talk about it... with every child

- a book about anxiety, depression, stress and trauma

by **Karen Glistrup** – illustrated by **Pia Olsen**

Foreword by Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark

"Where Karen Glistrup's work shows its strength, is its ability to open up for the dialogue between the adult and the child about feelings. I will strongly recommend this book to everyone, no matter how affected you are of mental disorders in the family."

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen
Prime Minister in Denmark 1993-2001

"It requires adults to talk to if you need to understand life and elusive, tabooed issues such as mental disease. Therefore, Karen's book is an important tool towards greater understanding - for adults as well as for children."

Lisbeth Zornig Andersen
Chairman of The Danish National Council
for Children, 2009-12

"This book creates a foundation of a new tradition which many of us have never known within the families who raised us. A tradition of increasingly stronger fellowship of children and their adults in opposite to pain, secrets and worries draining everyone of energy and vitality."

Jesper Juul – family-lab.com
well-known author of the book:
'Your Competent Child'

"When you fight depression, treatment is not enough. Information is also vital. Hence, books which demystify are needed. Therefore, this book meets a very large and important need."

Poul Videbech
Professor, Dr.Med.Sc, Consultant

"Thank you very much for writing the book 'talk about it...with every child.' I am an adult with mental illness but when I read the book I felt the child in me who grew up with parents who had untreated mental health challenges was being acknowledged by someone. Now I am a parent who is trying my best to be a good parent and manage my own mental illness. I appreciated how you approached this challenging but important topic."

Elizabeth Nestlerode
Portland, Oregon

talk about it... with every child

– a book about anxiety, depression, stress and trauma

by Karen Glistrup
translated by Russell Dees

PsykInfo Midt, Denmark 2014

This book has been published with support from the Danish Ministry of Health.
Some illustrations have been included with the kind permission of Eli Lilly A/s.
TrygFonden has supported and evaluated the book.
See the evaluation at: www.talk-about-it.eu
Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this book and who will help it become known and used.

talk about it ... with every child

– a book about anxiety, depression, stress and trauma

© Karen Glistrup - www.karenglistrup.dk
2. edition 2014

First published in Denmark 2011
by PSYK**INFO** Forlaget – PsykInfoMidt.dk

Illustrations: Pia Olsen – piaolsen.com
Poems: Janne Jørgensen
Linguistic advisor: Pia Blak
Layout & PrePress: TeR Døssing – ddsign.dk
Photo: Anne Kring
Translation: Russel Dees
Reviewer: Elizabeth Nestlerode

English paperbook: ISBN 978-87-994320-2-8
English eBook: ISBN 978-87-994320-5-9

All rights reserved.

This book may only be reproduced by institutions that have entered into an agreement with Copy-Dan and only within the framework of said agreement.

Order the eBook / paperbook
and get an excerpt of the eBook pdf free of charge at
www.talk-about-it.eu

Guidelines for reading

- The left sides, with the illustrations, are meant as inspiration for conversations with smaller children.
- The middle, with the icons, are mostly for school children.
- The right, with the shaded backgrounds, give further information and ideas for adults on how to continue the conversations with children.

Do not put this book up on the bookshelf. Keep it out and accessible, so children can flip through it and read for themselves.

You can also read it together, research the topic, and talk about the pictures. Pay attention to what the children are interested in. Stay there. Listen, think out loud, and talk together.

Happy reading!

Talk about it - with every child

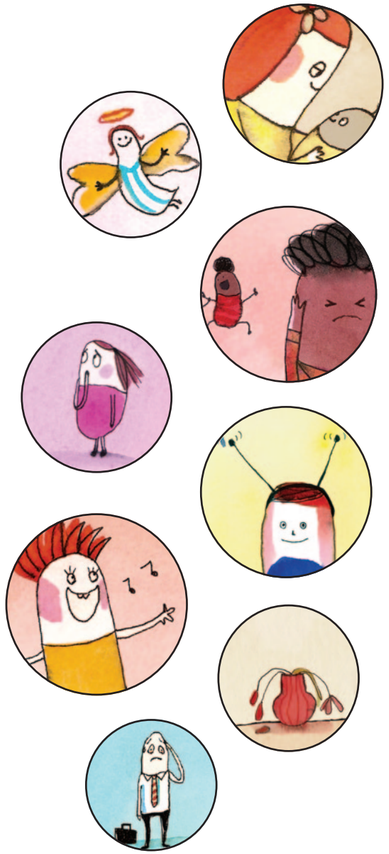


Table of Contents

Foreword by HRH Crown Princess Mary 5

Introduction – Welcome 6
– On smart children and what grown-ups can learn

What is anxiety and depression? 8
– How does it feel and how does it look?

