

Experiences by using IMS in a Norwegian Family Counselling Office

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History

- ▶ 2002 A project to understand childrens voices when parents were in separation conflicts
- ▶ 2006 A world conference in family therapey in Reykjavik Island where Arnold Bentovim presented
- ▶ 2008 - 2009: Training course and sertification as trainers in Norway. Translation to Norwegian.
- ▶ 2009 - 2019: 13 IMS courses for sertification as users around the country: family counselling offices, child protection, psychiatry, violence- and sexual abuse counselling, crisis center, child care center.

The later years: more authority orders about increased quantitative production have diminshed our time for marketing, courses and prevented follow up studies about the effect.

IMS has been used at our own office for several hundreds of conversations.

Context

- ▶ Family counselling offices, about 50 in Norway, are either connected to the state or are foundations connected to the church.
- ▶ Financing is through the state, church foundations have a cooperation agreement.
- ▶ A law regulates the service defined as a special social service.
- ▶ The tasks are helping with a diversity of family problems:
- ▶ **Couple problems:** communication, emotion difficulties, cooperation - sometimes linked to psychiatric problems, addiction, violence, generation opposites.

▶ Breakups and separations:

- ▶ Mediation as a law regulated necessity to get separation and economical support as a single parent and better child allowance.
- ▶ All children over 7, are invited to a conversation about their preferences which parent they want to stay with,
- ▶ how much they want to visit the other -
- ▶ about their reactions to the break up fact
- ▶ implications of the breakup.

In these conversations **IMS has been very useable** to convey their connection to each of the parents.

emotional reactions to the splitup

opinion about preferred living site

opinion about visit arrangement

what kind of help and support they may need

(how we use the program, see the file **Use of IMS in breakups and separation conflicts**)

IMS advantages

- ▶ Got a picture of BOTH resources and problems in their relationship with BOTH parents. Useful when delivered back to the parents mediation to avoid polarisation and conflict escalation.
- ▶ By getting information about concrete situations with the parents, we got trustworthy information about the relation to the parents.
- ▶ By focusing first how they experienced their relation to both the parents before we asked about where they wanted to live, we escaped attitudes that they could be told to convey by f. eks one of the parents on the forehand.

Parent conflicts

- ▶ About practising of the access agreement, cooperation, communication, how they take care of the children (eventually neglect), the children wish for another arrangement, children symptoms, childrens reluctance to visit, parents abuse of drugs or alcohol, effect of psychiatric sickness, aggression, violence, sexual abuse, network interfering, new fiances, stepsiblings

Advantages In my shoes

- ▶ We got hold of and understood the childrens situation by the IMS interview.
- ▶ We could catch the childs position between the parents
- ▶ We saw how the conflict affected the children

- ▶ We got valuable information about the parents behaving
- ▶ We could together with children talk about an intervention that suited them
- ▶ Old enough and if they wished, the children took part, maybe behind the one-way mirror, when we talked with the parents about the children's difficulties in the conflict.
- ▶ The children's voices brought back to parents through the IMS interview, their suggestions or their participation helped focusing their situation and calmed down the parent conflict.

Family problems/children problems/symptoms

- ▶ **IMS Advantages**
- ▶ The childrens emotional and relational situation in the family has been cleared out - and not oppressed by other voices
- ▶ The childrens problems/symptoms have been evident and their connection to the relational situation
- ▶ We have located attachment problems through the interview
- ▶ What to work with has become clear to us often most thanks to the child interview and what the child showed us.