TOPIC 1. WHAT IS THE MEMORY PROJECT?

Preface:

The aim of this short introduction session is to help parents to understand the difference between the Memory Book (writing down the family history and other important information for children) and the Memory Project (a series of workshops which have been developed to answer questions from parents about HOW they can learn to do the best for their children.)

The ideas mentioned in Topic 1 are all explained in much more detail in the other Topics available on this website. But at this stage parents only need enough information to help them decide if they want to get involved in the workshops; also to decide which topics are likely to be most useful to them.

Most of the ideas and materials referred to in Topic 1 were originally put together with help of a group of Ugandan parents living with HIV/Aids.This means that some of the language, examples and illustrations are geared to the culture of Uganda and the particular problems of families living with HIV/AIDS. But we hope that most of the basic ideas can be helpful for people living in other parts of the world and facing many different problems

We hope you will find ways to adapt the ideas to fit the culture and the needs of your group and we shall be very pleased to hear from you about how you have managed to get the ideas across. We can then pass on your suggestions to other people who use this website.

Please contact us via ***www.memorybooks.org.uk/feed-back-form.***

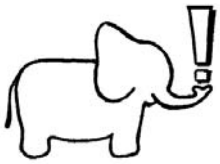
Icons used in this document:



This is where you can get a picture of how the topic fits into the whole structure of the Memory Book training programme and what it aims to achieve with the group members.



When this icon appears at the beginning of each topic it describes how the topic is broken into sessions or group activities and provides a guide to the time to be spent on each session. Elsewhere this icon details what needs to be taught by the end of a particular session or activity



Elephants don't forget and you should not forget this important piece of information or idea.



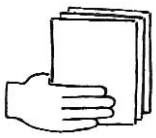
Key facts for the trainers/workshop leaders to get across during the session.



Guidance notes for trainer/leaders on how to run this session.



A story that draws a picture of a situation or explains a point or idea to the group.



Material/sheet to be given out to the group.

Background information for trainers/workshop leaders



Topic 1 is covered in one session but because attending training or workshops may be new to some of the group members, it is suggested that you make time for a good break in the middle and leave time for follow up questions and informal socialising at the end. The overall aim is to encourage people to feel confident enough to join in, not to intimidate so that they drop out.



AIMS OF THIS SESSION are to help members of the group to:

- Relax and find out more. By coming along to Topic 1 they are not committing themselves to join up for a difficult training programme, but they can choose if and what they want to learn.
- Be clear about the difference between Memory Book and Memory Project.
- Know something about the most important components of the Memory Project training programme (open communications in the family, planning for children, making use of the law etc.)
- Decide which Topics will be most useful for them as individuals and as a group.
- Have some understanding of the ground rules for future workshops.
- Go home feeling confident that they don't have to be experts to come to the workshops. Their experience as parents and as members of the community, and their willingness to share what they think and hope for, are the only entrance requirements!

MATERIALS needed for this session:

- Copy of "Information on the Memory Project" (for trainers/leaders to refer to)
- Supply of newsprint and marker pens
- Paper and pens for workshop members who want to make notes.
- Copy of the Memory Book for Africa, downloaded from the website or a copy of the printed version (available from TALC POBox 49 St Albans, Herts Al1 5TX, UK or info@talkuk.org).
- Examples of some of the materials used in the Memory Project Training Programme are included at the end of this topic (but choose any others you like).
  - List of page headings from the Memory Book
  - Outline map of Uganda (or country where workshop is taking place.)
  - Mango Tree
  - Who Am I? Sheets for children and parents.
  - Planning Jigsaw
  - Guidelines for making a will.
  - Copy of sample "Ground rules"
  - Copy of Smiley Faces feedback poster



KEY FACTS for the trainer or workshop leader to get across:

- All the information discussed in this session, and all the way through, is personal and private and must never be repeated outside the room.
- When people are talking about things which are usually kept private try to fit them into small groups where they feel safe and comfortable.
- Be ready to stop people who start going into details which aren't necessary or appropriate.
- Many people feel shy or embarrassed by their lack of education or inexperience of talking in a group. To start with they may think they have nothing useful to say. But with your encouragement they can switch from thinking "I don't know anything" to realising that their personal treasure trove of experience and memories is the foundation for all this work. They have as much to offer as anyone else.
- Making a Memory Book and doing some of the workshop exercises uses reading and writing. But people who find this difficult should not be put off because there will be tactful helpers who can help people when necessary (Trainers make sure you have some helpers!!)
- Although many parents are carrying a heavy burden because of health or other problems, the workshops can be FUN and many parents go away feeling much more confident and light hearted.
- Listen out for opportunities to remind group members that most families find life is much easier once parents and children start talking to each other with out big secrets in the way. (This will come up in Topic 3 on Open Communications in the family.)
- Remind parents how much LESS terrifying it will for children if plans for their future are openly discussed (covered in Topic 7 Planning for Children.)
- Even if parents cant complete all the work, or can't find solutions for all their problems, every little that they do will help their children.



How to run this session:

⇨ Because this is a first experience for many people, make sure the room or space is as comfortable as possible and that workshop leaders are around to give a friendly welcome.

⇨ See advice in the section "Ideas for Workshop Leaders" about introductory games or other ways of helping newcomers to relax and speak a few words.

⇨ Explain the programme for this session.



⇨ Be prepared to give a *presentation* based on the paper "Planning for our Children." This paper has been included at the end of this document. Use any other material from the website that you feel will be useful. Emphasise the main ideas covered in the Memory Project Training Programme.

⇨ Encourage group members to ask questions or to speak up if there is anything they don't understand. However IF there are too many interruptions to deal with "on the run", find one of the group who would be willing to write questions on newsprint, and then deal with them at the end.

⇨ **This might be a good time to take a break?**

⇨ When you come back together check that everyone has understood what are the most important themes covered by the Memory Project training programme:

- Open communications in the family
- Planning for children
- Making use of the law
- Making Memory Books
- Helping children prepare for difficult changes including possible death of parents and/or separation from the family.

⇨ Encourage members of the group to work out which Topics are most important for them and where they want to start.

⇨ Show samples of materials which will be used in future workshops, explain what they are for, how they are used.This requires a bit of research of the Memory Book and the various Topics from which you take the examples.(Copies of some materials which you could use here are given at the end of Topic 1 or find others that you prefer. If resources allow you may want to give out samples for people to take home.)

⇨ Next talk about the practical arrangements for future workshops:

- If decisions have already been made explain when and where workshops will be held and any costs involved.
- Explain that if people say they want to come to the workshops its important they show up because (volunteer) trainers are giving their time and the success of the workshop depends on the group working together and helping each other.
- Raise the subject of GROUND RULES. The purpose of ground rules is to make sure that everyone feels safe in the workshop and that confidential information will be respected. (sample Guidelines that are given at the end of this topic can be discussed. But its better if group members come up with their own version.)

⇨ Finally, after checking for any more questions, bring the workshop to a close. There are plenty of suggestions in Ideas for Workshop Leaders about good ways to end the session and for getting Feedback. (A simple fun way to do this is to use the Smiley Faces format - a copy is at the end of this Topic.)