

## Family Needs Checklist – Online application - Version 3.

**The checklist includes six sections:** A cover letter, an information section, statements concerning the caretaker, statements concerning the family's life and situation, statements concerning the child, and an evidence-based feedback section.

### SECTION 1 THE COVER LETTER

*This application is intended for use (in Finland) by expectant parents, parents or other persons caring for children or any adults who want to think about the safety and welfare in their own family. The purpose is to help you to reflect on your own present situation or that of your own children, grandchildren or other children you take care of and of the whole family, and to identify any possible needs for a change or for early support. The objective of the application is to increase your research-based knowledge about the factors which promote safety and welfare as well as the factors that harm these. Furthermore, the application contains information about services and useful links that will take you to sources of additional information about the early support for families with children.*

*Many matters affect safety and welfare separately and together. All families will meet many challenges in their lives. These are related to issues such as pregnancy, child birth, growth, child rearing, schooling, intimate partner relationship and its development, family relationships, working life, leisure time, hobbies, and illnesses. The list is long. The challenges can be positive or negative, anticipated or unprecedented, and may pass quickly or be recurring. These challenges may develop into the insuperable problems, especially when they accumulate. The family may lack factors which would protect their safety and welfare, such as the support of society or the close relatives, an ability to manage a difficult situation or a lack of information about how to act in the best way in a difficult situation. Children are the most vulnerable to these situations and experience symptoms when they feel insecure. Be courageous and act early!*

*If you have concerns about the safety and well-being of yourself, your child or another family member, or you need information about services such as those aimed at families, this app provides you with a low-threshold means to contact these services.*

*This application was developed as part of a European research project (ERICA) to promote a non-violent future for children and families. The Family Needs Checklist is currently under validation process. The application is intended only to support your own personal reflection and any data collected by it will not be disclosed to other parties. If you wish, print out your answers to later use after filling it out in the application. The data will not be saved anywhere and will be lost when you exit the application ([see here for Privacy Statement](#)).*

*When you start using the application, you will receive information about different types of child maltreatment. This is followed by 28 statements, to which you answer either yes or no. The statements are based on research knowledge and cover a wide range of safety-related challenges in family life. You should consider whether or not each statement applies to your situation. It is a good idea to be fairly honest with yourself when answering the questions, because at the end of the statement section, you will receive feedback based on your answers, which includes research-based information about risk factors, protective factors, and the availability of services to support your reflection. Now, go and find a quiet place and start your reflection journey.*

## SECTION 2 INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD MALTREATMENT

<b>Do you know</b>	
<p><b>what is child maltreatment all about?</b></p> <p><i>From a family perspective, child maltreatment comprises a wide range of abusive, neglectful or harmful behaviours experienced by children (0 – 18 years old) including all forms of physical, emotional or sexual violence, neglect or negligent treatment resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Further, it can involve violent discipline or the exposure of children to intimate partner or domestic violence by caregivers.</i></p>	INFO
<p><b>what is child physical violence all about?</b></p> <p><i>Physical violence refers to a physical act that causes harm to a child and potentially leaves the child with physical signs or injuries. Physical violence can result in the death of the child. Examples of physical violence include corporal punishment, strangulation, squeezing, suffocation, hitting with or without an object, causing a burn injury, pushing and kicking, shaking a baby, drugging the child and acts related to performing genital mutilation to the child. Physical violence also includes giving medications not intended for the child, causing the symptoms of an illness in the child or giving false medical information about the child, resulting in unnecessary, intrusive medical interventions.</i></p>	INFO
<p><b>what is child emotional violence all about?</b></p> <p><i>Emotional violence includes restricting a child’s movements, denigration, ridicule, threats and intimidation, discrimination, rejection and other emotionally hostile treatment, such as forcing the child to witness an act of violence at home. Emotional maltreatment is identified as an underlying component of all other forms of child maltreatment.</i></p>	INFO
<p><b>what is child sexual violence all about?</b></p> <p><i>Sexual violence includes completed or attempted sexual contact, acts of sexual nature not involving contact, such as voyeurism or sexual harassment of a child who is unable to refuse or understand the purpose of the acts. Child sexual violence is usually hidden, which usually means that the child’s caregiver is unaware of this leaving no witnesses to report the violence. This often means that reporting sexual violence depends on the child’s willingness to disclose it, which many children are reluctant to do. Usually, sexual violence occurs at home when a caregiver is unable to provide adequate care, support, and a safe home environment for their child, or is unable to detect or assess the signs of danger, threat, or violence. For a child, long-term consequences may include insufficient parenting sensitivity, harsher intrusiveness and boundary dissolution. Victims of sexual violence experience emotional and physical maltreatment. Knowledge and skills about sexuality, healthy relationships at home, awareness of violence and knowledge on how or where to seek help <a href="#">Rape Crisis Centre Tukinainen - Tukinainen</a> protects children from sexual violence. Find a child’s safety skills and body -poster <a href="#">here</a>. <a href="#">1dc0d081-safety-skills-and-your-body_english.pdf (storage.googleapis.com)</a> and sexuality education -poster <a href="#">here</a> <a href="#">70fdd83e-promoting-child-development.-age-appropriate-child-centered-sexuality-education.pdf (storage.googleapis.com)</a></i></p>	INFO
<p><b>what is child neglect all about?</b></p>	INFO