Disorder in the brain 12
- What do you call it?

It is never the child's fault! 14
– The many causes of mental illness

Trauma and PTSD 18

Alcohol and drugs 22

The brain as a computer 24
– The mind and the body are connected

If your mother or father has a mental illness 28
– Many children are in the same boat. With and without signals

Mood changes 30
– They can't be predicted. What's wrong?

Children can feel everything 34
– When grown-ups fight, your heart hurts

How to get well 38
– And how to stay well

Good contact and good talks 42
– Are in major and minor keys

Contagion, attachment, and good boundaries 50

More ideas, Peace of mind and Smile 52

Afterword by Karen Glistrup 55

Anxiety and depression
Stress and trauma
Mental illness

What are these things?

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

Foreword by Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark

Sometimes we get sick. We can all be physically ill – but, it is also possible to be ill in the mind. And this is what we call mental illnesses.

When you have a mental illness, you are not quite yourself. Mental illness is not easy to understand – it is especially difficult for children when an adult in their life is suffering from one. *"Why is my mother crying all the time?" "Why is my dad in bed all day?"* Many children even think that it is their fault.

Anxiety and depression are the most well-known mental illnesses.
In Denmark as well as in Australia where I was born, these illnesses are widespread. It is estimated that one in five families are affected. This means that every child knows an adult who has a mental illness – either in their own family or in their friends' families. The best way of supporting these children is by making sure they know something about mental illness.

Wars, catastrophes, and life as a refugee can also harm the human psyche. This type of mental illness is called trauma. Trauma is also very difficult for children to understand.

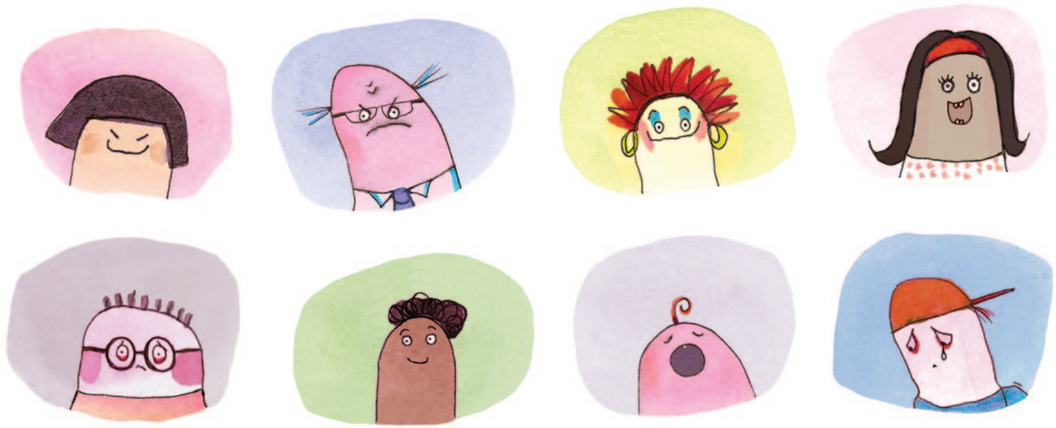
This book 'talk about it…' is informative and very helpful. The illustrations and text discuss issues that might seem difficult to share with children.
The book is also a tool that makes it easier for us to talk about our thoughts and feelings – and this, is so important for both children and adults.

Crown Princess Mary

HRH Crown Princess Mary is the patron of the Danish Association for Mental Health, the Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Mental Health Fund

Welcome!

People have all kinds of moods!
But, sometimes, people get into a bad mood for far too long a time.
What could be wrong?



This book talks about what's wrong.
That is, if grown-ups don't feel very well and can't understand why.

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

Kids are smart.
Yes, kids are smart.
And they understand a lot.
If someone is sad, children can feel it.
And children can see whether people are angry or happy.

Sometimes, it's hard to understand grownups. For example, if they're almost never happy. Or start yelling about minor issues.

What's wrong?

It may seem that there is something seriously the matter.
But no one says anything …
Or they just say: *"It's grownup talk."*

Children who experience that can become very insecure. And they might easily begin to think: *"Does it have something to do with ME?"* or *"Is there something wrong with ME?"* or *"Have I done something wrong?"*

It's very bad for children to walk around with these kinds of thoughts. There could be lots of other things wrong that children just don't know about.

