

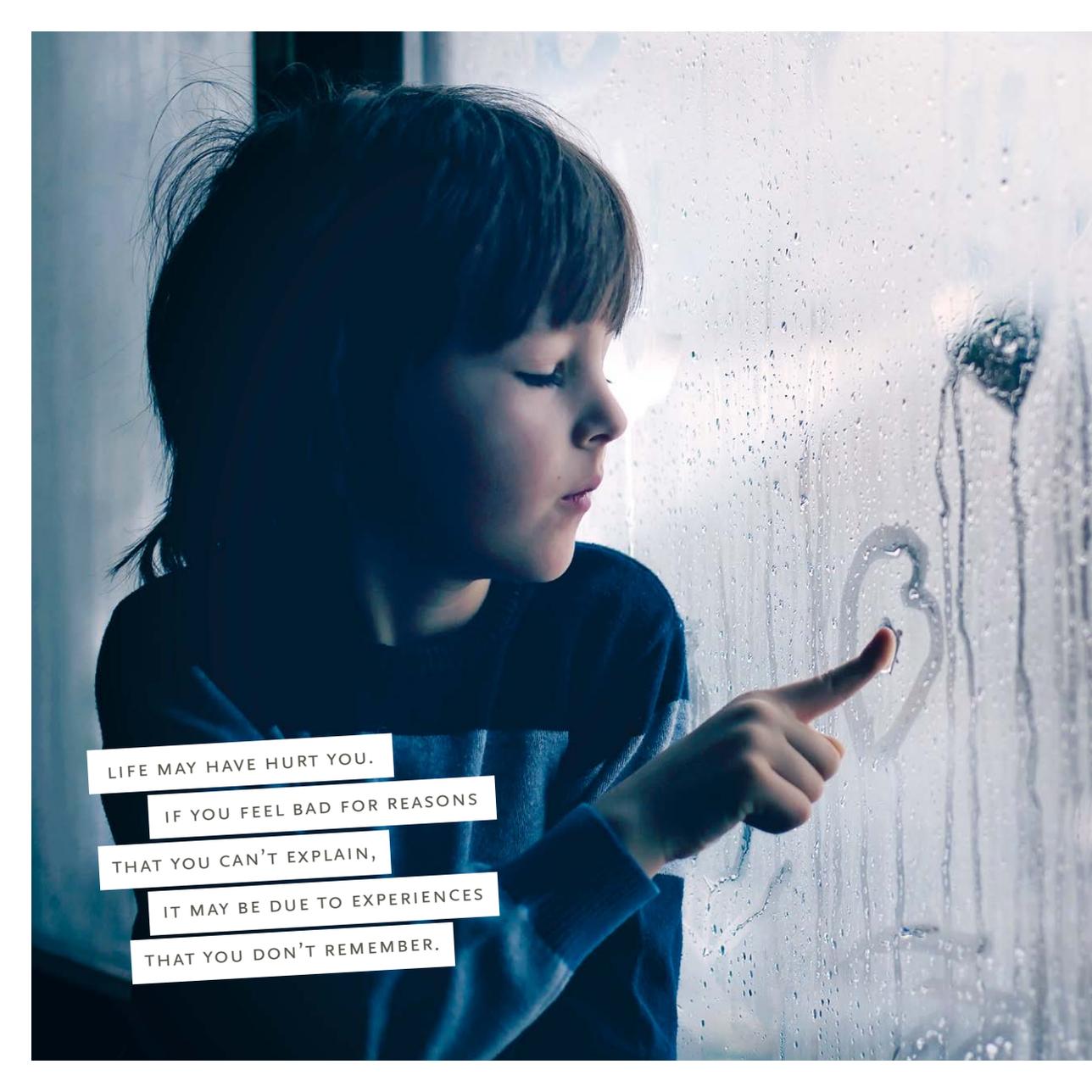


THE FEDERATION OF
MOTHER AND
CHILD HOMES
AND SHELTERS

Childhood experiences matter

FOR YOU WHO WANT TO GIVE

YOUR BABY A GOOD CHILDHOOD.



