



BUILDINGBRIDGES



# Preparing victims and offenders for an open dialogue

Workshop at the

Building Bridges Conference –

Supporting Victims of Crime through Restorative Dialogues

Rome, 19.-20. November 2015

20.11.2015

# Building Bridges is designed for victims



Victims,

- whose lives have been detrimentally affected by a crime committed against them,
- who have recovered from the initial experience (sometimes called the 'recoil' phase)
- and who need support to move on to the next stages of recovery from the experience of victimization



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## Different victims may

- be in a vengeful state of mind, and express aggressive or hostile attitudes towards offenders
- want to meet with offenders in order to impress upon them how bad their behavior was
- tend to downplay the effects of the crime upon them, or even regard themselves as deserving whatever bad effects they suffered
- want to be prone to express prejudicial attitudes towards others



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# Who can participate?

- Only those who do not agree to, or are very likely to be unable to comply with, the basic ground rules, even with extensive preparation, should be considered unsuitable.
- A further issue to be considered carefully is a recognizable risk of re-traumatization



# Who can participate?

It needs to be considered (for everyone, but especially for victims of sexual offenses)

- whether they are well prepared and participation does not have a re-victimization effect
- how the participation will affect themselves, but also
- how it might affect the offenders
- whether the facilitators have been trained especially for working with victims with special needs (e.g. victims of sexual crimes)
- Ideally the groups (offenses) match



# Recruiting victims

- Self-referral
- Word of mouth referral
- Selection from a well-known pool of victims
- Victim conferences/events
- Co-operation/referral by victim support organisations
- Co-operation/referral by other NGOs/probation service/principalities
- Website
- Newspaper articles



# Victim support office

an example from Germany



- Victim counselling and ongoing support
- Online counselling or counselling by phone
- Counselling of young men
- Self help groups
  
- Close co-operation with other victim services

# Victim counselling

an example of Germany



- Psychological assistance of victims to prevent psychosocial or posttraumatic stress
- Information/ counselling and help relating to rights of victims
- Counselling of financial and practical questions relating to crime
- First contact – if possible straight after the crime happened, but offering help as well when problems arise/continue years after the crime.

„Add on“ to Building Bridges

Helping victims

Building up trust

Preparation for Building Bridges



# Preparing victims

There are two levels of preparation:

- a single appointment with the victim (selective preparation).
- multiple appointments with the victim (intense preparation).
- The methods of preparation may include interviews, telephone calls, or single/multiple (usually up to 3) appointments.

# Preparing victims



The main aims of preparatory work with victims are:

- to ensure that victims understand the nature of the programme, what it can achieve, what it cannot achieve, and what their role will be;
- to assess the expectations of victims from the programme;
- to answer any questions the victim may have concerning the programme.
- to evaluate if participation is in the best interest of the victim (e.g. danger of re-victimization) and the group

# Important BB rules for victims and offenders



1. Anything said during the programme has to be kept confidential.
2. Participants should behave respectfully towards all other participants at all times.
3. Participation is voluntary



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**Building Bridges is designed  
for victims.**

**Building Bridges is designed  
for offenders.**



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# Recruiting offenders

## Recruiting offenders inside prison

- Close co-operation with prison staff/chaplains
- Referral through prison staff/chaplains
- giving a presentation of the programme for a group of prisoners;
- the use of flyers and posters; an entry in an education/training book (where prisoners can pick courses) if one exists;
- through volunteers/staff working already in the prison
- asking previous participants to spread word



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# Recruiting offenders

## Recruiting offenders outside prison

- associations with responsibility for the care and resettlement of ex-offenders;
- probation services;
- social assistance organisations;
- those running prisoner aftercare programmes





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# Preparing offenders

- Meeting with the facilitator to discuss any questions.
- Establishing a relationship of trust between the facilitators and the offender-participants.
- It is useful to have a preparatory meeting also with all offender-participants, to explore why they decided to take part and their hopes and expectations for the programme
- Preparation to meet the victims and to help them to understand the needs of the victims and what they are going through – also that the prison environment is not known to the victims and can make them insecure.



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# Preparing offenders

- The timetable for the sessions should be explained and discussed, and offender-participants (as well as prison staff) should confirm that, unless there are unforeseen and exceptional circumstances, they can and will attend every session.

# Preparing offenders

## Victim empathy training



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an example from Germany (Seehaus e.V.)