If someone is always tired and almost never really happy, then it might be due to an illness. An illness that makes for a bad mood. That is the kind of illness this book is about.

There is a lot grownups can learn

Just 50 years ago, people thought that children were born 'empty'. Grownups were supposed to add the 'filling' to a child. Yes, people actually believed that children were 'shaped' solely from their upbringing. Not until later would children get the ability to view and understand things for themselves.

Today, we know that children are created from birth with a brain that contains pretty much all the functions needed to make contact and develop vital life experiences. Sensation and communication are core competences a SMALL CHILD is born with.

Newborns teach us to be intimate. OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE have acquired a lot of 'filling', and they have been 'shaped' by the experiences life has already given them. We have to remember that they also need to be met with intimacy and respect for the fact that they are sensing, thinking people.

We must SEE CHILDREN in their reality and talk with them about what they are experiencing.

In this way, we strengthen children's confidence in their own senses and in us grownups.

And, in the long term, we give children the best experience of themselves.

Here are some grownups who aren't doing so well

Abe can't sleep at night. His thoughts can only remember things that are bad. They keep him awake, even though he is so tired.

Oswald's stomach hurts, and he has no appetite.

Every day, Lana says, *"I'm no good at anything … and I'm a bad mother, too!"*
The doctor says that Abe and Oswald and Lana have a disease called DEPRESSION.

Laila just sits here, and she is SO scared.
There's nothing to be scared of. But her thoughts – THEY are sure that everything is dangerous.
The doctor says that Laila has a disease called ANXIETY.

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

What are anxiety and depression?

Anxiety and depression are two very common mental illnesses.

Anxiety and depression cause nervousness and make your ideas and feelings go out of balance. This happens in the brain, but it can also be felt in the body.

People might behave differently. And this is felt by the people they are with. But many are able to hide their nervousness very well.

- People who have ANXIETY may feel like this:
- They feel unwell and nervous
- Their heart beats wildly
- They sweat
- Their muscles are tense and they cannot relax
- They feel like they cannot breathe or
- They may breathe like they are about to go parachuting for the first time
- Or they might be afraid of the strangest things

Anxiety can come and go.
So they never know how they're going to feel.

How many people are affected?

Mental Health is a global issue, impacting the lives of families, individuals, and children everywhere.

Depression is a common illness worldwide, with an estimated 350 million people of all ages affected. (1)

One in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. Around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability worldwide. (2)

The boundary between being sick and vulnerable is fluid. Many people who have a mental illness don't take medicine. So, it is difficult to know the true extent of the various mental illnesses.

This book deals mostly with anxiety, depression, stress and trauma.
The difficulties for those affected and their families, however, can be recognized in many other mental illnesses.

Despite how widespread they are, anxiety and depression are still very private illnesses. It is a great victory for some just to go to a doctor. So, many people do not get the necessary treatment.

"I have suffered from anxiety for many years. But I have never told anyone. I was afraid of what they would think about me.
It was a little shameful. Such a lot of energy I've used hiding!"

This is what Maritta says. She was employed as a social worker.

"But it is interesting that, once I decided to tell my colleagues about it and finally got treatment, two people came out and told that they also had mental problems, and one has a spouse who was hospitalized with a psychosis."

It is never the childs fault!

There is no single cause

There is rarely one reason for why people get diagnosed with a mental illness.

It almost always has something to do with the vulnerability of an individual AND something to do with that individual's experiences in life.

Death

It is perfectly normal to feel great sorrow when we lose someone we care about. Everyone feels that way. But, sometimes, sorrow develops into a depression.

Birth

Strangely enough, some women can become depressed in connection with the birth of a baby. The baby is loved and wonderful, but an imbalance arises in the mother's brain, so all the love and joy can't come out.

It is very unhappy for both mother and child. If the new infant has a big sister or a big brother, it is also very sad for them. Because they also lose the mother they know, the mother who is happy and gives them warm hugs.

■ 10-15 % of the women who give birth suffer from postpartum depression. (4)

Inheritance and upbringing

Some people may have inherited or developed a predisposition to mental illness when they grew up. Difficult experiences in growing up may help make people vulnerable. But they can also turn out to provide a special strength.
"I CAN DO IT!", say the mind and the body.