LIFE MAY HAVE HURT YOU.

IF YOU FEEL BAD FOR REASONS

THAT YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN,

IT MAY BE DUE TO EXPERIENCES

THAT YOU DON'T REMEMBER.

Feeling bad may come from bad experiences in your childhood.

Difficult childhood experiences, such as parents using drugs or alcohol, violence or mental health problems, may still be with you or cause you shame. It may also be that you find it difficult to ask for help.

ASKING FOR AND RECEIVING HELP can be frightening, and it's not easy to trust other people. Your difficult experiences can also mean that you are left alone with your problems.

It is important to seek help to deal with your own experiences, especially when you have a baby or are becoming a parent. Difficult experiences or trauma that have been pushed aside in the mind

often return during pregnancy and when the baby is still young. They may make you act in a way that is not good for your baby even if you don't mean to. When you seek help, your difficult experiences can turn into a strength, and give you special abilities to act as a parent.

Please remember: the difficult things you experienced as a child are not your fault.

HOW WERE YOU TREATED AS A CHILD?

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES MATTER.

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My boyfriend and I had a beautiful home. I thought it was a good place for our baby. I've always felt inferior to others. When I was a child, I was repeatedly told how naughty I was.

I decided that no one would talk to my baby that way, I'd always protect my baby! I thought that the baby was crying because he didn't want me to be his mother. One night there was an accident. The baby cried so hard and for so long. I got upset, I cried. My boyfriend also got upset.

My baby and I were taken to the mother and child home. I was ashamed. The counsellor and I talked about my childhood. The counsellor told me about

symptoms of trauma. I cried when I realised that that was why I had a hard time coping and being with the baby. The counsellor said it might be because I wasn't cared for or loved as a baby.

Today I told my godmother where we are. I felt relieved. Something is happening. My boyfriend has also taken part in the discussions. We are getting help to be parents to our baby, even if the two of us won't be getting back together. The best thing about here, in my opinion, is that there are other families here. One father has similar fears as me. It's been important to talk about them. I'm sure that I can give my baby a better start in life when I get proper help.



Traumatic experiences can manifest themselves in many ways

- Sleeping disorders, problems remembering things, anxiety, depression, difficulties regulating emotions.
- Surprising emotional reactions, vague physical symptoms.
- Experiences of absence, feelings of unreality and alienation, experiences of inferiority.
- Challenges related to coping with everyday tasks.

It's normal to go through various emotions when your baby is small. A single symptom is not necessarily a sign of trauma.

**"I THOUGHT THAT THE BABY WAS CRYING
BECAUSE HE DIDN'T WANT ME TO BE HIS MOTHER."**

You're not alone. Experiences of abuse are more common than you can imagine

ABUSE IS A FAMILY SECRET that prevents a child from being a child. If you had a lot of difficult experiences in your childhood, you may have missed out on the care you needed. This may make it difficult for you to care for your own child. For example, you may find it unbearable when your baby cries or needs you all the time.

Pregnancy can feel uncomfortable. It may be frightening, or you may

even be angry with your baby. It may also be the case that pregnancy doesn't mean anything much to you, and that you can't prepare yourself for being a parent. You may find it difficult to bond with your baby.

You may be acting in a way that is harmful to your baby, such as missing baby's check up appointments, forgetting to take care of yourself or using alcohol or drugs.

ABUSE IS OFTEN ABOUT BEING TOO TIRED

TO COPE, LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, IGNORANCE,

HELPLESSNESS, INCOMPETENCE OR NEGLIGENCE.

SOMETIMES PARENTS INTENTIONALLY HARM THEIR CHILD.



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I've gone through things that I can't mention to the other mothers in the playground. In the mother and child home, I met people who had experienced the same things, so I didn't feel different.