<p>Neglect is a caregiver’s omission of behaviour that is necessary for a child’s healthy development and includes a lack of love and nurturance, home, protection, school attendance, required medical attention or denial of professional care and treatment, poor quality of supervision, poor hygiene or inadequate or insufficient availability of food or clothing. Child neglect often involves the occurrence of multiple risk factors. Therefore, neglect is more likely to be determined by multiple causes than by a single risk factor. The strongest predictors of child neglect are the caregiver’s history of antisocial behaviour or criminal offences, a history of mental or psychiatric problems and a low educational level as well as caregiver’s own history of child maltreatment. Neglect is known to be associated with the highest risk of future maltreatment.</p>	
<p><b>what is intimate partner violence or domestic violence all about?</b></p> <p>Intimate partner violence or domestic violence can be <b>physical</b> violence occurring in a relationship, such as hitting, kicking, tearing, or using a weapon. It can also occur as <b>emotional</b> violence, such as name-calling, contempt, shouting, or the use of coercive means, such as behaviour that seeks to control and threaten the partner. These may include the various means of isolation, control and the restriction of movement, detention, preventing the partner from meeting friends, or engaging in hobbies or studies, intimidation by hurting the partner, controlling the partner’s sleeping or eating. In addition, it can be <b>economic</b> violence, such as the restriction of money or employment, or economic exploitation. Intimate partner violence can be <b>sexual</b>, such as rape, sexual harassment, or pressuring the partner to have sex, admire others, kiss, or watch sexually explicit media content. Intimate partner violence can also be <b>stalking</b>, such as repetitive, unwanted attention and communication that causes fear or concern in the victim of his/her own or another person’s safety, including surveillance or following another person, unsolicited email or other social media communication. It can also involve using children as the instruments, targets or allies of persecution.</p>	INFO
<p><b>what consequences can there be for shaking a baby?</b></p> <p>Shaking a baby can cause lifelong injuries and disability. A baby may have a challenging temperament or a health problem such as stomach issues. A caregiver may find the baby irritable, overactive, or otherwise difficult to handle. The caregiver may have unrealistic expectations for the baby’s ability to control their own behaviour, or the caregiver may feel hopeless when he or she feels unable to cope with a challenging situation. The risk of shaking is further increased if there is substance abuse or domestic violence in the family. The fact is that the consequences of shaking a baby are often very serious and irreversible. Shaking is always physical violence. It is therefore crucial to seek help proactively. For more information about shaken baby syndrome, see <a href="#">here. Shaken Baby Syndrome – Symptoms, Prognosis and Prevention (aans.org)</a> Need help urgently? <a href="#">Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI</a></p>	INFO

### SECTION 3 STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER OR ADULT

Think about the situation with yourself

NO.	Statement	YES	NO
1.	I was maltreated as a child	Y	N

2.	I have experienced traumatic events as a child and haven't gotten over them	Y	N
3.	I sometimes have unrealistic expectations for what the child's behavior should be like	Y	N
4.	I am not always able to control my child's disobedient behaviour	Y	N
5.	My age is ≤18	Y	N
6.	I have no formal education or a low level of education	Y	N
7.	My life is currently stressful	Y	N
8.	I use substances such as tobacco, drugs and/or alcohol	Y	N
9.	I don't know what the safe limit for alcohol use is in a family with children	Y	N
10.	I have a history of antisocial behaviour or criminal offences	Y	N
11.	I am suffering from mental health problems, such as depression or a feeling of worthlessness	Y	N
12.	I have to use a lot of health services with my child because my child is often sick or unwell	Y	N
13.	I experience difficulties in taking care of my child's basic needs, for example dental hygiene, basic hygiene, clothing or healthy food	Y	N
14.	I experience difficulties in taking care of my child's basic needs, for example providing my child with social and emotional support	Y	N
15.	I experience difficulties in taking care of my child's basic needs, for example schooling and sleeping times	Y	N

#### SECTION 4 STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE FAMILY LIFE AND SITUATION

Think about your family life and situation

16.	I am a single or divorced parent	Y	N
17.	I have three or more children	Y	N
18.	There are constant financial worries or unemployment in my family	Y	N
19.	My child/children are three years old or younger	Y	N
20.	I feel lonely and haven't had enough support from my community, relatives, friends or spouse	Y	N
21.	I have experienced intimate partner violence at home	Y	N
22.	My child has experienced intimate partner violence or other form of family violence at home	Y	N

#### SECTION 5 STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE CHILD

Think about the situation with your child

23.	My child had complications associated with pregnancy or birth	Y	N
24.	My child cries a lot	Y	N
25.	My child has been diagnosed with a developmental or physical illness, or has challenges related to emotions or social situations	Y	N
26.	My child is often disobedient, misbehaving, difficult or irritable	Y	N
27.	My child has challenges at school or day care	Y	N
28.	I have to calm my child down by giving him/her drugs, sedatives or other substances	Y	N

## SECTION 6 FEEDBACKS

**IN BRIEF:** The family's situation is considered to be **positive** if the person caring for the child answers **NO** to all the provided statements. If no risk factors are found, the family's situation is considered positive and the following feedback will be given to the respondent →

*Congratulations! Your family life seems safe and healthy for you, your children, and other family members at the moment. Please do not hesitate to reuse the application if the situation in your family becomes challenging, or you need research knowledge and information about the available support services. It is crucial to take action early. All families have a right to receive support for a safe everyday life. You can tell about your result when visiting the child and family health and social services. This way, professionals will know about your family's situation and it can always be discussed openly in joint discussions. This enables making arrangements for support that meets your needs as flexibly and quickly as possible before any worries come to harm the safety and health of your, your children's, and other family members' life. You may find useful information on the [national websites](#) of non-governmental organizations. [Civil society in Finland - Kansalaisyhteiskunta](#) such as [Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters](#) [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters - Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto \(ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi\)](#) , [the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) and [the Family Federation of Finland. Väestöliitto.fi \(vaestoliitto.fi\)](#)*

### STATEMENT feedbacks

#### 1. I was maltreated as a child:

*Childhood maltreatment can have devastating effects and consequences on health, for example head trauma, growth disturbances, obesity, reduced cognitive functioning, impaired language development, neurological dysfunctions, poorer social skills, an increased risk for mental health problems, emotion regulation problems, minimization of emotions, distancing oneself from others, higher rates of antisocial, risky or problematic behaviour, physical aggression and delinquency. Childhood maltreatment and neglect is a predictor of later problematic adult relationships, which may involve intimate partner violence. Caregivers may experience higher social isolation and lack healthy and supportive adult relationships in times of need. Childhood maltreatment may also manifest as negative parenting behaviours such as insufficient parenting sensitivity, harsh intrusiveness and boundary dissolution, corporal punishment, hypercritical*

statements, verbal or physical hostility, neglect, overcontrol, rejection, scolding and threatening. Parents who have been subject to maltreatment in childhood are more likely than others to have children who also fall victim to maltreatment.