Everyone has both strengths and vulnerabilities.
Some people who have had a tough childhood use their experiences in the education they choose. They might become talented doctors, psychologists, or educators.

Stress

If someone is subject to strain over a long period of time, the brain and the nervous system become overburdened. This is called stress. People can get stress from very different things – for example, conflicts, worries, too much work, or bullying.

A little stress is not dangerous. But we need peace of mind every so often.
What makes you stressed or those you know?

■ It is well known that untreated stress can trigger depression and anxiety attacks!

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

War and catastrophes can hurt the brain

Sara takes good care of Asha and Arian.
"My wonderful children!", she says, hugging them close.

All grownups are afraid,
but they try to take care of their children.
The children are also very scared.
They almost forget to breathe.

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

Millions of people on this planet have witnessed cruel war and evil deeds. Or natural disasters.

Many try to escape. Escape is dangerous, and many die. Some refugees succeed in reaching a new and peaceful country. They can expect to wait for a long time at asylum centres before they know whether they can live in that country.

Arian says: *"This new country is very different from the one we come from. The language is hard for my mother to learn. I'm learning it quicker. So, I often have to translate for her."*

In the peacefull countries where many refugees arrive and settle, the people they meet may not know anything about life with war and leaving ones homeland to live in safety. Children who are refugees may not know who they can talk to about their experiences.

Mette's grandmother is dead. Mette is crying, and they are talking about it in class.

It is a really good talk. Several children have lost a grandparent, and the teacher comforts Mette.

Arian is quiet, thinking: *"I wonder if they know that my father and my big brother were shot?"*

Must we talk about it?

The doubt and silence here are a lot like the doubt and silence that surround mental illness. We cannot find the words. It is too horrible. And we don't want to go poking around in something painful and, maybe, do more harm. So, everyone remains silent.

Silence is a mistake

It is good to divert children's thoughts and to give them happy experiences. Music, sports, games, and going to school are crucial for the health of children. But total silence about what happened is harmful. Silence makes things invisible, and everyone needs to be seen. *"Only when people get to know me can I start to feel at home"*, says Malar.

Who in the school knows about the children's life before they fled? Or about the escape itself and life in the camps or asylum centre? Nadja came to Denmark as a refugee from another country when she was in the third grade, and now she is at high school. *"Nah, people don't ask us about anything... in a way, they don't seem to care"*, she says.

Openness means both inclusion and that you care

Our interest in the stories of refugee families has significance for how these children flourish and for the understanding of their friends. That is why we should talk about it. We need to talk about the fact that many people in the world must become refugees. We have to make sure people know that lots of people may be traumatized after escaping catastrophes and war. We have to talk about what trauma is.

Tell, ask, and listen

"There is so much on TV about wars around the world … where do you come from, Nadia?" "…maybe, I can help you tell your friends a little about your story?"

We do care!

Oh, no... not again!

Children can be both angry and afraid when grownups get drunk.

The grownups are enjoying beer and wine.
But some drink far too much.
So much that they do scary or foolish things.

Why do they drink?

Many people drink because they feel bad inside. Unease and anxiety may be a cause. In the beginning, it may feel nice to be drunk or high, but afterwards everything is worse. People can actually develop a depression if they drink too much.

Some people drink beer, wine or strong spirits.
Others smoke marijuana or take pills. Some chew leaves called Khat or take other drugs.

Jeanette said in a group of children: *"I have never said this to anyone before. The grownups don't go around saying they have an alcohol problem!*
My mom, she puts on makeup and smart clothes and then NO ONE can see it."

"... 'It's not that cool if your mom reeks of alcohol.' Once I said this to her, and she became SO furious! Today, now that my mother and I have both gotten help, I'll tell other children: TELL SOMEONE, IT CAN HELP YOU!"

People who drink too much don't like to talk about it... Hmm. On the next page, we can talk about the brain. It doesn't do so well from drinking too much!

■ Worldwide about 16 % of drinkers aged 15 years or older engage in heavy drinking. (6)

Shame and scorn

Maybe this chapter reminds you of someone in your family? It is not surprising. In many families, there is at least one person who struggles with an alcohol or drug abuse problem.

For someone the problems start with a feeling of inferiority and performance anxiety that is dulled with intoxication. Slowly, things go wrong.