5 meetings with a group of offenders

Facilitators: Staff/volunteers of Seehaus – in combination with prison staff/chaplains

Goals:

- Understanding the terms offenders and victims (also a lot of the offenders have been victims)
- Confront offenders with the fate of some victims
- help offenders to see what impact crimes had on victims
- Help offenders to think about how their victims might suffer from the crimes they have committed
- Help offenders to develop victim empathy
- Help them to take on responsibility
- Discuss the topics of repentance and restoration
- Prepare offenders for a possible participation in Building Bridges or a Victim Offender Mediation

Methods: Discussions, videos (e.g. of victims' stories, games, role play, psychodrama, confrontative questions, drawing pictures, write letters to victims)



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# Follow-up Work with Victims and Offenders

- It is important to provide referrals or other forms of assistance, should they be required by the victim or (ex)-offender, or deemed appropriate by the facilitators.

# Peace circle

An example from Hungary

- aka: peacemaking circle
- definition
- implementation
- what both side felt during the crime
- what do they need to reconcile
- results, agreements

# Cooperation and co-work with social services



- why?
- preparation
- benefits for offenders
- benefits for victims
- after care
- systematic way of thinking





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# Hungarian experiences

- 3 pilots of BB & 1 peace circle
- 24 offenders & 17 victims
- downsides and positive results
- specialities



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# Work after BB

- monthly meeting
- follow up for released inmates
- prison staff meets with the group of prisoners
- victim self help groups
- peace circles where it needs
- conferences, workshops, media



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# Building Bridges in Spain

“Construyendo Puentes”



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# First steps

- Challenge
- Present a new programme to prisons
- Acception
- Possible troubles
- Adaptation of STP (Sycamore Tree Project)
- Training Facilitators



# Searching for participants

## Offenders

- Prison staff (social workers and educators)

## Victims

- Victim associations
- Community centers
- Surveillance court
- Council
- Other associations (drugs, homophobia)
- Professional referral bodies
- Personal contact

# Selection criteria

## Offenders

- Pre-selection by (type of crime)
- Interview (willfulness, involvement, no judgment)

## Victims

- Interview (willfulness, no risk of re-traumatization)



# Participants

## Pilot 1

- Group 5 – 5
- Crimes: violent robbery, traffic offenses, involuntary manslaughter, fraud, domestic violence, hate and discrimination crime

## Pilot 2

- Group 3 – 4
- Crimes: violent robbery, traffic offenses, gender violence, assault, kidnapping



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# Sessions

- Session 1: Introduction
- Session 2: Crime and Restorative Justice
- Session 3: Responsibility
- Session 4: Regret and Forgiveness
- Session 5: Restoration
- Session 6: Someone else's shoes (empathy)
- Session 7: Closure and Farewell



# Methods and Resources **BUILDINGBRIDGES**

- Drawing
- Writing
- Story telling
- Group dynamics
- Audiovisual



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# Results

Evaluation comparing pre and post drawings

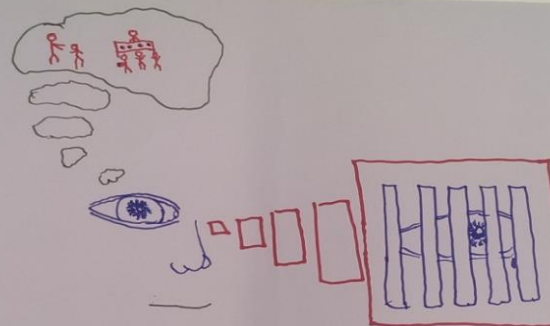
# offender

First Session

Last Session



DANIEL



Para mi ha representado que las personas sufren cuando les hacemos daño y al poder ayudarlos te hace sentirte mejor.