It is also known that not all caregivers pass on the maltreatment they have experienced and not all maltreating caregivers have experienced abuse in their childhood. Most caregivers are able to provide nurturing environments for their children. Positive caregiving includes empathy, engagement, nonviolent forms of discipline, positive affect, responsiveness, scaffolding, sensitivity, supportive presence and emotional warmth. The presence of safe, stable, nurturing relationships, emotional intimacy, relationship satisfaction, support and warmth in relationships with caregivers, siblings and intimate partners protects children against child maltreatment. If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from a local professional, for example a public health care nurse, social worker, or a voluntary agency professional [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters - Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto \(ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi\)](https://www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi) if you have any doubts, big or small. The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

## **2. I have experienced traumatic events as a child and haven't gotten over them**

Traumatic events in childhood, such as natural catastrophes, war, political violence and genocide, increase the prevalence of child maltreatment in families. Trauma severity is associated with parental child maltreatment. Caregivers with experiences of serious trauma are at a heightened risk of committing especially physical and emotional acts of violence against their children due to mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The effects of parental trauma reduce the quality of the parent--child relationship and increase the risk of family-related violence. Protective factors include awareness of violence and knowledge of how to seek help and build personal resiliency for recovering after experiencing maltreatment or trauma, including coping skills and self-esteem as well as early access to interventions for traumatic events and mental health services. If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from a local professional, for example a public health care nurse at a family counselling clinic, a social worker or a voluntary agency professional [MIELI](https://www.mieli.fi) if you have any worries related to your, your child or family life, whether big or small. The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

## **3. I sometimes have inaccurate expectations for what the child's behavior should be like**

Sometimes caregivers do not have sufficient knowledge about child development. The parent may turn to the child for reassurance and support and in doing so overburden their child with the responsibility of protecting and encouraging their parents, siblings and the whole family system. This causes excessive burden on children, who cannot fulfil the role that exceeds their developmental capacity. Parents who have experienced such burden in their own childhood may show poorer maternal warmth and contingent responsiveness towards their own children. Caregiver's warmth means positive affect and a positive tone of the voice, physical affection given to the child as well as rewarding and encouraging the child. Contingent responsiveness means sensitivity to the child's affective cues, acceptance and accurate response to the child's needs and interests. The knowledge about the child's development produces greater satisfaction, investment in parenting, perceptions of competence and less parenting-related stress. If you think that you have poor understanding of your child's development, please contact your public health nurse or a voluntary agency professional. [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters - Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto \(ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi\)](https://www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi) You can also find information on developmental milestones [here](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/earlychildhood/developmental-milestones/) [CDC's Developmental Milestones | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/earlychildhood/developmental-milestones/) and get tips for positive

parenting [here](#). [Positive Parenting Tips | CDC](#) Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

#### **4. I am not always able to control my child's disobedient behaviour**

*Childhood maltreatment experienced by the caregiver sometimes causes aggressive responses and biases in interpersonal relations. Children who witness intimate partner violence (IPV), experience harsh parenting or corporal punishment have more behaviour problems. It is vital that the caregiver recognizes this and seeks support for interventions that aims at improving relationship skills. Significant protective factors include safe, stable, supportive, and caring relationships in the family and other interpersonal relationships, mental support, safe attachment to the child, parental warmth, satisfaction with one's own parenting, support from the social network, hobbies, community involvement and positive interpersonal relationships maintaining and increasing supportive networks in parents' life. If you have any concerns, big or small, please ask for advice or support from a local professional, for example a public health care nurse at a family centre, social worker, day care teacher or a [voluntary agency professional](#). [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters - Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto \(ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi\)](#) The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Learn about attachment styles [here](#) [Attachment styles in a relationship | Hyväkysymys.fi \(hyvakysymys.fi\)](#) Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

#### **5. My age is ≤18**

*A young parent might be doing just fine with their child. Previous life experiences of caring and nurturing are often the result of a safe and healthy family life in childhood. On the other hand, very young parents have an increased risk of maltreating or neglecting their children. The parent's young age, an unstable relationship with their partner, mental health problems or adjustment problems may affect the parent's behaviour towards their own child. For many young parents, their own emotional, social, and cognitive development is still in progress, and as a result, it can sometimes be difficult for them to be mature, calm, and flourishing caregivers. Coping skills are resources and include an ability to control mood and emotions, thoughts, actions, desires, social relationships, and living conditions. Such skills are used in solving everyday challenges or asking for help if one's own resources are not enough. Young parents are also vulnerable to a range of emotional, social and financial difficulties. Especially living in poverty and being single or divorced have been found to be risk factors for child neglect.*

*Parental empathy has a protective effect on fearful babies, as it reduces sensitivity to emotional stimuli, which helps the baby cope better with a given situation. A parent's higher ability to empathize promotes the child's social development, self-management in life, and confidence in personal abilities. In addition, the parent's ability to empathize is related to the ability to perceive cues given by the child. The capability to empathize of young parents does not differ from other parents. The possible lack of empathy skills is due to normal human development. It is possible that a young parent is at a risk of having a low level of empathy due to developmental immaturity, which can make it difficult for the parent to respond to the child's needs. This makes it very important for young parents to have support for both their own growth and the safe and healthy growth of their child. Please ask help from family members, close associates, or social and health care professionals in your municipality. You can also take advantage of [a voluntary agency professional \(chat\)](#). [Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) You may also find this information about the [development of adolescence](#) <https://www.caiglobal.org/tcpt/Files/Stages%20of%20Adolescent%20Development.pdf> useful and the development of [children 0–5 years](#) [CDC's Developmental Milestones | CDC](#) and [children](#)*

0–17 years [Positive Parenting Tips | CDC](#) so that you can better understand your child or your own growth milestones. Need help urgently? Contact [Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

## **6. I have no formal education or a low level of education**

*Hopefully through your education, you have a possibility to work in a field you like. Your education path might also still be in the beginning or in progress. Among other risk factors, a lack of education or a low level of education may predict child neglect in the family. Education is known to be one of the most important aspects that ensure stable, secure and satisfying work and family life. It can be difficult to continue your education when you have a child. Please don't hesitate to ask for help from your family, local volunteers, or contact local education and employment centre professionals for planning support. Need help urgently? Contact [Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

## **7. My life is currently stressful**

*Among others, a stressful and exhausting life situation is known to be a serious risk factor for child maltreatment or even the act of a parent killing their own child. It is known that parents' own experiences in avoidant or distant relationship with their partner increase parenting stress, risk for intimate partner violence and child maltreatment in the family. When you are exhausted and think that the stress you are under every day is too much to bear, and you are not able to overcome it, please seek support, have a discussion with your partner, close relatives or contact your local health care professional, public health nurse, a social worker, a family counselling centre to assess your and your family's possible support needs. The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Need help urgently? Contact [Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

## **8. I use substances such as tobacco, drugs and/or alcohol**

*Substance abuse, including drug, tobacco or alcohol use, is a common risk factor of intergenerational child maltreatment, intimate partner violence and familicides. Substance abuse, together with low social support and the child's young age is known to be a significant risk factor of recurrent child maltreatment. Children of parents who are drug users are more likely to develop a variety of emotional, behavioural, physical, cognitive, academic and social problems in the short and long run. In addition to making the parents' personal lives chaotic, drug use is associated with a reduction in the extent that parents supervise their children. This may undermine the parent's ability to provide a safe and nurturing home environment as well as increase instability in employment, family structure, housing, childcare and household finances and have a negative, long-term effect on children's well-being.*