It is embarrassing to be dependent. No one is proud of having problems with alcohol.
Some people may try to hide their struggles or pretend not to have a problem. But children develop a special sensitivity to the way adults use alcohol: Jeanette told me: "- *as soon as I open the door I just know how things are!*"

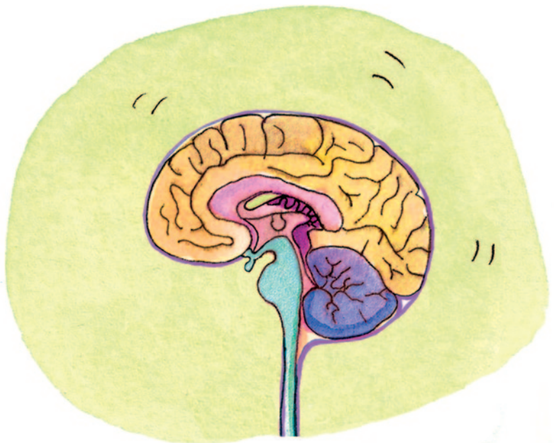
When parents are under the influence their children become frightened. If nobody around them talk about it children may feel isolated, alone and angry.

"... when it's too hard to be at home, I just play football with John!"

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

There are diseases of the body and diseases of the mind

We call diseases that make our bodies sick physical illnesses. You probably know a lot about them!



We call diseases that create unrest in the brain – or the mind – mental illnesses.

Everybody has a body, and everybody has a mind

We are familiar with the body.
It is everything we can touch: arms, ears, legs and fingers, neck and head. And then all the organs inside: stomach, heart, lungs, veins, and many more body parts.

You can see many physical illnesses.

If you catch your finger in the door, it becomes swollen and blue. You can see that. If you get the flu, you get a fever. You can measure that. But you cannot see a stomach ache. And you cannot see a heartache.

The body and the mind go together

Just as the blood streams through the arteries of your body, so do the moods of the mind – the psyche – flow through the body's nervous system with the brain as our 'Central Headquarters.'

The psyche is our thoughts and feelings. The psyche is the way we are human beings. Our personality. You can be anxious, impulsive, or a loner without necessarily having a mental illness. Every human being has his or her own personality. And all people have a psyche. But we cannot see the psyche!

Mental illnesses for everybody!

All people have feelings.
All people have a mind.

Both vulnerability and strength are human qualities.

We are all different.
And we have a right to be the way we are.
No human being should wonder, *"Is there something totally wrong with me?"*

Mental diseases affect feelings, thoughts and behaviors.
They can also affect the body, so it aches and becomes very tired.
There are many different types of mental illness.
Some very serious and others less serious.
They each have a name.
They can strike anyone. Whether you are rich or poor, smart or not so smart, whatever you look like.
Still, it is as if you would rather be like everyone else.

Many people are embarrassed if someone in their family has a mental illness. They think that their family is very different from other families. They do not know that many people suffer from, for example, anxiety or depression.

- One person in every four will be affected by a mental disorder at some stage of life (7)

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

A lot of children are in the same boat

These children all have a father or a mother who has anxiety or depression.
They have just come on board the boat.
Still, it feels like they know each other.
Because they have all experienced sort of the same thing.

If your mother or father has a mental illness?

Yes, then you should know that there are a lot of you in the same boat!

You just don't know each other, because most people keep it to themselves.
"What's the use of telling anyone about it?" many children think.
"Nobody understands what it means anyway."
"People will tease me," others think.

And then you may feel alone – like an outsider – and different – and wrong inside. On the outside, people can look as though everything is all right.

That is why grownups can easily be fooled into thinking that you are happy and well, even though you feel very bad inside.

- Many children in classrooms and homes throughout the world have a father or mother who suffers from anxiety, depression, or another type of mental health challenge. These children are quite normal. Just like you.

Children's signals

Children can have experiences – also in their family – that make them afraid or insecure. This is all a part of being a child and a human being. It provides important experiences that help them handle other difficult situations later.

But if it happens a lot that grownups are doing poorly, are fighting or drinking too much, children can develop stress. Stress arises when the nervous system is constantly on the alert.

Children don't say: *"I think I'm getting stress from all the insecurity here at home!"*

Instead, children's stress 'seeps' or 'breaks' out in some form of behavior that the adults have a hard time understanding. They can't see how the child feels inside.

It may be that Matt is being very difficult or Mette will not eat. Maybe, Matt does not want to go to school, and Mette seems sour and cross. Maybe, Matt just looks sad, and Mette cannot concentrate.

