind the family dynamic.

### E Management of the intervention time

This refers to the management of time resources in professional action. Professional time should be differentiated from people's time. The professional task and the institutional framework will mark the professional timeframe. These times should try to adjust to the personal/families times that are needed to make and integrate the changes.

### F Network to facilitate and enhance professional work

Networking refers to the work of collaboration and coordination between two or more professionals of work teams, services and institutions linked to the attention of a common case from a holistic, ecological and multidimensional perspective. Networking is possible thanks to the recognition of the interdependence between professionals and services, seeking to facilitate and optimise resources and the meaning and direction of professional action (Ubieto, 2007).
Reflective questions
The questions presented below are open-ended questions that have been developed jointly with the GIFT project members and that ask us to reflect on the different dimensions. The questions are grouped into: a) intervention with children and young people; b) intervention with parents; and c) professional practice. In turn, each of these three dimensions is organised into sub-dimensions.

3.1. Questions for self-reflection or team-reflexion regarding the intervention with children and young people

**The role of children and young people**

1. How do professionals consider the role of children and young people in the family?
2. How do professionals consider the role of children in the intervention?
3. How do professionals consider the role of children in the community?
4. How does the institution (service) consider the role of children in the family?
5. How does the institution (service) consider the role of children in the intervention?
6. How does the institution (service) consider the role of children in the community?

**Active listening**

7. What kind of space do we provide as professionals and services for children to express their voice?
8. How do the professionals (active) listen to the children ...?
   - About their needs?
   - About their feelings?
   - About their expectations of the intervention?
   - About their future perspectives?
9. Do you consider the impact of the children’s voices on the intervention?
Promotion of empowerment from professional practices

1. How can your intervention/practice help the children’s confidence and self-esteem grow?

2. What do you do to stimulate or encourage the autonomy of the children? Sense of autonomy, identity, competence, belonging, etc.

3. How do you let the child know that they can count on you as an important figure and source of support during the intervention/accompanyment process? What do you do to be a point of reference for the child during the accompaniment process?

4. How do you highlight the achievements/progress of the child in the intervention/accompaniment?

5. Promotion of empowerment from the institution/service

6. How can we help the child’s environment so it can be an empowering place for the child?

7. How do we work on empowerment using the different methodologies of intervention (group, individual, etc.)?
Bonds between children and contexts

1. How do professionals consider the bond between children and families?
2. What is positive about each of the bonds with their families?
3. How do professionals consider the bond between children and community?
4. What is positive about each bond with the community for the child?

Bonds between children and professionals

5. What kind of relationship do we need between professionals and children for a good intervention?
6. What limits do we have to create and maintain for the bond between children and professionals?
7. How far do we have to take the building of this relationship? When do we have to take a step back?

Links between families and professionals

8. What kind of relationship do we need between professionals and families for a good intervention?
9. What limits do we have to create and maintain for the bond between families and professionals?
10. How far do we have to take the building of this relationship? When do we have to take a step back?
3.2. Questions for self-reflection or team-reflection regarding the intervention with families

1. What role does the language (verbal, non-verbal (body) and written) used by professionals play to encourage families to reflect on their situation?

2. How do we motivate and / or include families in the decision-making processes of the intervention?

3. What kind of resources and spaces are offered to families to encourage them to express their voice about their lives?
   - About their needs?
   - About their feelings?
   - About their expectations of the intervention?

4. How do we transmit the value of the family’s voice in guiding the intervention?

1. How can families identify that you show respect and sensitivity during the intervention, regarding:
   - Values and cultural beliefs?
   - Background?
   - Events?

2. How do you value diversity (of family or cultural models) during the accompaniment of families? How is diversity included in the programs they participate in?
1. How can we help families reflect on their relationships with the different systems, considering all their dimensions (family history, network, etc.)?

2. How do you think that you can be committed and available to the family as significant support for them?

3. How do you think that the institution/service can be committed and available to the family as significant support for them?