*Prenatal exposure to drugs is known to cause pregnancy complications and birth defects, physical disabilities and central nervous system dysfunctions in the foetus and infant. Later impairments in children's cognitive and behavioural development have also been detected. Caretakers with substance abuse may be less responsive to the infant's needs and experience less rewards and increased stress in the interactions with their infant. The caretaker's recurrent and continuous substance abuse during and after pregnancy increases the risk of the child developing an insecure attachment style. [Attachment styles in a relationship | Hyväkysymys.fi \(hyvakysymys.fi\)](#) Passive tobacco exposure has also been linked to health problems in children and adolescents and is known to increase the risk of the children's own tobacco use initiation and dependence. During pregnancy, the substances contained by tobacco enter the foetus' blood circulation through the placenta. Smoking affects, among other things, the foetus' brain development, and increases the risk of miscarriage and premature birth. Children of mothers who smoke are, on average, smaller in size at birth. Passive smoking also impairs foetal development. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of disease after birth.*



<https://paihdelinkki.fi/fi/tietopankki/pikatieto/tupakka> Impairments in children's cognitive and behavioural development are also later detected.

Here <https://paihdelinkki.fi/fi/testit-ja-laskurit/huumeet> you can fill out the DAST-20 drug use test and the DUDIT drug use risk test (The Drug Use Disorders Identification Test). The [tobacco addiction test https://paihdelinkki.fi/fi/testit-ja-laskurit/nikotiini/tupakkariippuvuustesti](https://paihdelinkki.fi/fi/testit-ja-laskurit/nikotiini/tupakkariippuvuustesti) and [snus test https://paihdelinkki.fi/fi/testit-ja-laskurit/nikotiini/nuuskatesti](https://paihdelinkki.fi/fi/testit-ja-laskurit/nikotiini/nuuskatesti), help you to determine your degree of nicotine addiction. The [Addiction Link Info bank | Addictionlink.fi \(paihdelinkki.fi\)](https://addictionlink.fi) will help you with your concerns. Your local health care professionals are also there to support you. The key is to act early before worries turn into serious concerns or grief. It is never too late to start a substance-free life for the sake of yourself and your family. Do you need help urgently and anonymously? Call 0800 900 45 (toll-free number)

## **9. I don't know what the safe limit for alcohol use is in a family with children**

*When the caregiver engages in binge drinking, the children may suffer from reduced supervision, verbal and emotional abuse, an increased risk of injury and other forms of child maltreatment. Such experiences early in life may have a crucial impact on a person's psychological and physical well-being and are also a risk factor for a child's own alcohol abuse later in life. In the context of a heavy or harmful drinker in the household, children are exposed to physical harm and domestic violence. This causes an almost four-fold risk for injury or exposure to domestic violence for the children. In general, the children of parents who are substance abusers are more likely to develop a variety of emotional, behavioural, physical, cognitive, academic and social problems in the short and long run.*

*The question: Do you engage in heavy or harmful alcohol use? Is relevant to all of us. We need to think about our relationship with alcohol and its harmful effects both on our personal and family life. The presence of a person engaging in heavy or harmful drinking at home has been constantly found to be associated with alcohol-related injuries in children and the exposure of the children to violence. There is no safe limit for alcohol use, since the risk limits for alcohol use are indicative. Individual factors contribute to the occurrence of adverse reactions and it is not possible to determine the limit for completely safe use. However, at the low risk level, disadvantages are likely to be minor. Alcohol abuse refers to a drinking habit that causes some harm or is associated with a significant risk of harm. Here [Alcohol | Addictionlink.fi \(paihdelinkki.fi\)](https://addictionlink.fi) you can take a test. An [Online databank Info bank | Addictionlink.fi \(paihdelinkki.fi\)](https://addictionlink.fi) and your local health care professionals are there to support you. It is never too late to start an alcohol-free life for the sake of yourself and your family. Find out [Children in alcoholic families | Addictionlink.fi \(paihdelinkki.fi\)](https://addictionlink.fi) how drinking harms children and please act before your child experiences any harm caused by your own or some family member's alcohol use. It is important to get help early and without shame. The most important first step is to acknowledge the existence of problems and seek help. We all want the best for ourselves and our partners and children! Do you need help urgently and anonymously? Call 0800 900 45 (toll-free number)*

## **10. I have a history of antisocial behaviour or criminal offences**

*Safe and healthy growth is a human right for every member of the family. In itself, having a criminal record does not mean that you are not good at caring for your child. A criminal record that includes offences related to substance abuse and violence increases the risk of domestic violence and killing of family members. The antisocial and criminal background of a parent may involve physical fights between the parents under the influence of alcohol, parents' use of weapons and the parent's problems with the authorities. Child maltreatment can include the neglect of a child's daily needs such as care and attention, or witnessing or experiencing violence between parents or other family members. Child maltreatment can also involve physical, mental or sexual violence against a child. Talk with your partner or close relatives if you are facing*

challenges that you cannot solve on your own. Please contact your local social worker or a voluntary sector professional *for men* [Miessakit Ry](#) and *for women* [EN – Maria Akatemia | Ihmisten ja yhteisöjen kasvun asiantuntija](#) and *for all caregivers* [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters - Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto \(ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi\)](#) so that you can assess the possible support needs you and your family may have together. It is important to get help early and without shame. The most important first step is to acknowledge the existence of problems and seek help. We all want the best for ourselves and our partners and children! Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

### **11. I am suffering from mental health problems such as depression or a feeling of worthlessness**

*You have indicated that you are suffering from mental health problems. Severe mental health issues in caregivers are among the most common risks for child maltreatment and neglect. These include mental disorders that caregivers may have, such as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), anxiety, depression, dissociation disorder, maternal postpartum depression, a history of psychiatric disorders such as depression, mood disorders or schizophrenia and poor perinatal mental health.*

*Postpartum depression has been found to impair the mother's ability to empathize, increases the mother's feeling of frustration and thoughts of harming the child. By contrast, maternal empathy has a protective effect on fearful babies by reducing sensitivity to emotional stimuli, which helps the baby cope better with the situation. The mother's higher ability to empathize promotes the child's social support, self-management in life, and confidence in personal abilities. In addition, the mother's ability to empathize is related to the ability to interpret cues given by the child. Depressed mothers who have a history of childhood maltreatment, especially emotional violence, emotional or physical neglect, have been found to have smaller social networks and some shortcomings in parenting, such as lowered nurturing and stimulating.*