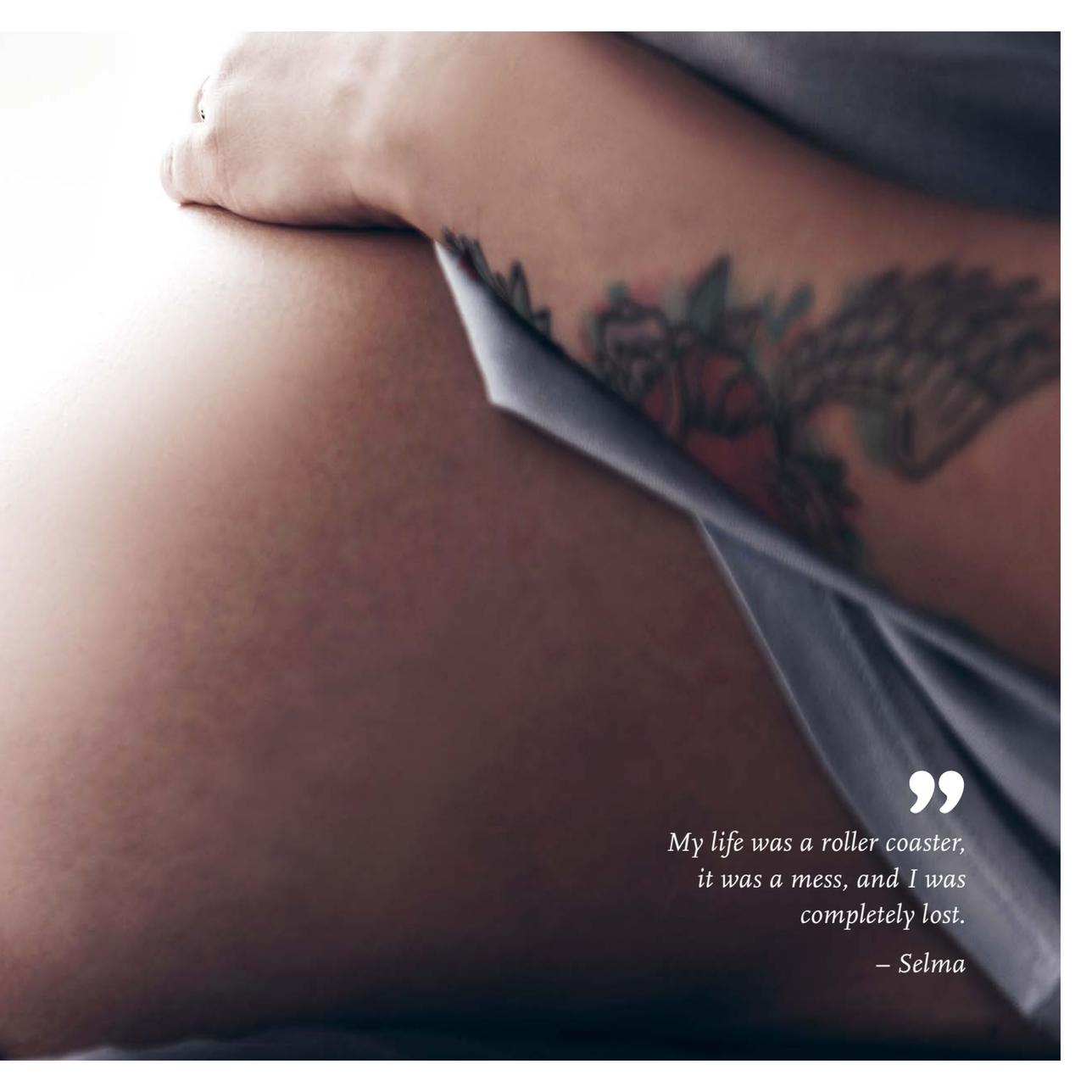
– Mother in a mother and child home

44% of parents have experienced disciplinary violence in their childhood (Hyvä kasvaa survey 2019).