- **Social support, community network and accompanying families respecting their rhythms and trajectories**

4. How do your intervention/practice help increase the family’s confidence and self-esteem?

5. What do you do to stimulate or encourage the autonomy of the family? Sense of autonomy, identity, competence, belonging, etc.

6. How do you let the family know that they can count on you as a person of reference and a source of support during the intervention / accompaniment process? What do you do to be a person of reference for the family during the accompaniment process?

7. How do you highlight the achievements / progress of the family in the intervention / accompaniment?
3.3. Questions for self-reflection or team-reflection about professional practices on the relationship with families today

1. How does the service you work in provide you with continuous training?
2. What time and space do you have to reflect on your intervention with families with other colleagues in order to share points of view and practices and mutually learn?
3. Which kind of training/learning process are you involved in?
4. What are the goals and the methods of the training practices you are involved in?
5. What is the role/space of evaluation in your practice?
6. Do you think there is something you could learn that would improve your professional performance, that of your team or service? (Communication, productivity ...)
7. What kind of resources do you have as a professional to improve your professional performance?

Knowledge and professional training

1. What resources and strategies are helpful to share with families about the process of intervention? What framework do you use to reflect on and assess family situations? Is it ecological (holistic)?
2. Do they include and integrate the focus on the child, the family and the environment?
3. What kind of families are challenging in terms of non-judgement regarding values or cultural matters?
4. What types of families or family situations is it easier or more difficult for you to empathise with?
5. Do you have limits or problems that you cannot address with families? Problems that you cannot deal with (eg, issue of sexual abuse, religion, gender) or red lines that you cannot cross?
6. How do we manage to respect and not judge systems of (cultural) values and beliefs that are opposed to what is considered “appropriate” in our context?
7. What strategies are used to make the programs and policies participative?
8. Does the service organise moments of reflection with other professionals on the dissemination of information?
9. Is the intervention for families developed and based on family’s needs or on what services can provide? What strategies can be used to base the intervention on a family’s needs?
10. How does the institution or service allow you to adapt to the family?

Flexibility of intervention within the institutional framework

1. What strategies are used by professionals and the service to find ways for families and professionals to analyse the needs and the assessment of the situation together?
2. Which elements from the family context and community are considered in the intervention with families?

Ability to interpret family actions
Time

1. What strategies are used by professionals and the service for providing quality time for the intervention?
2. How is the concept of time for each family and age group considered?
3. What resources and strategies are helpful to face the large volume of work?
4. How does the service you work in promote motivation to continue with the activity?
5. How can we manage the different rhythms that occur during the intervention?
   - that of the family
   - that of the child
   - that of the institution

Professional transformation

6. What has the family allowed you to understand about yourself, about your professional practice?
7. How do you give feedback to the family about what they have enabled you to learn about your professional practice?
1. How is the networking and coordination of the different services promoted? Is there any teamwork between the different departments (Social / Medical-Social / Healthcare / National Education / Justice)?

2. Is the communication and trust between services promoted? What strategies are used to do so?

3. Do professionals propose the creation of multidisciplinary professional networks on a community level? What kind of networks are proposed?
4. Diagrams and final questions
For each dimension and subdimension there is a diagram with a set of associated questions that guide the reflection. Each diagram is completed while reflecting on the questions (review chapter 3.), relating each one with a score on a scale from 0 to 5. The number 5 indicates that the professional has considered the questions in their professional practice. The number 0 means that this issue has not been considered. Values between 1 and 5 will show different degrees of consideration.

Professionals can make copies of the diagram sheet in order to work more comfortably on it.

**Dimension: Interventions with children and young people**

After the reflection using the questions in section 3.1. complete the diagram considering each subdimension (A, B, C)
Dimension: Interventions with families

After the reflection using the questions in section 3.1, complete the diagram considering each subdimension (A, B, C, D).