But just as often Matt and Mette are able to 'keep things on the inside.' They can hide how they feel, so no one gets suspicious or starts to worry.

Mette may be very meticulous with her homework and herself. And Matt may be one of the 'strong' boys, one of the leaders.

Our conceptions about certain signals must not blind our attention. A focus on behavior and on how the child is to be 'handled' simply confirms the child's feeling of being wrong. We must become interested in how it is to BE the child. We must become interested in their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. THERE we can catch sight of the child and THERE the child feels seen!

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

We know what is healthy for the brain!!

All these things are vitamins for the brain.
They are good for children
– AND they also help the depressed brain
to make fresh, new brain cells!!!

Come on, health! Talk to someone

It is healthy for the mind to get things off your chest and to be listened to. We are already in the process of getting healthy by talking about the subjects in this book!

Get your pulse going, laugh and sing

When we exercise, the brain creates new nerve cells and some of the biological chemicals that give us bright and happy feelings.

The same happens when we have a really good laugh or sing just for the pure fun of it.

Do something that makes you happy

It is good to do something that makes your soul happy. Visit somebody you like, walk in the woods and look at nature, go for a swim, or listen to your favorite music.

Eat healthy food

Body and mind work together. It is clear that a healthy diet with the right vitamins and oils is important for the health of the mind.

Take deep breaths

Through deep breathing, you can find a source of health in your heart. Listen closely and try the exercise on p. 53.

Read more about mental health (8)

SHARING HELPS

Groups for children and young people

It is good to meet with others who have had the same experiences and feelings as you. You do not have to say that much for the others to understand how it is.

Recognition creates a feeling of community and security. While many children often have the feeling of somehow being wrong, sharing experiences in a group can create a feeling that everything is OK. Just knowing that we share something we do not often share with others creates a safe space. Children who have had the desire and opportunity to be together in a group recommend that others do the same.

However, some children and young people say 'no thanks' to a group. This must be respected.

The family is the most important group

Groups with children and young people are good. But remember that family is the most important group of all. Yet, many parents have difficulty talking to their children about what is painful. Regardless of how good a parent you are, you may need help with this kind of conversation.

Read about family conversations and therapy groups in
"What children don't know… indeed hurts them – break the taboo"
by Karen Glistrup
(This eBook will be available at Amazon in early 2015.
Subscribe newsletter: www.talk-about-it.eu*)*

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu ❤ Best greetings Karen Glistrup

We look after each other

Psychologically, my Mom is having
a hard time.
It has an effect on the family.
And things aren't going so well for her
Despite our good will to the contrary.

It's like we're all ashamed of it
And want to hide our troubles and cares.
We feel like giving up because
It's such a weight to bear.

But, luckily, we're able to talk
To a person who really listens,
Someone to tell us that our love
Will help Mom's outlook glisten.

Then, we get hope and faith to believe
That, even though life has its quirks,
It can always be made much better
When the power of family works.

Mental illness is 'contagious'

When one person in the family suffers, it affects them all. For good and for bad. For good because we feel that we mean something to each other. For bad because anxiety and difficult emotions are contagious.

Our brains copy each other. It happens without our noticing. Therefore, everyone in the family can sense these emotions and agitation in themselves. It is unpleasant, and it can make you so sad. It is as if everyone feels they are 'wrong'.

You can learn to protect yourself against the anxiety that comes from other human beings.
Because it is not your anxiety!

You can do different things:

- go for a little walk
- breathe very carefully and listen to your heart
- go out and play
- listen to music through headphones
- take a relaxing shower
- go swimming
- play, dance, jump, and sing
- pray to God for help
- think good thoughts
- find someone who would like to listen and understand.

Attachment and good boundaries

The beautiful thing about children is that they become attached to the people who take care of them. This happens from the moment children are put into a pair of arms to embrace them.

Children attach themselves in trust and learn by experience. Trust is a decisive element in a child's healthy development and the formation of the child's personality.

Just as important as secure attachments is a healthy boundary between child and adult. The adult has a responsibility to draw his or her own boundaries and to respect the child's. To give children faith that they can count on support and be the 'leader' of their own lives.

Your feelings and mine

Both children and adults can train themselves to get into touch with their feelings. When you know your own feelings, it is easier to distinguish them from the feelings of others. It is certainly not easy, but it can be learned.