# victim

First Session

Last Session



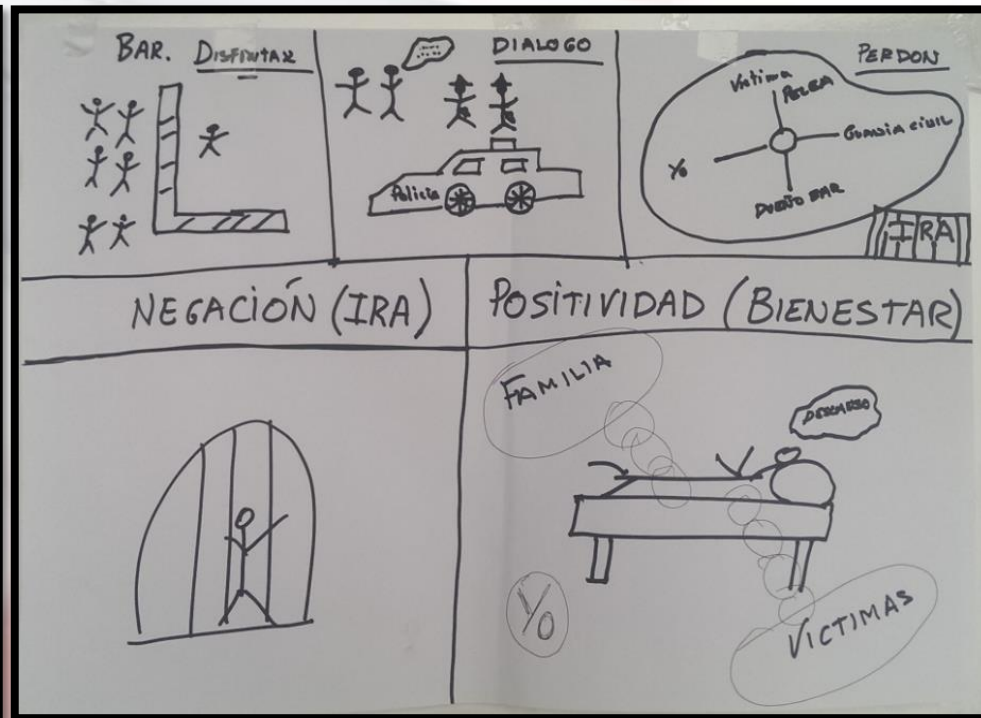
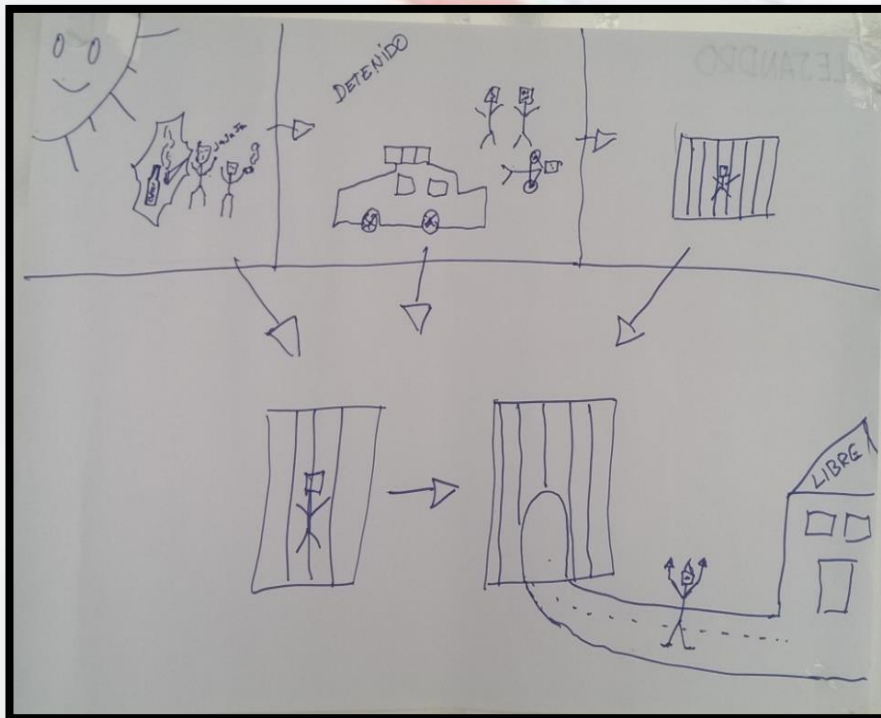
MÁS TRANQUILIDAD,  
MÁS SERENA.



