

# Support groups for young carers of veterans

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The game: blow the feather

The support groups

Why?

Who?

How?



## Why?

- Create an opportunity for conversations on having an parent with mental health problems
- Break taboos (not feeling alone)
- Develop social and personal skills
- Strengthen own sense of needs and feelings
- Remove feelings of guilt and responsibility

# Who?

- Children and teenagers of veterans with mental health problems
- Age: 8-12 and 12-16 years





## How?

- 6-8 children in each group, closed groups
- Timeframe: 17.00-19.00 (including dinner)
- Visitation, 10 group sessions, follow up
- Mix of games and exercises tailored for the age group
- Parent group supported by volunteers

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# Evaluation design

- Process evaluation
- Impact evaluation
- Methods:
  - Interviews
  - Participant observation
  - Questionnaires





## Qualitative datacollection



Data collection baseds on 8 groups

### Interviews

- Group leaders
- Volunteers

### Focus group Interviews:

- Children and teenagers
- Parents

Participant observation

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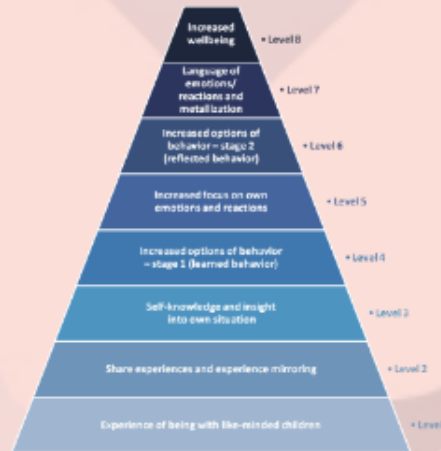
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# Qualitative findings

