

THE CHILD AND YOUTH ATTACHMENT RELATIONS MAP

A GUIDE TO MAP IMPORTANT RELATIONS DURING FAMILY REUNION

Introduction and Purpose

The single most important factor in re-integration is to preserve and create secure emotional bonds between the child or youth, its SOS mothers and its relatives, during the shift from Village to family.

For a successful family re-union, we must first know who the most important caregivers and peers to the child or young person are. The child will have to gradually let go of important relations: its caregivers, teachers, and friends in the Village. It will also be excited and probably nervous about being accepted when it returns to its new community, school, and family of origin. And after reunion, there may be important relations issues to resolve.

The Attachment Relations Map is a simple tool for all participants to understand, preserve and nurture all the child or young persons social and emotional relations in the process.

What are the important relations for the child or young person?

Which persons is the child attached to? With whom does the child look for emotional safety, friendship, comfort and protection? And towards whom can it have doubts or insecurity? Knowing this will help you find the best ways of preparing the transition from Village to family. In this way, you can monitor a successful transition from preserving the emotional bonds in the Village, to forming new secure bonds in the family and culture of origin.

How to use the Relations Map

Please look at the map at page 3. The child or youth preparing to re-unite is in the middle. The important relations in the Village today are at the top, and the future relations with relatives and others are at the bottom. To the right, you see three smileys: happy, neutral and sad. Please print handout copies of the Map, or show it on a projector.

- You can use the Map *to discuss and agree among program managers and SOS Mothers.*

Who do they think the child is most attached to, and how should this view be considered and shared with the child?

- You can use it *in dialogues with parents or relatives*. You can inform them about your view from the point of Village staff, and you can interview them about how they see the child's attachments to its parents, relatives, and family friends. What do they think?
- You can use it *in dialogues with the child or youth to explore its view on important relations*. This will help you understand and respect the child's views and needs.

Using the Map before, during, and after family reunion

You can use the map all the way from preparation to successful reintegration. For preparing staff, relatives and the child before moving out, and while the child is getting used to living with its family. Perhaps there are disagreements with or among relatives that must be resolved? And you can use it again some time after the reunion: you can repeat your assessment with all parties as often as needed. Here is an example:

An example: Managers and SOS Mothers map a teenager's relations

Please discuss each relation in the Map, using your knowledge of the child or youth in question, and mark a smiley for each relation.

For example:

"Our teenager, Ann, is very attached to her SOS Mother, who cared for her since she was two years old. She really is her emotional parent. We'll give this important bond a happy smiley".

"She is also very attached to her two best friends in the Village, Bernard and Sophie – a happy smiley. Bernard seems to be almost her boyfriend, so she will be reluctant to leave him".

"She never really had good friends in our local school – a neutral smiley. But she's very happy about her language teacher – a happy smiley for her".

"We know that Ann and her older brother Albert are very close – a happy smiley".

After mapping each relation, please sum up and agree on your views: What are the child's important relations in our Village? How can we use this knowledge in dialogues with the child and its relatives?

Exploring the child or young person's view of important relations

Next, a staff member or the SOS mother has a conversation with the child in question. You can introduce the map like this or find your own way of introducing it.

For younger children, use roleplay or storytelling, or give statements so the child can point at a figure. For example: *"Let's play a game! – we'll give all the people you know a happy or a neutral or a sad smiley".* Then ask: *"If you are sad or afraid, who would you go to for comfort and help?" "Who is your best friend in the Village?" "My mother (or my) father makes me feel happy/OK/ insecure or afraid", "I love to play with my sister (or) brother", etc.*

"Dear Ann. It is important for us to know how you feel about your caregivers and friends in the Village, and how you feel about your relatives and people in the community. So, let's go through this map and talk about what you think and feel about each person in your network. Some are important to you, some are not. Perhaps you are in doubt about some of them. Please feel free to tell me what you think! When we have talked about a person: please mark a happy smiley if that person is very important to you. A neutral smiley if "this is just someone I know". Or a sad smiley if you think "I'm not sure if this person likes me or accepts me".

Managers and SOS Mothers mapping with relatives and other new relations

When using the map with relatives or parents who receive the child:

Please show a copy of the map, explain that you want to understand their views and their help to describe the child's family relations. Ask them to choose a smiley for each relation. Observe if you sense any reservations or doubts during the interview and discuss them openly. For example, a mother says: *"Ann is a teenager now. I don't have much experience with teenagers, and I'm afraid she'll expect the same services she has now in the Village. We are too poor to offer her that – she will have to sleep with her younger brother".* When you have listened to the family, present how SOS staff sees the child. Include the child's own view from the interview. Discuss the family's and your own views.

After the meeting with the relatives, you can compare your professional views with that of the family's view, the child's view, and plan the best way of helping the child form secure relations.

Once the child or young person has been reunited with the family, you can use the Map again to evaluate the views of all parties, solve any problems, and ensure a successful reunion.

ASSESSMENT OF CHILD AND YOUTH -IMPORTANT RELATIONS

SOS Mother



SOS Peers



SOS Teachers



Siblings



Biological parents



Other relations



New Friends



CLOSE RELATION



NEUTRAL RELATION



INSECURE RELATION



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES

**FAIRSTART
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HELP CHILDREN SAVE THE WORLD