*There can be other risk factors in the family related to the parents' mental health problems such as the absence of partner in family life, emotional violence, coercion, or intimate partner violence, which all increase the risk of child maltreatment. A parent's mental health problems concern the whole family. If you are feeling exhausted and find that the everyday strain you are under is too much to bear and impossible to overcome, please seek support, have a discussion with your partner, close relatives or contact your local health care professional, public health care nurse, social worker, family counselling clinic, day care teacher or [a voluntary agency professional MIELI](#) who can assess your and your family's possible support needs. It is important to get help early and without shame. The most important first step is to acknowledge the existence of problems and seek help. We all want the best for ourselves and our partners and children! Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

### **12. I have to use a lot of health services with my child because my child is often sick or unwell**

*If your child is often ill, there is usually a reason for it. Sometimes the illness can be mysterious in the beginning, but the cause is usually found and your child will get the best possible treatment. It is important that both parents participate in taking care of the child and spend time with the child. This ensures that both parents will have a clear idea of the child's well-being. Sometimes a parent begins to see their child through his or her illness alone, even when the child is actually healthy. This can be very harmful to the child's safe and healthy growth. Even when a child is diagnosed with a long-term illness, it is important to focus on the child's well-being, resources, and uniqueness. Family life is very hard when a child is frequently ill. This is hardest for the child,*

as the illness inhibits normal physical, emotional and social growth and development. Illness produces constant suffering. Frequent visits to a clinic or hospital also interrupt school attendance and chronic absenteeism may undermine the child's peer relationships. These may also increase dropping out of school and lead to poor psychosocial consequences in adulthood. It also has an effect on parents, as the child's illness interrupts normal social life, family life and working life. If the situation with your child becomes challenging, and you are unable to resolve it with your partner or close relatives, please contact your local healthcare professional or the nurse designated to you, with whom you can assess your own and your family's potential support needs. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

### **13. I experience difficulties in taking care of my child's basic needs, for example dental hygiene, basic hygiene, clothing or healthy food**

*You seem to have some trouble with taking care of your child's physical daily needs. There can be many reasons for this, including a lack of money, transportation problems in the family, difficulty locating services, insufficient understanding of the need for support, inadequate services, your own physical or mental health or social problems, a lack of education or knowledge to fulfil the child's basic needs, difficulty finding common time with your child, or an overwhelming workload.*

*Parental activity has an important and major impact on the health and development of young children, for example their oral health. Tooth decay is the most obvious sign of a failure to take care of a child's oral health. Dental neglect causes the child to have cavities, plaque, oral infections, bleeding in the oral mucosa, tooth decay, pain, swelling, difficulty biting, and avoiding smiling. In addition, it can cause sleep disorders, physical growth disorders, and problems with school performance and social functioning. Deciduous tooth decay can also cause disturbances in the development of tooth enamel in permanent teeth. In addition, some young children may need general anaesthesia to remove painful and carious teeth. The child may also play less, have difficulties in eating or sleeping, and avoid school attendance or experience fatigue at school. The child may also struggle with impaired tooth appearance, growth retardation, especially in young children, and impaired quality of life. Taking care of your child's oral health with regular tooth brushing reduces the risk of caries. Young children are dependent on their caregivers to maintain their oral health. This includes taking care of oral hygiene, implementing a health promoting diet and seeking treatment regularly and when needed. Adequate and nutritious food ensures the child's sound growth and prevents the growth delays and possible obesity. Adequate hygiene and clothing ensure the child's good overall health. Taking the child to the available health services in a timely manner ensures the child's favourable development and health and parental support. Don't hesitate to contact your nearest health care professional or social services or a voluntary agency professional [Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) when you need early support. Family needs assessment helps identifying timely and appropriate help. Here are some tips [Oral health for young children - Bing video](#) for oral health. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

### **14. I experience difficulties in taking care of my child's basic needs, for example providing my child with social and emotional support**

*You seem to have some trouble with taking care of your child's daily emotional and social needs. Each child has a need to be loved and cared for as they are, to communicate with and relate to parents and close family members. Each child should also be able to develop into an independent person who loves and values him/herself and is able to communicate effectively and meaningfully with other people. Particularly the language development of physically abused and/or neglected*

children has been found to be more delayed than that of children who have not experienced abuse and/or neglect. It is also known that parents' own experiences in unreliable relationships may cause undesirable working emotion regulation and parenting which involves less sensitive and responsive caregiving for the child. There can be also many other reasons such as your own physical or mental health or social problems, lack of education and knowledge about how to fulfil your child's basic needs, a lack of money, difficulty locating and accessing services, insufficient understanding about the need for support, inadequate services, difficulties in finding shared time with your child, or an overwhelming workload. Your empathy, commitment, nonviolent boundary setting, positive influence, helpfulness, sensitivity, constructiveness, understanding, systematicity, supportive presence, and warmth, love and trustworthiness are very important for your child's healthy emotional and social development. If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from your local professional, for example public health care nurse at a family centre, social worker, day care teacher or a voluntary agency professional [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters - Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto \(ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi\)](#) if you have any worries related to your child or family life, whether big or small. The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Get tips for positive parenting [here](#). [Positive Parenting Tips | CDC](#) Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

#### **15. I experience difficulties in taking care of my child's basic needs, for example schooling and sleeping times**

You seem to have some trouble in taking care of your child's need for education or supervision. This can be very hard indeed! There can be many reasons for this, including your own physical, mental health or social problems, a lack of education and knowledge of how to fulfil the child's basic needs, a lack of money, difficulties locating and accessing services, insufficient understanding about the need for support, inadequate services, the difficulties finding common time with your child or an overwhelming workload. The fact remains that school attendance and adequate quality of supervision and child rearing boundaries are the child's basic needs. Absence from school without a good reason impairs the child's opportunities for learning. Not knowing safe boundaries creates insecurity, excessive reactions and will cause the child to seek boundaries. It is very important for your child's learning and development of a sense of safety that you engage in positive parenting practices such as empathy, commitment, nonviolent boundary setting, positive influencing, helpfulness, sensitivity, constructiveness, understanding, systematicity, supportive presence, and warmth, love and trustworthiness. If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from your local professional, for example public health care nurse at school, social worker, day care teacher, school teacher or a voluntary agency professional (chat) [Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) if you have any worries related to your child or family life, whether big or small. The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Get tips for positive parenting [here](#). [Positive Parenting Tips | CDC](#) Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