Adults can help by 'mirroring' the child's feelings. Show the child with your voice and facial expression that you see, sense, and understand:
"I know you must be scared! … or angry!"
"I understand very well WHY you're sad!"

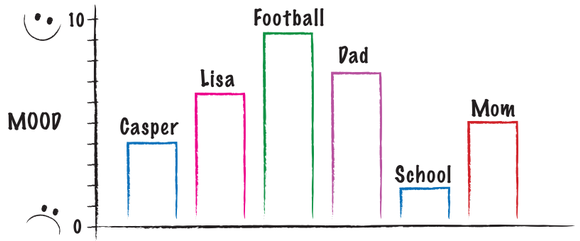
Or by telling the child about your own feelings:
"I'm sorry I scolded you. It was probably because I was so tired. Please forgive me."

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

Here are a few more ideas to talk about

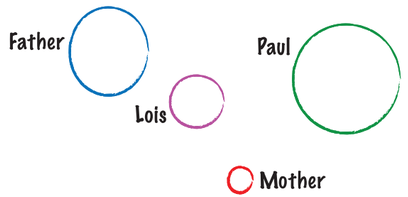
Look at the faces here and in the book and talk about when you recognize the various moods and feelings in yourself.

Draw a bar chart with 8-10 bars and give each bar a topic. For example: school, mother, father, myself, my sister, riding, etc.
Have each child fill out his or her own bars corresponding to how they rate the mood in themselves and others and how happy they are about various activities. Children are familiar with the scale of 1 to 10.
The results are not important. What is important is whether the children are engaged and get in touch with what is meaningful for them.



You can draw the amount of the energy and happiness in each family member. Everyone draws his or her own. Big or small. This provides a very clear picture for children to see how large a circle their mother and father draw for themselves in relation to the children's.

When children and adults draw together, they both feel they are seen and see a connection.



Find more ideas on Facebook: 'Talk about it - with every child' in danish: 'Snakomdet' – Thank you if you 'like' and share :)

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

Peace of mind – an exercise

It's good to be able to create your own peace of mind. This exercise is a good way to combat anxiety and stress. It can create peace of mind when our thoughts and feelings are uneasy and out of balance.

You can practice this exercise, so you can preserve your own peace of mind even when you are with someone who is agitated. Just read calmly to yourself, and try doing what is suggested.

Sit down in a cozy spot that you like. Make sure your legs and your back are comfortable. Also your behind and your feet. Relax your shoulders and your stomach and take some deep breaths, in and out.

Slowly, read on in the text here, while you breathe in and out alternately. As you read, pay attention to whether there are any sounds in the room. Just note the sounds. Let them just be the sounds they are.

Imagine you are sitting in your own special place, where nothing can disturb your breathing. Maybe, there are no sounds. Then, just listen to the quiet. Keep paying attention to your breathing the whole time. Stay in your breathing for a few minutes. At your own tempo, in. At your own tempo, out.

When you find your thoughts wandering 'out into the world,' help bring them back with a friendly, little smile so that you're only paying attention to the sounds or the quiet and your breathing.

Continue breathing slowly … in … and out. .

Remember that you are entirely yourself. You are not what happens to you.

Try to think of a really difficult experience you have had with someone who was agitated. Was there blaming and shouting? Was it completely quiet? Were you afraid or sad? Or did something else entirely happen?

Can your body remember how you felt when it happened?

Do you feel something? In your skin? In your gut? In your throat? Somewhere else?

Maybe, you don't feel anything. That's OK.

Now try to look at your experience as if it were drawn on a blackboard. While you are looking at the blackboard, make sure that you breathe slowly in … and you breathe out. Pay attention to your heart as well.

Take your time. Maybe, close your eyes for a while.

Now, think again about the fact that the experience was an experience.

It was something that happened outside you. You can – in spite of everything you experience – train yourself to preserve your peace of mind. You have your own heart, your own breathing, and your own life.

You are a person.
You are just the way you are supposed to be.

Give yourself a smile.
And direct your attention to your breathing.

Now, once again, in the quiet, listen to your thoughts.
Let everything be completely quiet. Every time you catch thoughts sneaking into your tranquility, direct your attention calmly back to your breathing. Keep sitting as long as you want to.

If you do this exercise regularly, you will gradually create peace of mind for yourself with the help of your own breathing.

Smile to the world

All good stories are supposed to end well.
This one does, too.

Here's a story about why people smile.

You make up the story yourself
– all of you sitting here.

Like this:
Choose someone to start.