# offender

First Session

Last Session



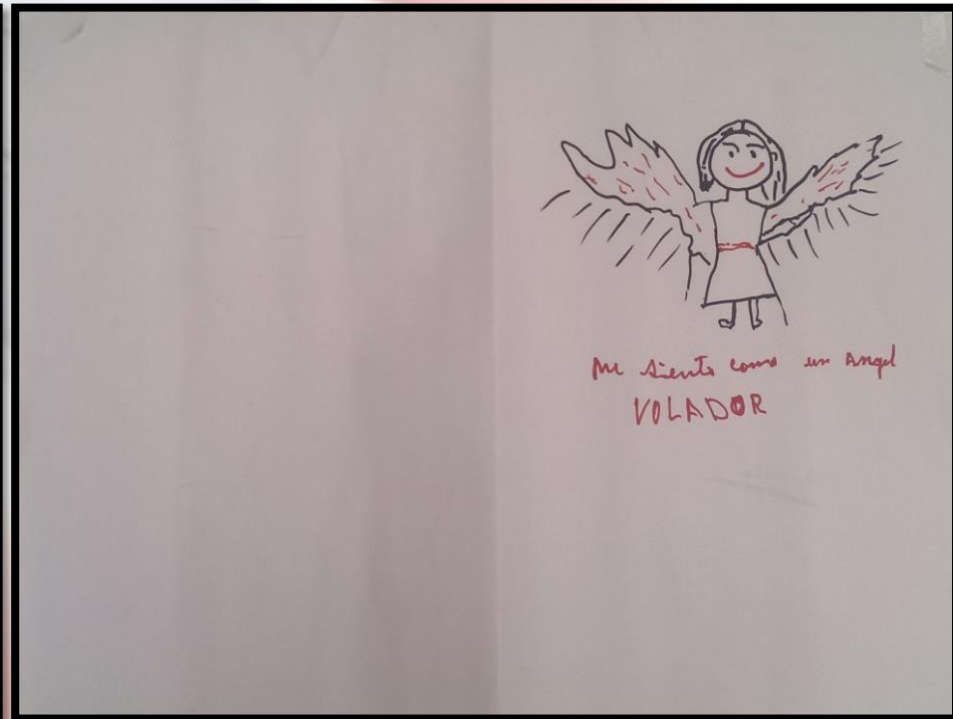
# victim



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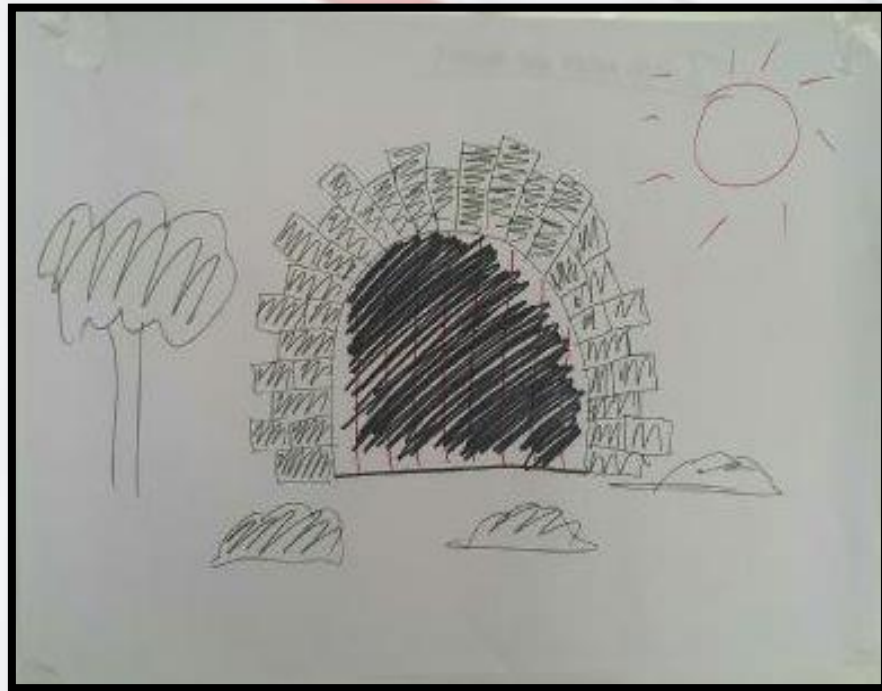
First Session