- **A**: Family participation in making decisions
- **B**: Respect, empathy, and non-judgement as the core values of the intervention
- **C**: Social support and community network and accompanying families respecting their rhythms and trajectories
- **D**: Empowering families
Dimension: Professionals that work with families

After the reflection using the questions in section 3.1, complete the diagram considering each subdimension (A, B, C, D, E, F).

- **Knowledge and professional training**
- **A**
- **Network to facilitate and enhance professional work**
- **F**
- **An open mind to understand the family**
- **B**
- **Management of the time of the intervention**
- **E**
- **Flexibility of intervention within the institutional framework**
- **C**
- **Ability to understand the family’s actions**
- **D**
Once the questions of the three dimensions have been answered, the scores are passed to the global diagram where the three dimensions fit together. This offers a global, systemic, and ecological view of the reflection carried out.

When the diagram is complete, the professionals are asked to look at it and answer these questions for further reflections.

1. Now that you have completed the IO3, what surprised you about your answers?
2. What three things would you like to improve that are within your control?
3. How exactly will you make these changes (personal and professional)?
Guidelines and reading
Considering the different dimensions regarding working with children and young people, the project members designed a series of guidelines so that professionals can take them into account in their everyday work.

These guidelines are based on the thoughts of children, adolescents, parents, and professionals that were expressed during the focus groups organised for the project and they respond to their demands and opinions.

The guidelines correspond to:

- **Personal knowledge**, e.g. knowing yourself, controlling yourself...
- **Theoretical knowledge** e.g. using references, and evidence-based knowledge.
- **Deontology** e.g. guaranteeing respect for certain principles, values.
- **Postures** e.g. listening, empathising, finding your place, stepping back.
- **Techniques**: remaining neutral, be able to identify the issues and focus on what is needed, on what is the essential ... etc.
5.1. Guidelines for intervention with children and young people

Work using the bond in the relationship with the other. For this, the professional has to position him or herself as an equal to the subject of intervention.

“(…) The boy, girl or adolescent (…) has formed a family, he is also an actor. The idea is to leave the representation of our services (…)”.

(Focus group young people)

Focus on everyday life can help to create connections with the other. If you expose your own daily situations, you become easier to identify with and also create an image, not only as a professional but, as a person, which fosters a bond and closeness. This bond can lead to trust in the professional, making it more likely for their recommendations to be taken on board.

“(…) psychologists have to have a relationship with the family to help them and pull them forward and have a transparent relationship, that everything is seen.”

(Focus group young people)

Understand how to relate to others and know how to approach young people and their families. The tone of voice we use, the words and respect for silence can be key to working with young people. They are the ones who will permit the work to take place, it does not matter how much you insist, they have to validate and respect you so that they give value to your words. Using games, both symbolic and non-symbolic, can create bonds that will facilitate the work to be done. The use of the same communication tools that young people use can help build bridges that facilitate dialogue. In other words, using new technologies as valid communication and relationship building tools.

Promote autonomy and trust in young people. If you work with confidence in their responsibilities and potential, you can get them to advance in the process of autonomy and complete development.

Being able to listen to and give space to young people, individually and as a group, can lead to them expressing their concerns and interests. Work using the interests of young people to achieve positive changes.
Correctly manage the emotions of adults for a meaningful vicarious learning process for the young person.

Use support elements, such as stories, paintings and movies, to help create bonds and present different problems.

The needs of children and young people are the focus of our intervention. For this we must try to analyse the unmet needs and work using the potential of the different subjects in order to cover the deficiencies detected.

“There is always talk of giving a voice, but I believe that the essential thing is to listen to the children, generate spaces for listening and that they really take into account the answers they can give, not do simulation steps.”