#### **16. I am a single or divorced parent**

As a parent of a single-parent family, you may experience relief after having gotten out of a harmful relationship. On the other hand, the change you are facing may be a harrowing experience if you or your partner have decided to leave a shared home. Divorce is always a shock to all family members, but especially to children: they love both of their parents unconditionally and don't understand why the family has to break up. It is known that there is a higher risk of child maltreatment in families where the father does not live with the family or has less contact with the children. Family disorganization, breakdown or violence are risk factors for child maltreatment and single parenthood is known to increase the risk of CM especially if the

child lives with only one biological parent. In a divorce situation, it is important that children can maintain a healthy relationship with both parents when possible. It is very harmful for children to listen to and watch their parents quarrel, bully each other or experience intentional isolation from one parent. Therefore, it is essential for adults to receive support and information about parenting after a divorce. The most important thing is to maintain a safe atmosphere in the family, as well as an open and warm relationships. There are many services and information available for divorced families on how to cope with this stressful and painful life event. Look for example [here](#), [Break up causes stress to children | Hyväkysymys.fi \(hyvakysymys.fi\)](#) or [here](#). [A Parent's Guide. Information and support for divorcing families with children by Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto - issuu](#) If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from a local professional such as a public health care nurse at a family centre, social worker, day care teacher or volunteer at an organisation if you have any doubts concerning any child or family life matters, big or small. The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

### **17. I have three or more children**

When you have many children to take care of, you can feel the deepest essence of life and all its colours; giggles, laughter, hustle and bustle. Parents have great responsibility to ensure the safe and healthy growth of all of their children. Having many children in a family can make it difficult for a parent to share physical, mental, and social resources equally with all children. It is known that a large family size is a risk factor for child maltreatment, also in refugee families. If you think that your hands are full and you don't have enough time for each of your children, discuss and come up with creative ideas with your partner on how you can cope better together, or ask for support from close relatives, family care professionals or a [voluntary agency professional \(Chat\)](#). [Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(ml.fi\)](#) The road to exhaustion is short, so act early, preferably in an anticipatory manner. [Childcare services](#) [Short term child care services - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) will also help you. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

### **18. There are constant financial worries or unemployment in my family**

Poverty, low socioeconomic status and low employment are known risk factors for IPV and child maltreatment. In addition to a poor socio-economic position of the family, refugee families may also struggle with feelings of inequality, problems in the family's cultural adjustment, conflicts in the relationship caused by cultural adjustment such as patriarchal beliefs, values and norms, acceptance of violence and punishment in one's own culture, and a change in the power dynamics between women and men. If you think that your everyday life is too much to bear, and you are not able to overcome it, please seek support, have a discussion with your partner, close relatives, contact [Kela Our Services - kela.fi](#) or your local social worker to assess your and your family's possible support needs. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

### **19. My child/children are three years old or younger**

You are caring for and rearing a very young child or children. You may be aware that each person has an individual temperament that later becomes this person's personality. Temperament is a set of abilities, tendencies and reaction styles, e.g., activity, sluggishness, sociability, a tendency to build resentment, and irritability. Babies may express their temperament through irritability, but cannot control their reactions. This makes babies and young children extremely vulnerable and defenceless. A tired or exhausted parent may become frustrated and experience inadequacy if the baby is very irritable and demanding. It is possible that a frustrated parent is prone to harm the child in an effort to control the baby's irritation. A baby or a very small child can get permanent,

*lifelong injuries or even die as a result of violence. It is important to get information about [temperaments](#) [The 4 Main Baby Temperaments & Personality Types – Happiest Baby](#) and their differences and about the [safe handling of the baby](#). [The Happiest Baby on the Block - Harvey Karp \(Summary\) - Bing video](#) It is known that, together with parental substance use, low social support, and the child's young age pose a significant risk of recurrent child maltreatment. This makes it important to have a joint discussion between family members to find out how you could help each other. If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from a local professional, for example a public health nurse at the family centre, a social worker, day care teacher or a [voluntary agency professional \(Chat\)](#) [Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

## **20. I feel lonely and haven't had enough support from my community, relatives, friends or spouse**

*You seem to be alone in taking care of your family. Managing all the hustle and bustle without adequate support from your spouse, other relatives or community can burn you out quickly. An exhausted parent is a risk for the child's healthy and safe development, as is an absent parent or a parent with less everyday contact with their child or spouse. It is known that, together with parental substance use, low social support, and the child's young age produce a significant risk of recurrent child maltreatment. This makes it important to have a joint discussion between family members to find out how you could help each other. Community professionals in social and health care will also help you. Some people may suffer from a co-dependency. They feel lonely and helpless when alone and see themselves as weak, incompetent, ineffective and regard others as capable and powerful. Overly co-dependent people are often submissive, compliant and eager to please, but also jealous, possessive, insecure and have poor impulse control. They also have not developed adequate coping and caring skills, which puts them at a higher risk of maltreating their children. If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from a local professional, for example a public health nurse at the family centre, a social worker, day care teacher or a [voluntary agency professional](#) [MIELI](#) The key is to act early before worries turn into grief or serious concerns. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

## **21. I have experienced intimate partner violence at home**

*Living with an abusive partner increases the risk for intimate partner violence (IPV) or intergenerational cycles of child maltreatment in a family. A family history of traumatic events in refugee families also increases the risk for family-related violence, including IPV and child maltreatment. Cultural risk factors include language barrier, a feeling of inequality, family's cultural adjustment problems, relationship conflicts caused by cultural adjustment, patriarchal beliefs, values and norms, acceptance of violence and punishment in the culture of origin, and a change in power dynamics between women and men. This is a very difficult issue to resolve because the intimate partner relationship usually also includes lots of love and people often find it hard to find a way out of the painful life situation.*

*A healthy intimate relationship involves love, openness, trust, and respect for freedom. This all can be acquired through human growth, which requires commitment to learning and working progressively. A safe home is everybody's human right. For the parent who experiences intimate partner violence may produce negative parenting practises like physical aggression (hitting, kicking or slapping), psychological aggression (diminished communication and connectedness, failing to give attention, calling names, threats to hurt, abandon or frighten the child), neglect*

*(withholding food or other forms of physical neglect, lack of supervision) and authoritarian parenting styles (strict, demanding, rigid, controlling, oppressive, intrusive behaviour).*