Last Session

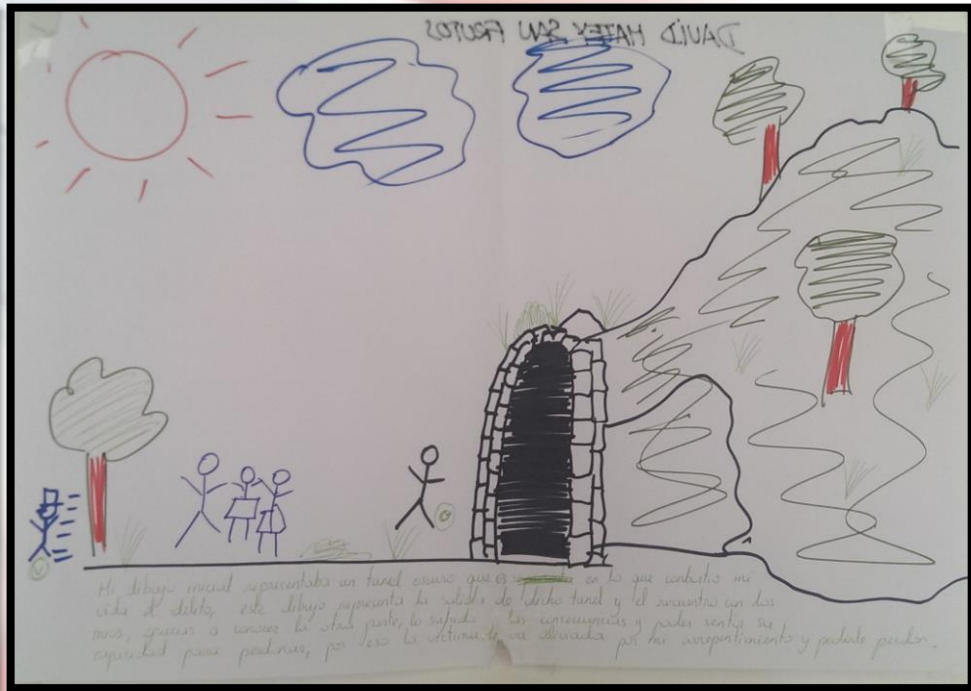


# offender

First Session



Last Session



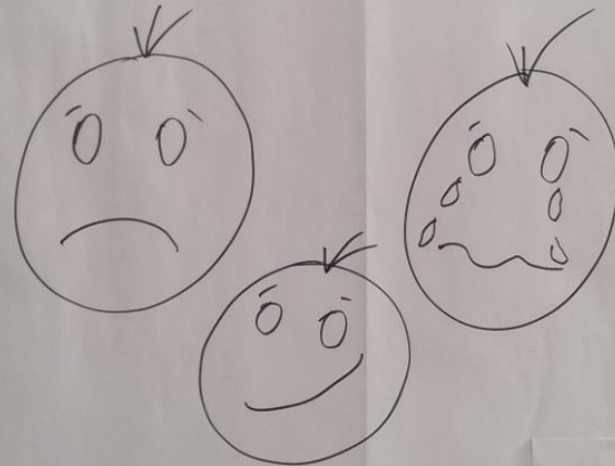
# offender

## First Session

- ① El Sentimiento de culpabilidad.
- ② Pérdidas o distanciamientos entre Seres queridos.
- ③ El porqué llegar a un límite extremo
- ④ Porque llegan a hacer daño a los más humildes.