Trauma experiences that a mother and father expecting a baby have gone through may be reflected in their parenting

- A parent may experience unpleasant emotions such as anger, fear, and anxiety during pregnancy. A mother or father can be violent towards a baby in the womb.
- A pregnant mother doesn't take care of herself; she won't have an illness treated, uses alcohol or drugs, has casual sex or is in a violent relationship, for example. This is child abuse.
- A pregnant mother may be overly concerned about her own and the baby's well-being; constant monitoring of health and the environment and excessive stress reduce the ability to cope. It is difficult to feel positive about things.
- A pregnant mother does not realise that she is pregnant. The mother doesn't notice any changes in her body. The mother, father or other people can also refuse to accept the pregnancy as a fact.





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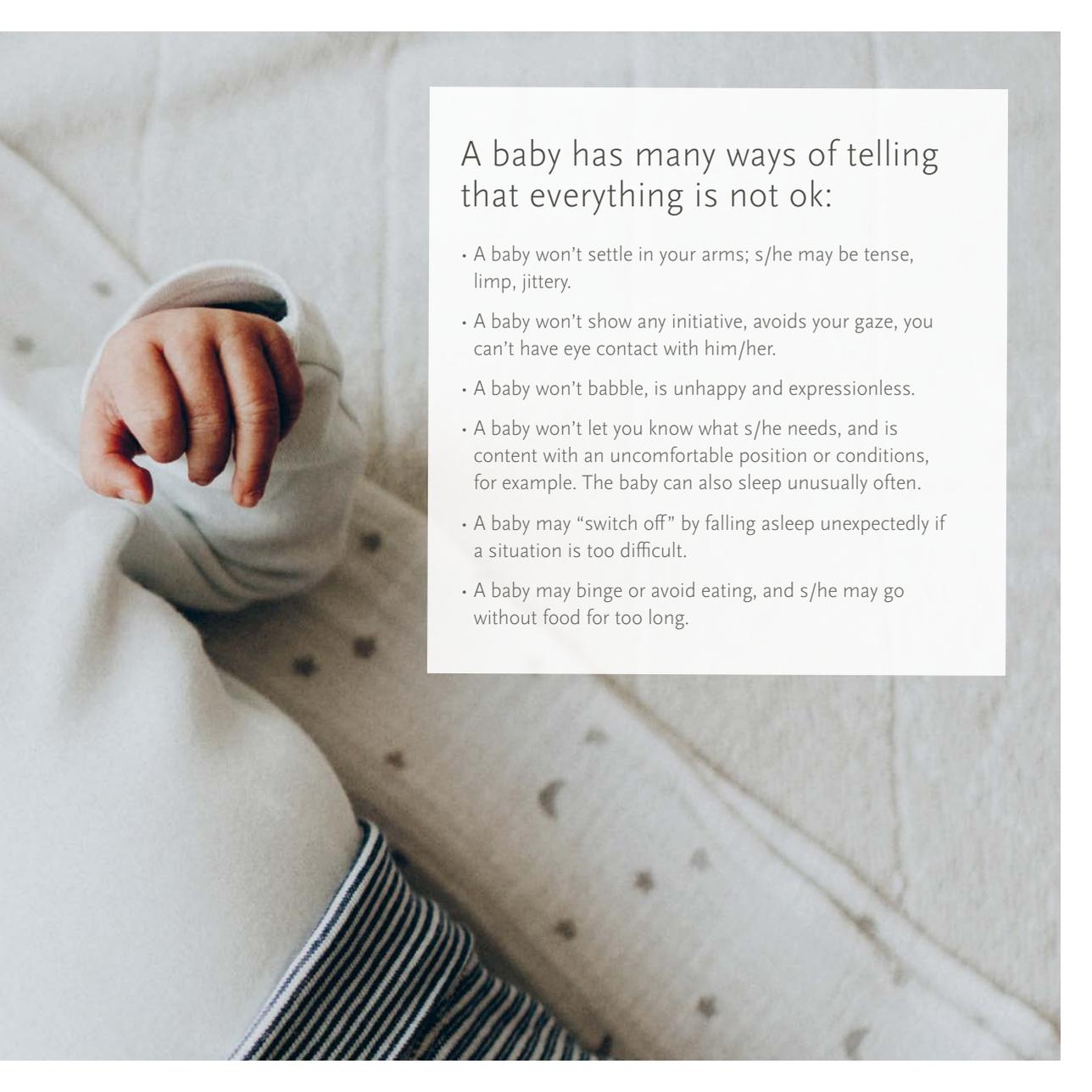
*My life was a roller coaster,
it was a mess, and I was
completely lost.*