*There is also evidence that some parents affected by IPV respond to their children in a warm and nurturing manner. Positive parenting practices protect the child against maltreatment. These include interaction with the child (the child is allowed to talk about his/her feelings, responsiveness, the child is allowed to speak freely), effective parenting skills (problem-solving skills, democratic, consistent, eliciting, protective), the expression of positive emotions (warm, happy tone, sensitive) and engagement (encouragement, playing with the child, rewarding the child, child-centeredness, participation).*

*If you feel unsafe at home, it is critical to quickly think about ways of how you, your partner and your children could live safely at your home. Taking quick action [Online shelter - Nettiturvakoti](#) provides you with many possibilities. It may be unbearable to try to survive by yourself and try to keep your children safe. Need help urgently? Contact [Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

*If you are the person causing the violence, you may also find it unbearable to control your anger in those situations. No one is violent by nature. Violence grows in a violent environment. You may have been hurt in your own childhood. (read more -violent men). [Jussi-work by Ensi- ja turvakotien liitto - issuu](#) (read more – violent women) [EN – Maria Akatemia | Ihmisten ja yhteisöjen kasvun asiantuntija](#) If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from a local professional, for example a public health nurse, a social worker or a voluntary agency professional for men [Miessakit Ry.](#) and for women [EN – Maria Akatemia | Ihmisten ja yhteisöjen kasvun asiantuntija](#) The key is to seek help and solve these problems at home and with professionals as early as possible. Need help urgently? Contact [Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

## **22. My child has experienced intimate partner violence or other form of family violence at home**

*A safe home is everybody's human right. There is strong evidence that child's exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) can have many harmful outcomes, such as behavioural problems, physical health problems, depression, and trauma symptoms. Children learn and form expectations for what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour within the home by observing how those caring for them interact in their intimate relationships.*

*Those caring for the children serve as a model of how someone may come up with social and moral justifications for their use of violence. For example, if parents deal with conflicts or stress by responding with aggression or violence, the child will have an elevated risk for behaving similarly. The child may come to believe that violence is an acceptable and effective way to solve problems. A child who feels that parental conflicts pose a threat to themselves or their parents are more likely to feel distressed. Children may put blame on themselves for their parents' conflicts and experience shame and guilt. In an environment with IPV, less of children's needs may be met and there may be a lack of available and responsive care for the child. As a result of parental unavailability, children may form an insecure or disorganized attachment style with their parents. A child may experience insecurity or doubts about the stability of their family system or the safety of one or both parents, or intervene in violent situations as an attempt to stop parents from fighting.*

*IPV rarely happens just once; it is often a repeated or chronic problem at home and its consequences can extend into adulthood. Protective factors include early support for families from the social welfare system, informal and interactive support networks, stable and supportive family relationships, gender equity, nonviolent family environments and family support for*

education. The negative impacts of IPV are reduced by parental warmth, including a positive affect, acceptance and support, sensitive parenting and appropriate boundaries. Learning positive parenting strategies, for example praising the child, spending time with the child and a consistent use of calm, nonphysical forms of discipline, such as time-out or the removal of privileges is helpful in promoting the parent—child relationship and intervening in behavioural challenges. If you have any concerns, please ask for advice or support from a local professional, for example a public health nurse, a social worker or a [voluntary agency professional for violent men](#) [Miessakit Ry.](#) [for violent women](#) [EN – Maria Akatemia | Ihmisten ja yhteisöjen kasvun asiantuntija](#) and [for all](#) [Online shelter - Nettiturvakoti](#). The key is to seek help and solve these problems at home and with professionals as early as possible. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#) Read more about the attachment styles [here](#) [Attachment styles in a relationship | Hyväksymys.fi \(hyvakysymys.fi\)](#) Get tips for positive parenting [here](#). [Positive Parenting Tips | CDC](#)

### **23. My child had complications associated with pregnancy or birth**

*Pregnancy and childbirth are a revolutionary life change for the family. This time may be further complicated by various challenges to the baby's health, including low birth-weight, premature birth or a low APGAR score. To maternal health, challenges include poor prenatal care or smoking. To family health, challenges include a cramped household, family relationships marked by conflict, single parenthood or financial distress. These can complicate the relationship between the parent and baby, for example, if the baby has been taken away from the parent to provide intensive medical care immediately after birth. This can hinder the development of parental bonding with the baby. Bonding involves the parent responding to and perceiving the baby's cues, interpreting them correctly, and responding to them appropriately and regularly, which strengthens the secure relationship between the parent and baby. When the parent responds to the baby's cry in a timely manner, the baby begins to trust that the parent is always close by and will provide food, shelter, acceptance, and love. The baby begins to feel important, safe, loved and attached to the parent. If a parent finds it challenging to care for their baby, the baby may feel unsafe. An unsafe or confused relationship with a parent, in turn, hampers the development of a growing child's confidence and positive self-image. Reflect on your relationship with your child and talk to your loved ones, and contact the nurse designated to you if necessary so you can assess your potential support needs for yourself and your family with the nurse. It is possible to strengthen an attachment relationship throughout life. You can read more about the baby—parent relationship [here](#). [Attachment styles in a relationship | Hyväksymys.fi \(hyvakysymys.fi\)](#) Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

### **24. My child cries a lot**

*Crying is a way for a child to express hunger, resentment, pain, anxiety or personal will depending on the child's age and stage of development. A parent may feel frustrated if he or she cannot cope with a challenging situation with a child. The child may have a challenging temperament, [The 4 Main Baby Temperaments & Personality Types – Happiest Baby](#) and especially babies may have stomach symptoms such as flatulence. A parent may find the baby irritable, overactive, or otherwise difficult to handle. Parents may have unrealistic expectations for the baby's ability to control his or her own behaviour, or feel hopeless when they feel unable to cope with a challenging situation. When a baby is constantly crying, the family may feel despair and a sense that their everyday life is in shatters. Excessive crying can also interfere with breastfeeding, isolate parents, strain and break family relationships, cause feelings of parental failure, lead to physical and mental exhaustion, put the baby at risk of child maltreatment or even death, or increase problems later in life. Parents of a crying baby are actively trying to solve the*



problem and adjust to the situation until time allows them to cope with negative symptoms, emotions, and memories. The best way to deal with a crying child is to go to the child and find out why the child is crying. In a family with a baby, parents learn to observe their baby's cues and respond to them appropriately and regularly. When parents have older children, it is a good idea to have a gentle and calm conversation with the older child and listen to the child's view of why they are crying. Calmness, hugging, and comfort alleviate the child's anxiety. Try the [Happiest Baby method](#). [The Happiest Baby on the Block - Harvey Karp \(Summary\) - YouTube](#)