Taking turns, each of you is to receive a smile from everyone else. Everyone gets a chance to try.

Who is first? OK. Now close your eyes. When you open them, look around at the others, all of them are smiling. Pay attention to what happens to you. Maybe, you come to smile yourself? Yes. You almost can't help yourself – unless you force yourself not to. (Maybe, mirror neurons are helping?)

And now it happens! When you smile, your smile sends a message to your brain that you are secure and happy. And when this message arrives, you FEEL more secure and happy.

See? That's why it's so good that people smile.

Now, it's the next person's turn.

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

Afterword

Just a few decades ago, there was a general agreement that children should not have to deal with difficult things in life such as illness and death. People thought that children should be spared and you shouldn't talk about these things with them.

Today, we know that children sense things and are affected by them far more than we are aware of. Especially when something is wrong. They are worried and curious, and they want knowledge about what is going on around them.

Since the late 1990s, I have been talking to families with children about mental illness in the family. This book is a result of the experiences I have had in my encounters with many such families.

More and more people are struck by mental illness. Every child will experience this with someone they know. Therefore, it is a topic that all children need to learn about.

But many parents and teachers are uncertain about how to approach this subject with children. One of the reasons may be that they themselves grew up in a time when talking about mental illness was taboo.

I hope that the book will inspire many new conversations between children and grownups.
- About ideas and feelings
- About mental illness
- About pleasures and pain
- About the good life for human beings.

Find the book an more ideas at
www.snak-om-det.dk / www.talk-about-it.eu

Karen Glistrup
Ry, Denmark, 2014

References
WHO, World Health Organization

1. WHO Depression. (2012). Retrieved June 14, 2014, from *http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs369/en/*
2. WHO Mental disorders affect one in four people. World Health Report 2001. Retrieved June 14, 2014, from *http://www.who.int/whr/2001/media_centre/press_release/en/*
3. WHO Mental Disorders. from *http://www.who.int/topics/mental_disorders/en/*
4. WHO Literature review of risk factors and interventions on postpartum depression, (2008) from *http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/mmh%26chd_chapter_1.pdf*
5. WHO Guidelines for essential trauma care, from *http://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/guide_field_workers/en/*
6. WHO Alcohol. (2014). Retrieved June 14, 2014, from *http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/facts/alcohol/en/*
7. WHO Mental health. The world health report 2001: New understanding, new hope. Retrieved June 14, 2014, from *http://www.who.int/whr/2001/en/*
8. WHO Mental Health. Strengthening our Response from *http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs220/en/*

Please support my work. Buy the book here: www.talk-about-it.eu Best greetings Karen Glistrup

Karen Glistrup

Karen Glistrup is a social worker and a psychotherapist specializing in families and couples.

She lectures, teaches, and supervises professionals who work with children and afflicted adults.

Karen has also written the critically-acclaimed book, “Hvad børn ikke ved … har de ondt af” Hans Reitzel 2002/2006/2014 (What children don’t know ... indeed hurts them).

www.karenglistrup.dk

Pia Olsen

Pia Olsen is an artist located in Copenhagen, Denmark. She works freelance and makes illustrations for books, web, magazines, apps and advertising.

www.piaolsen.com

”I strongly agree with the way in which this book approaching both the children and their parents. It can be helpful in our practice and it can help parents as well as mental health workers to talk to children. I am pleased to recommend the book to my networks here in Europe as well as worldwide.”

Karin van Doesum
Phd. Psychologist/Researcher.
Mindfit and Radboud University Nijmegen.

Every child will meet an adult who has a mental illness – either in their own family or in their friends' families.

This book provides children with knowledge, understanding for each other, and insight into the fact that it is never the child's fault if adults become ill. The book is written for small children, older children, and adults, who themselves were once children.

The first part discusses anxiety, depression, stress and trauma.
The second part deals with children who are grappling with mental illness in their family.
The last part provides ideas about how we can talk with every child about difficult things and how people can become well.

"Children feel things and seek context. We can help them by talking openly about the reality in which they live."

Karen Glistrup

ISBN 978-87-994320-5-9

PsykInfo Midt

"This book 'Talk about it ...' is informative and very helpful. The illustrations and text discuss issues that might seem difficult to share with children.
The book is also a tool that makes it easier for us to talk about our thoughts and feelings – and this, is so important for both children and adults.

Extract from foreword by
Her Royal Highness
Crown Princess Mary of Denmark