*[Handwritten signature]*

## Last Session



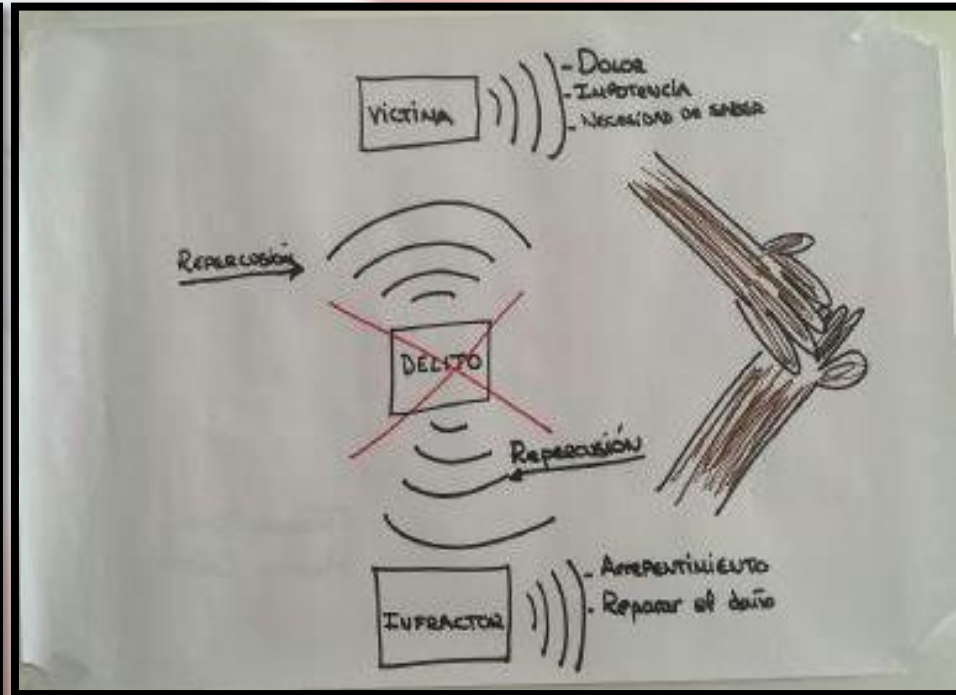
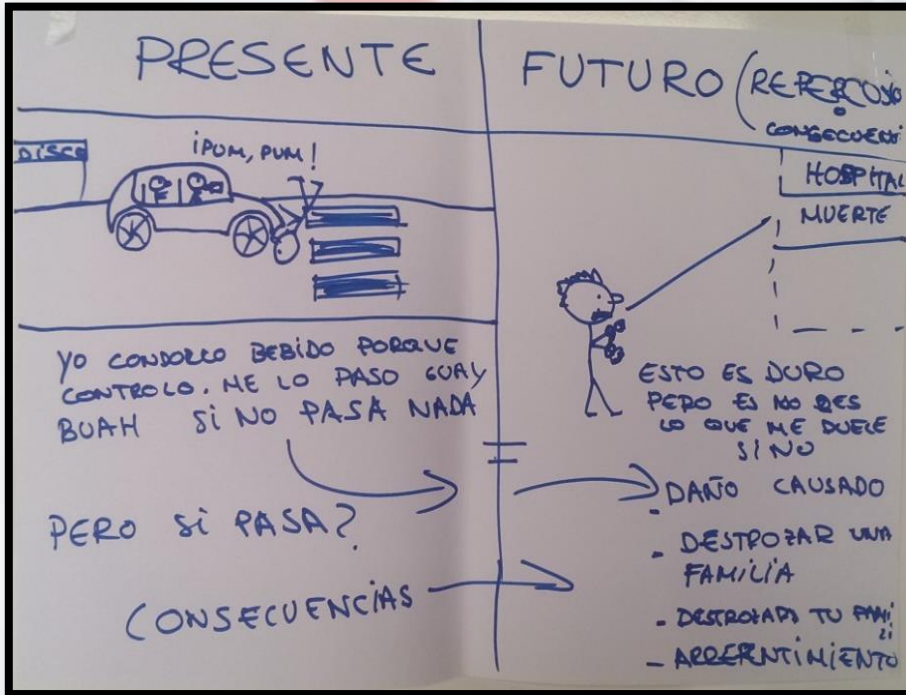