Frustrated parents may violently shake the baby. The risk of shaking is further increased if there is substance abuse or domestic violence in the family. The fact is that the consequences of shaking a baby are often very serious and irreversible. Shaking is violence against the baby and can cause lifelong injuries and disability. Therefore, it is critical to acknowledge this and seek help preventively. If the situation with your child seems challenging, and you are not able to overcome it, please seek support, have a discussion with your partner, close relatives or contact your local health care professional, a public health nurse at a family centre, a social worker, day care teacher or voluntary agency professional to assess your and your family's possible support needs". You can read more about the shaken baby syndrome here. [Shaken Baby Syndrome – Symptoms, Prognosis and Prevention \(aans.org\)](#) Click [here](#) [Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) to chat to receive advice on dealing with the child. Click [here](#) [Learn how to boost your baby's brain from a Harvard Professor | UNICEF - YouTube](#) to learn about the child's development of interaction and [here](#) [Baby talk master class with Dr. Kalashnikova | UNICEF - YouTube](#) the initial stages of the child's language development.

## **25. My child has been diagnosed with a developmental or physical illness, or has challenges related to emotions or social situations**

You are the parent of a child who is special and has special needs. The time you spend with your child is often joyful, but also exhausting. You may find your resources lessening. It is known that children with special needs require significantly more continuous, individualized and immediate care and guidance, repeated health care visits and sometimes have few prospects for improvements in the well-being of the child or respite from caring for the child. This imposes considerable physical, financial and emotional demands on parents. Some parents have described this situation as "Being stressed, exhausted, drained, or having unreasonable demands, and performing heavy and continuous nursing work 24/7/365 that never ends". There may be a lack of a parent-child bond due to long hospital stays. The child may demonstrate constantly challenging behaviour that creates a high level of stress mental health problems. Parents may also find it difficult to balance with the demands by other family members. They may experience isolation and social problems affecting their mental health. They may experience severe mental anxiety and have a higher risk of developing depression than parents without a child with a disability.

Most parents provide their children with a safe and loving home. However, in some cases, high levels of stress can make parents engage in behaviours that can lead to the maltreatment or even the death of their child. Sometimes parents lack an understanding of the child's special needs or an ability to respond to these before they become experts in understanding their child's needs. Therefore, the parents of special-needs children need ongoing support and special sensitivity from professionals at all levels of the community. The ultimate goal in collaboration is to be listened to and supported according to your needs and your family. Make sure to often reflect on your situation, and when your child's, your own, or your family's situation requires it, please contact the nurse designated to you, a social worker, day care or school teacher, or a voluntary sector professional [here](#) [Kehtysvammaliitto – in English » Home \(kehitysvammaliitto.fi\)](#). and [here](#). [About us \(in English\) | Tukiliitto](#) Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)

## **26. My child is often disobedient, misbehaving, difficult or irritable**

*A disobedient, misbehaving, difficult or irritable child can indeed be challenging. The growth of a child is associated with developmental challenges, and solving these will help the child grow and develop favourably towards adulthood. A child needs an adult to go through these challenges. Close and supportive interaction with the child is important. It is important for a parent to maintain a supportive atmosphere and stable family relationships, safety rules, and exercise judgment and act properly challenging situations. This is not always easy. Many things can hamper our efforts. These can include fatigue, a poor relationship with the child, busy life and having little time for the child, mental health problems, difficulty coping with a challenging situation or understanding the child's feelings or stage of development, or maintaining consistent, safe and health-promoting parenting methods.*

*The child may also have special difficulties that cause problems for parenting, for example (ADHD) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Living with a child with ADHD can be busy and stressful, and the family's everyday life can be chaotic and full of conflicts 24 hours per day. These may make cause feelings exhaustion, hopelessness and helplessness, which parents do their best to resolve. Time spent with other family members can become limited, as dealing with various professionals is time consuming. Caring for the child can also disrupt working life. Parents lack understanding from friends, family, professionals and society in general. They may think that they have to fight for support from the education, social welfare and health care systems. Once parents are able to accept the child as he or she is, the parents tend to recover and start to feel more optimistic about their future. ADHD has been found to be associated with a greater number of experiences of child maltreatment. This makes providing families with a plenty of preventive family support important. Protective factors include accessible systems that support families together, stable and supportive family relationships, close and nurturing parent-child relationships, skills and support for nonviolent childrearing, access to safe, inclusive education and life skills, awareness of violence, and knowledge of how and where to seek help, close and supportive relationships with parents and caregivers, support for coping and building self-esteem and access to early support and intervention services.*

*If your child's situation is challenging and you feel unable to resolve it with your partner or close relatives, contact your health care provider, social worker, or your child's day care instructor or school teacher. [A voluntary sector professionals \(Chat\) Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) will also help you. Together with professionals, you can assess your own and your family's potential support needs. [Here are some tips Advice for parents as their child rages and defies | Hyväkysymys.fi \(hyvakysymys.fi\)](#) if you lose your temper. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#)*

## **27. My child has challenges at school or at day care**

*If your child has challenges at school, it is important to respond to this quickly and thoroughly. This makes it vital to get support immediately. For example, the child may have learning problems due to a medical condition, problems in concentration, tiredness, experience bullying at school, problems in the home environment, a lack of emotional support, neglected from guidance and nurture on a daily basis, have poor relationships at home or at school, lack friends, witness domestic violence or physical, emotional, sexual violence at home...the list is long. If the situation with your child becomes challenging and you will not be able to overcome it at home, please try to resolve problems with your partner or a close relative, or contact the staff at your child's school to solve the challenge. You can also contact a public health nurse at school, a social worker, day*

care teacher or a voluntary sector professional (Chat) [Front page - The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare \(mll.fi\)](#) to assess your and your family's possible support needs.

## **28. I have to calm my child down by giving him/her drugs, sedatives or other substances**

*Your child may have medications prescribed by a doctor. It is important that the child receives all the medicines that have been prescribed for him or her and that these are given correctly. If the child has medications that should be given as needed, these can only be given to a symptomatic child. It is against the law to give any other medications to a child if these are not available to children without a prescription and under the direction of a pharmacist. It is also against the law to give alcohol or other drugs to a child or falsifying the child's symptoms in order to obtain a doctor's prescription. This is also considered a form of violence. If you have any questions about children's medications, ask your doctor for advice. Need help urgently? [Contact Crisis Helpline - MIELI](#) or [Poison Information Center Poison Information Center | HUS](#)*