– Selma



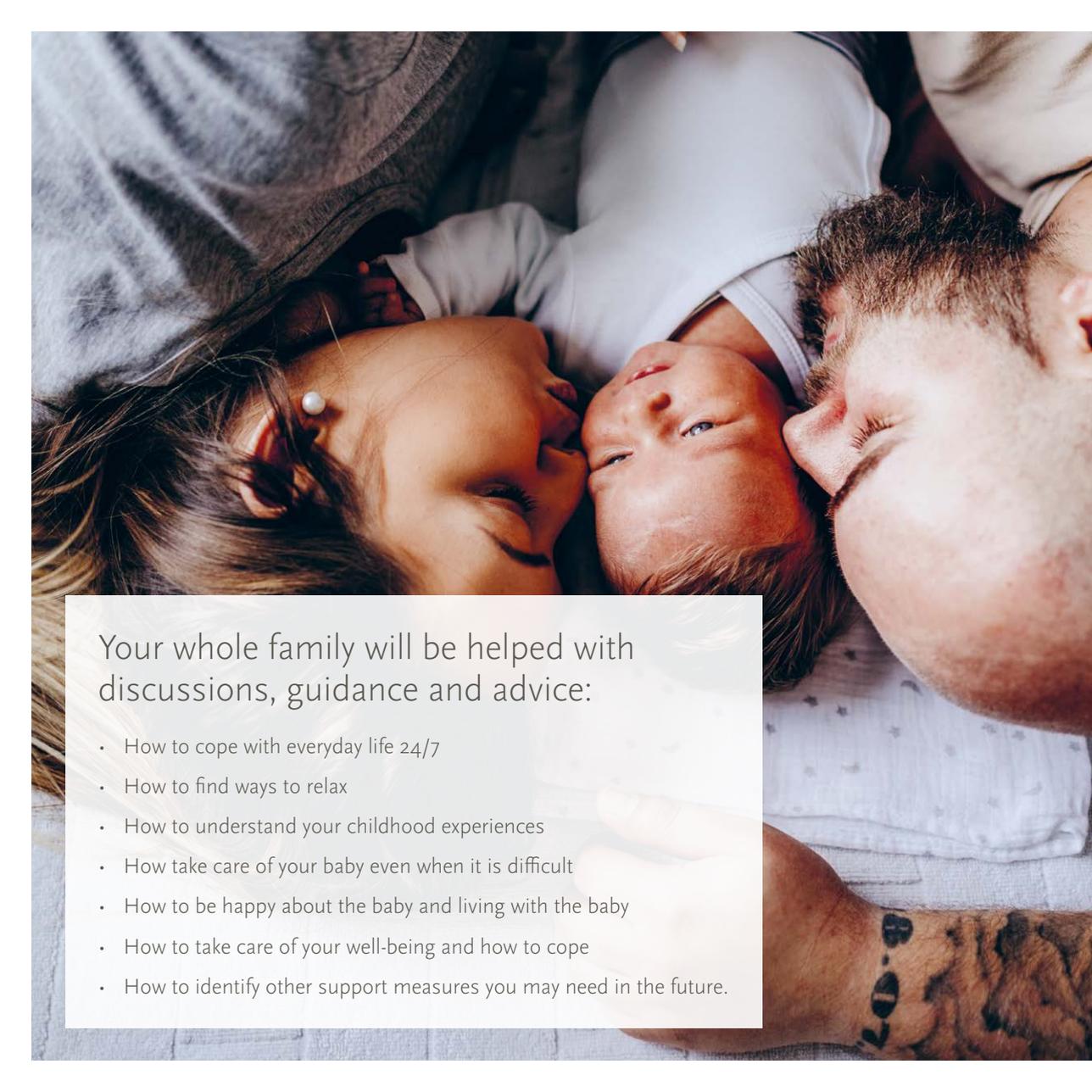
DARE TO SHARE YOUR PROBLEMS.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP.