(Focus group professionals)

Table of guidelines

- Work with the bond
- An everyday perspective helps understand the family’s reality
- Understand how they relate to each other and the values they consider important
- Use an appropriate tone of voice and communicate using the same tools
- Use play as a form of expression
- Trust in the positive purpose of the families’ actions
- Work with people’s potential
- Use individual and group intervention
- Reflect on the professional’s feelings so as not to project them on to professional practice
- Keep in mind that the child and their needs are at the heart of our intervention
Reading recommendations

**A Focus on children and young people**


**B Empowering children**


IO3. Think and Act: Reflective Tool for professionals working with families (TART)


Enabling bonds


5.2. Guidelines to help families to reflect on their situation

Taking families into account in the decision-making process is paramount. To do this, you have to try to find common ground to be able to build possible solutions to the problems that arise. This way we can prevent families from feeling that we oppose their opinions or that we are imposing our logic on them. The common focus is usually on the welfare of the children. Both parents and professionals want the best for minors, starting from this point in common, we must work together to address the difficulties detected.

"We are much more interested in relationships, communication, if the father is involved, if he wants to work with us to improve the situation, these aspects are very important."

(Focus group professionals)

Facilitate the process of family participation by adopting an attitude of active listening and recognition of the "other". In the case of migrant families, this implies taking into account the family’s system of values, beliefs and culture of origin, when these do not come into conflict with the rights established in the current country of residence. It is also important to work with the discourse that they create from their own autobiographical narratives. By helping families feel capable of facing their challenges and adversities and supporting them through the process, professionals can be an essential piece in creating a feeling of empowerment within the family.

"I think that sometimes, I have found myself in meetings that talk about families, and that summon a lot of people, and everyone is there except the family (...)".

(Focus group young people)

"It is important to listen to what parents have to say (...) to make them feel that we understand their context, their way of life (...) to be able to ask some small questions, without judging, which can sometimes lead to reflection on the support that parents can offer their children”.

(Focus group professionals)

"As a parent, it's really comforting to have someone who listens to us, who understands us, who does something for the child. I think even as a parent it's a relief".

(Focus group parents)
Consider families as active agents of change. For this, it is necessary to recognise their strengths, willingness and potential, whilst providing them with all possible information, from the beginning of the intervention in order to agree on the objectives and the roadmap to follow.

"(...) the final objective of our intervention is to rectify the problems or intervene on the problems, but we are not the ones who must provide the solution, but rather to help the beneficiaries to find them and help them to improve themselves”.

“All families in some way have vulnerabilities, and I think the important thing is to be able to work from the capabilities. We all have capacities, I believe that, as professionals, knowing how to search, knowing how to find, knowing how to distinguish these capacities of the family and value them (...) and empower them “.

(Focus group professionals)

Be clear about the professional’s task and stipulate the scope of action, with the families and with other services, to avoid overlapping and encourage the families to take responsibility.

"We also ask many times to explain their story, that sometimes they are very hard stories and that there are many emotions, and that we ask the twenty-five professionals who work with the family.”

(Focus group professionals)

Maintain empathy and avoid prejudice, keeping in mind that each case and each family and each intervention is unique. In this way we can demonstrate our commitment and facilitate the creation of a bond of trust.

"The principles of the profession guide our intervention, we do not judge those families, those people, we try to treat each beneficiary equally, the intervention must be unanimous, so to speak (...)."

(Focus group professionals)
The professional’s adjustment to each individual case, their understanding and flexibility towards the family’s trajectories and values are essential to choosing and adopting the necessary approaches. The professionals can use an appreciative approach in the activity with families. Respecting the rhythm of every family member and accompanying the emotions that can emerge during the intervention.

“Professionals must guarantee adequate time for parents to prepare their reflections.”

(Focus group professionals)

Family accompaniment also involves the effort to create a comprehensive cooperative relationship between professionals and families. Recognizing that the processes are not linear and that during the intervention there may be setbacks, is part of the reality of working with people.

Take into consideration that parenting can be a function shared by different actors, facilitate formal and informal networks of mutual support and detect their existence to consider them within the intervention.

“I cannot leave my baby ... even to my friends if they are not my family. You pay a babysitter; a grandfather loves his grandson ... a friend ... I do not find a recognizable reason to disturb a friend”.