# offender

## First Session

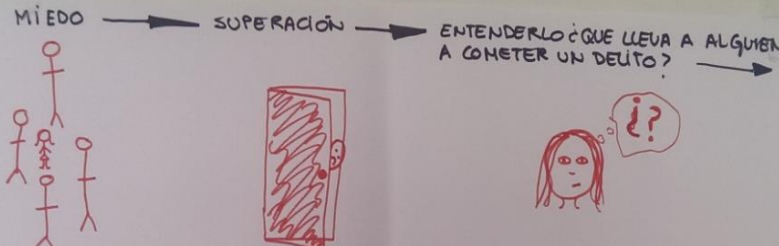
## Last Session




# victim

## First Session

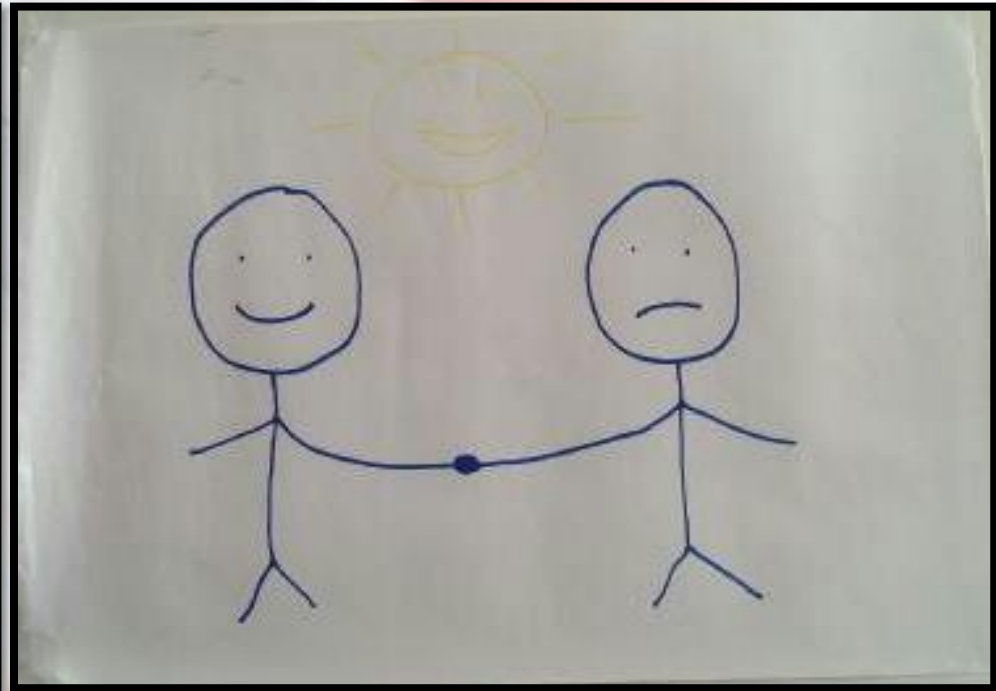
MIEDO → SUPERACIÓN → ENTENDERLO ¿QUE LLEVA A ALGUIEN A COMETER UN DELITO?



→ PUEDO ENTENDER QUE HAY SITUACIONES EN LA VIDA QUE TE LLEVAN A COMETER ERRORES, PERO TAMPOCO LO JUSTIFICO. ESTO ES UNO DE LOS HECHOS QUE ME HA LLEVADO A SER QUIEN SOY.



## Last Session



# After Building Bridges



- After care
- Meetings with offenders
- Victims invite other victims to participate





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# Preparing offenders

## Victim empathy training



an example from Germany (Seehaus e.V.)

### 1. Meeting

Aim:

- Introduction to the topic
- Challenge to think about the topic „Offender“

Methods:

- An provocative introduction and a discussion afterwards
- Film

# Victim empathy training

an example from Germany



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## 2. Meeting

Aim:

- to understand and identify „crossing frontiers“

Methods:

- Practical Games
- Describing the crime



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# Victim empathy training

an example from Germany

## 3. Meeting

Aim:

- To realise, that the estimation can't happen from the outside but just from the victim itself

Methods:

- To classify the experiences from the crime and discuss it



# Victim empathy training

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an example from Germany

## 4. Meeting

Aim:

- To identify the attitude about repentance
- To deal with the own crime and the consequences for the victims

Methods:

- To write a letter to the victim
- Draw a picture
- Confrontative questions
- Psychodrama



# Victim empathy training

an example from Germany

## 5. Meeting

Aim:

- To prepare a potential meeting with the victim

Methods:

- Film
- Discussion with the aid of quotes





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# Building Bridges workflow



- one facilitator, supported by a small number of co-facilitators
- 6 Victims and 6 offenders
- 5 to 8 sessions
- Always the same ambience
- Always the same seating arrangements

# Building Bridges workflow



- Beginning
  - Review on the last meeting
  - Introduction and Discussion
  - 2 Lifestories (from the 2nd session)
  - Feedback
  - Finalritual
- > Build rituals, provide safety, Cooperation with counsellor and therapists

# Building Bridges sessions



RJ –victims and offenders

- To explore the experiences and needs of victims and perpetrators of crime, and to introduce restorative justice as a way of viewing and responding to crime and all those involved.

# Building Bridges sessions



What is crime?

- To explore different ways of understanding crime, including what it means to understand crime through the lens of restorative justice.



# Building Bridges sessions

- Responsibility

To explore what it means to take responsibility for committing an offence, and the challenges involved

# Building Bridges sessions



- Confession

To explore the meaning, power and importance of confession and repentance.



# Building Bridges sessions



## Forgiveness

- To explore the meaning, power, and importance of forgiveness

# Building Bridges sessions



## Reconciliation

- To understand the impact of reconciliation and explore ways of restoration of crime for all parties.

# Building Bridges sessions



## Next steps

- To move toward healing and restoration and to explore the steps that are needed in the lives of the participants.

# Building Bridges sessions



## Celebration

- To reflect upon and to celebrate the new awareness that group members have about crime and healing.