A baby has many ways of telling that everything is not ok:

- A baby won't settle in your arms; s/he may be tense, limp, jittery.
- A baby won't show any initiative, avoids your gaze, you can't have eye contact with him/her.
- A baby won't babble, is unhappy and expressionless.
- A baby won't let you know what s/he needs, and is content with an uncomfortable position or conditions, for example. The baby can also sleep unusually often.
- A baby may "switch off" by falling asleep unexpectedly if a situation is too difficult.
- A baby may binge or avoid eating, and s/he may go without food for too long.



Your whole family will be helped with discussions, guidance and advice:

- How to cope with everyday life 24/7
- How to find ways to relax
- How to understand your childhood experiences
- How take care of your baby even when it is difficult
- How to be happy about the baby and living with the baby
- How to take care of your well-being and how to cope
- How to identify other support measures you may need in the future.



You and your baby deserve help

THERE ARE SERVICES FOR PARENTS and babies that can support you by day and by night. The employees recognise trauma and signs of abuse, and they know how ways of caring for a baby are passed down from one generation to the next.

You can learn to understand your experiences and their impact on how you look after your baby and how you behave. Your ability to cope is strengthened as the symptoms of your trauma decrease, and your difficult experiences can make you a better parent.

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Problems won't go away if you just stay alone at home.

– Pekka, 38

The community, other families in the same situation and professionals will support you as you take the first steps with your baby and get ready for your future.

The baby can't wait

- You can protect your baby already in the womb.
- You can build a warm relationship between you and your baby during pregnancy.
- Being a parent is easier when you already have an image of the baby and yourself as the parent of this unique baby during pregnancy.
- When you accept help, you are more likely to be a safe parent.
Safe care:
 - can be seen in the child's growth, development and interaction
 - improves the child's learning abilities and influences behaviour
 - strengthens the child's self-esteem; the child feels accepted and happy.
- By accepting help, you can protect your baby from later mental health and substance abuse problems.
- All babies have the right to a safe life and being well cared for. Babies depend on an adult's ability to recognise their needs.



WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR YOUR BABY?



SEEK HELP!

Help for families with babies in challenging situations:

**Etelä-Karjalan perhetyön
kehittämisyhdistys ry**

(Lappeenranta)
ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi/
ek-perhetyo

Helsingin ensikoti ry

helsinginensikoti.fi

Kanta-Hämeen perhetyö ry

khperhetyo.fi

**Keski-Suomen ensi- ja
turvakoti ry** (Jyväskylä)

ksetu.fi

Kokkolan ensi- ja turvakoti ry

kokkolanensijaturvakoti.fi

Kuopion Ensikotiyhdistys ry

kuopionensikoti.fi

**Kymenlaakson Ensi- ja turva-
kotiyhdistys ry** (Kotka)

kymenlaaksonensijaturvakoti.fi

Lahden ensi- ja turvakoti ry

lahdenensijaturvakoti.fi

Lapin ensi- ja turvakoti ry

(Rovaniemi)
lapinensijaturvakoti.fi

Oulun ensi- ja turvakoti ry

oulunensijaturvakoti.fi

Perheidenpaikka ry

(Outokumpu)
perheidenpaikka.fi

**Porin ensi- ja turvakoti-
yhdistys ry**

porinensijaturvakoti.fi

Raahen ensi- ja turvakoti ry

raahenensijaturvakoti.fi

Tampereen ensi- ja turvakoti ry

tetuko.fi

Turun ensi- ja turvakoti ry

tuntu.fi

**Vuoksenlaakson vammais- ja
perhetyö ry** (Imatra)

https://ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi/
vuoksenlaaksonperhetyo/

**Ylä-Savon Ensi- ja turvakoti-
yhdistys ry** (Iisalmi)

ylasavonensijaturvakoti.fi

vauvaitkee.fi
aima.fi

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