"I don’t know how to explain it, but the family is the most important thing for me, when you are bad and you are well, the family has to be there."

"But family is also this, not feeling alone, that you have them to share the pain, this un-conditional feeling."

“Sometimes I consider myself as a single mom. (...) The dad would like to be here, but he cannot be here. In fact, he is sad because he loses many passages of his children and so much from everyday life because he leaves at 7:30 in the morning and returns at 19:30 in the evening ... So, in short ... There are no dads! In my opinion, the dads would gladly exchange with us and would like to be here. On the other hand, these are social roles. We, as women suffer, we have on our shoulders all the management of the home, children, school, after school, activity, of shopping, etc. but dads suffer too with the frustration of not even being here”.

(Focus group parents)
Make use of community networks to facilitate ties with families. Through the help and support of key figures from the community, professionals might earn the family’s trust and cooperation more easily.

“But collaboration is essential to intervene in any case ... even with the police, even with the church, even if they are not of the same religion, they could support (...) for the success of the intervention (...).”

(Focus group professionals)

For this, not only individual interventions carried out with the family must be taken into account, but also contemplating group interventions can encourage the creation of support groups and the expansion of family networks.

The participation of families in decision-making is based on a family-centered intervention that is supported by a positive relationship with the professional. For this, flexibility and accessibility must be shown and will make subjects take an active part in their process of change. The processes, limits and possibilities of intervention with families have to be clarified to avoid misunderstandings.

“In the past, decisions were not made with families. Now we always try to decide with the families, based on the PIPPI model”.

(Focus group professionals)
### Table of guidelines

- Find common ground to work on those aspects to improve
- Show an attitude of active listening, avoiding prejudice and stigmatization
- Know the family’s value and belief system and respect it
- Work using potential and with a perspective that facilitates changes
- Recognise families as active agents of change and work with their potential
- Work as a network, knowing the different professional roles in order to avoid overlapping
- Have a more flexible view to recognise different realities
- Promote formal and informal support
- Put the emotions that the intervention provokes in the family into words
- Clarify the processes, limits and possibilities of professional intervention
- Individualise the situation of each family. Each story and situation is unique, even if it resembles another
- Have a holistic view of the family
- Restore damaged self-esteem through the transmission of professional commitment
- Use individual and group methodologies in interventions

### Reading recommendations

**A Family participation in making decisions**


IO3. Think and Act: Reflective Tool for professionals working with families (TART)


B Respect, empathy and non-judgement as the core values of family accompaniment and/or intervention


C Social support, community network and accompanying families respecting their rhythms and trajectories


D Empowering families


5.3. Guidelines to promote professionals’ reflection on the relationship with families today

Reflecting on our own practice allows us to improve the accompaniment process. Knowing our models and being aware of our prejudices is an essential tool to improve interventions and adjust to the families’ possibilities and circumstances.

"(...) we have a job of special toughness, this is a full contact job to be in the environment of suffering every day and find solutions and energy and motivation to go further, it is not a simple thing (...)."

“When you work with families, families have tensions and conflicts, which constantly evolve, and there you see the time as well. People and age groups conceive time differently, and for infants or adolescents, it is a totally different management of time from that of adults, and even more so when there are situations in communities violated by the system, which is managed by the time in a different way, and there is a different sense of urgency, and the use of spaces, schedules or routines is different”.

(Focus group professionals)

Try to find the space to reflect, evaluate and self-evaluate. Providing professionals with space and time in which to share and discuss their practices enables them to analyse and review how they understand situations and to learn new lessons to put into practice.

"The system is dramatically untreated (...) things are disjointed (...) we are locked in somewhat obsolete ways of working (...) the way everything evolves, we don't necessarily follow it, we are not reactive."

(Focus group professionals)

The professional must be vigilant in evaluating his or her practices to make them evolve and not fall into a form of institutional abuse. Be aware of boundaries and “red lines” that cannot be crossed during intervention with families.
By using an ecological perspective, that includes the context and all the relationships influencing the family’s life, the professional takes a comprehensive view of the family’s situation. Take into account the importance for the professional to be open-minded to understand a family from a different culture.

“I agree with the rules that have changed, because when I was little, I wanted to go clean a house and my husband told me not to, but because before they didn’t leave you, and now it has changed. Well, I married thirteen years old, I was a girl, luckily now it’s different. Now my daughters are getting married, they are working, and for me this is very nice, that what I have gone through shouldn’t happen”.

“It is not easy to find the information (the Moroccan community in Verona), nobody told me that there is a space for families, and if I look for it, I do not understand it because I do not speak the language.”

(Focus group parents)

Maintain creativity, without losing sight of the institutional mandate. It is important that the professional does not lock him or herself into predefined patterns of intervention, they must be able to adapt to situations and interlocutors and be creative. The flexibility of the professional can be a decisive factor for the success of an intervention.

“I was within the limits of my work (...) you have to be inventive (...) because each story is unique (...) we walk together (...) we go with a gift I don’t know”.

(Focus group professionals)

To work in a multidisciplinary team to enable every professional to share his/her competencies to meet the family’s needs, as a team. Reinforce networks and be clear about the objectives in meetings with other services in order to make the most of the time and knowledge that each professional has about the family.
"Organize common training for professionals from different services, in order to have common languages and tools."

“I would not forget the preparation of the professional who does this accompaniment (...) how to intervene with these families, how to do an interview, how to carry out an accompaniment. And the same with the accompaniment with the children, listening to the children, knowing what they want and to what extent they understand them. For me, the professional is key, and training is essential”.

“Networking is promoted a lot, from programmatic and political documents, but in reality, it is only as an act of presence of the people. A network is not configured, but how they see each one as it is added, or how it is subtracted, and from there are those comments about the other services, or they see how to take advantage of the other services for a project, but they are not really a network. They do not serve as a support and they do not have constant communication channels that help them meet their objectives in an articulated way, and it remains in something that is shown, but it does not fulfill the function”.

(Focus group professionals)

To be able to stay strong and respect our work it is important to remember what our task is and the limits we have. Managing feelings of frustrations and not over-doing things, as well as, managing time and the pressure of the workload can be an important skill for professionals.

“From my experience with a psychologist, both you and your family have to have confidence to tell him what is within the family. And that is not achieved with one session or two, in my case it has had to be achieved with two years, that I and my family and the psychologist can sit down and that there is confidence to tell him everything that happens, it is not something that go out to the first session, or to the first psychologist you go. If not, the person and the time that passes”.

(Focus group young people)
**Table of guidelines**

- Find common ground to work on those aspects to improve
- Reflect in order to improve
- Work according to each individual family’s reality
- Know the professional task and know how to transmit it
- Ecological / systemic perspective of the intervention
- Open the mind to understand without judging
- Control emotions that arise in professional practice
- Multidisciplinary work for a holistic view

**Reading recommendations**

**Knowledge and professional training**


IO3. Think and Act: Reflective Tool for professionals working with families (TART)


D Ability to interpret family actions


E Management of the intervention time


**Network to facilitate and enhance professional work**


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TART for professionals working with families
TART for professionals working with families

Interventions with children and young people
A. Focus on children and Young people
B. Empowering the child or young person
C. Enabling bonds with the children and young people

Interventions with families
A. Family participation in making decisions
B. Respect, empathy and non-judgement as the core values of the intervention
C. Social support and community network and accompanying families respecting their rhythms and trajectories
D. Empowering families

Professionals that work with families
A. Knowledge and professional training
B. An open mind to understand the family
C. Flexibility of intervention within the institutional framework
D. Ability to interpret family actions
E. Management of the time of the intervention
F. Network to facilitate and enhance professional work

Date: ___________________________ Notes: ___________________________
Family name: ___________________________
Think and Act: Reflective Tool for professionals working with families (TART)