## The pyramid of success

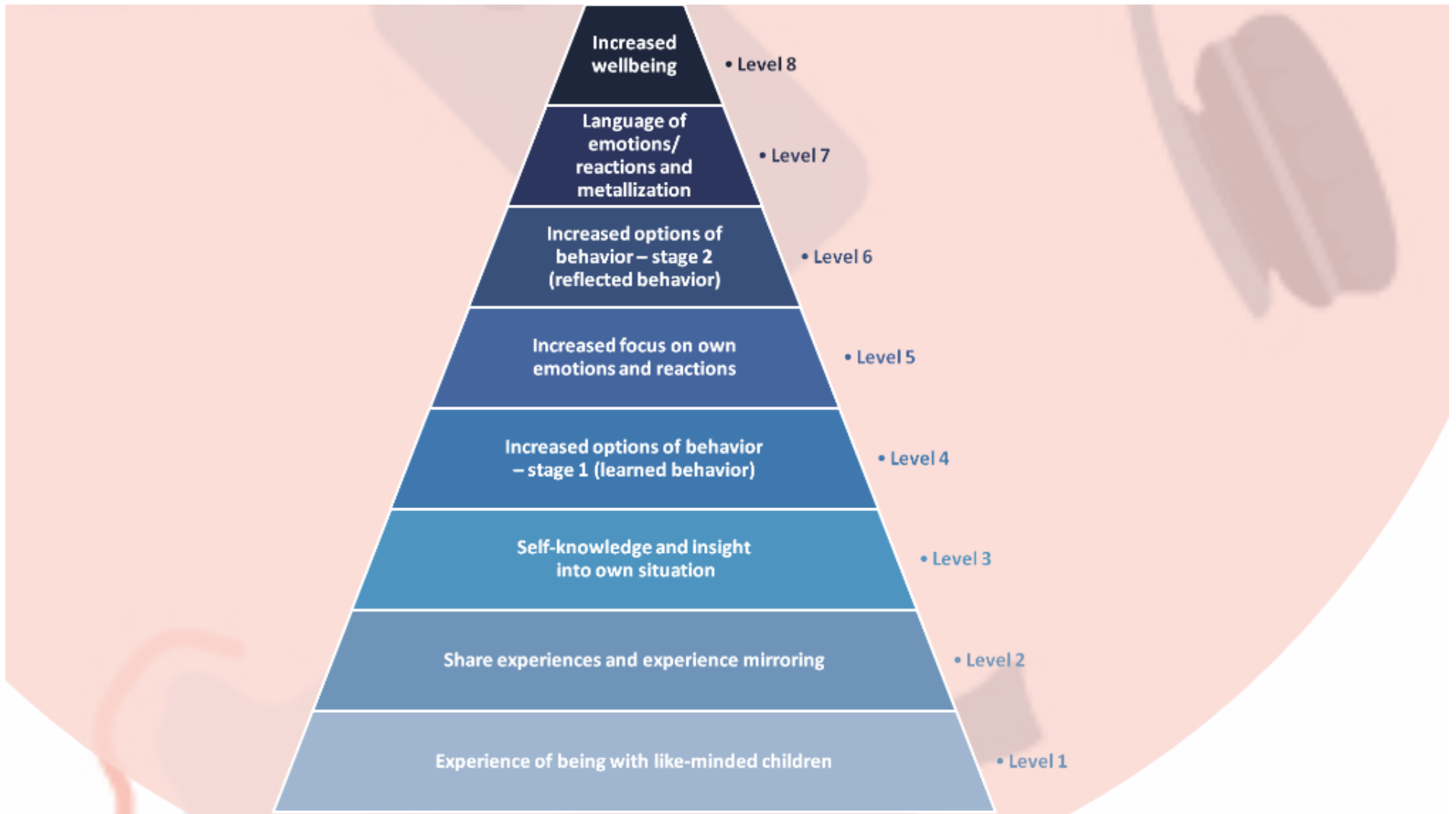


Level 2

Level 4

Level 7

Level 8

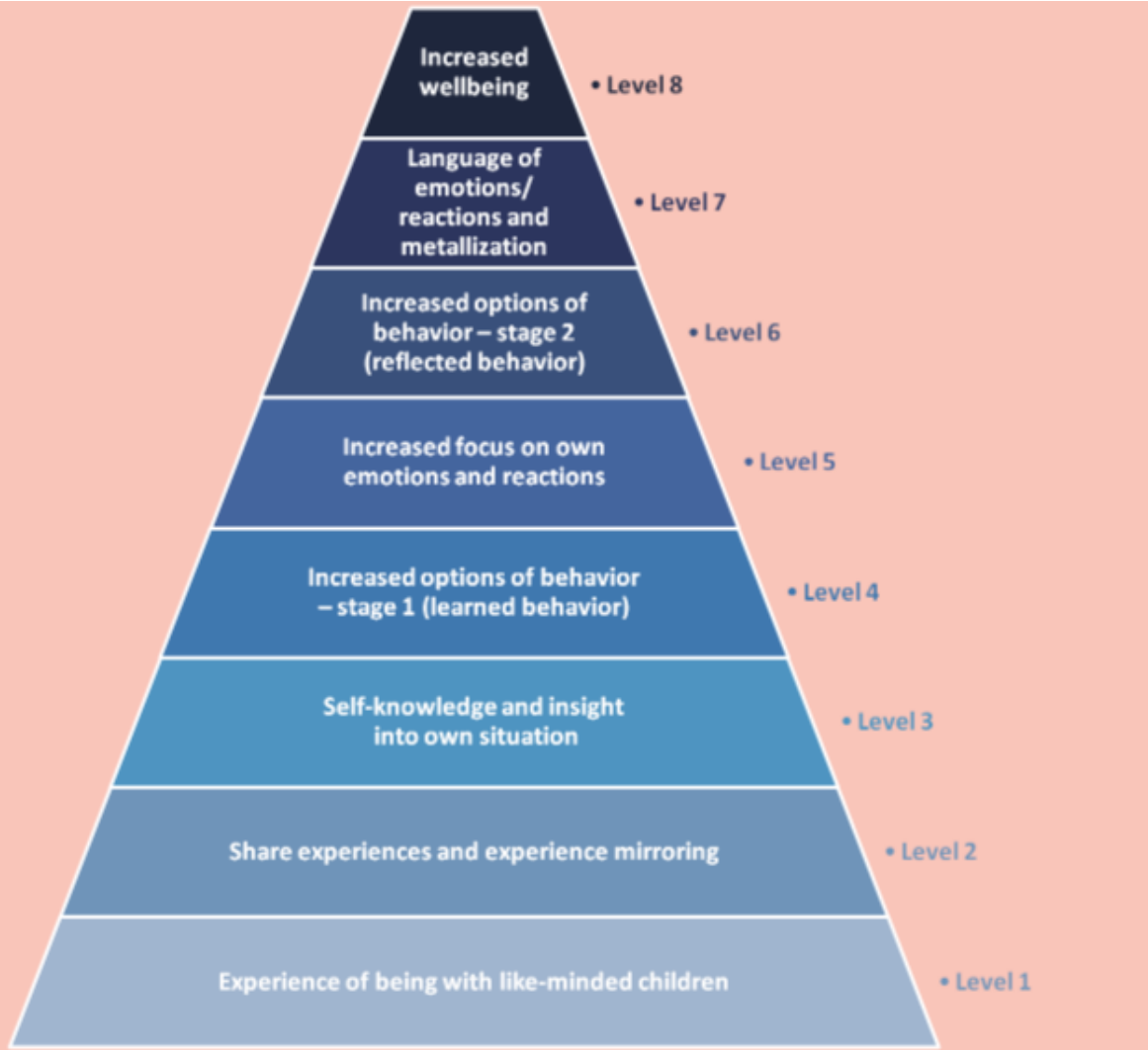


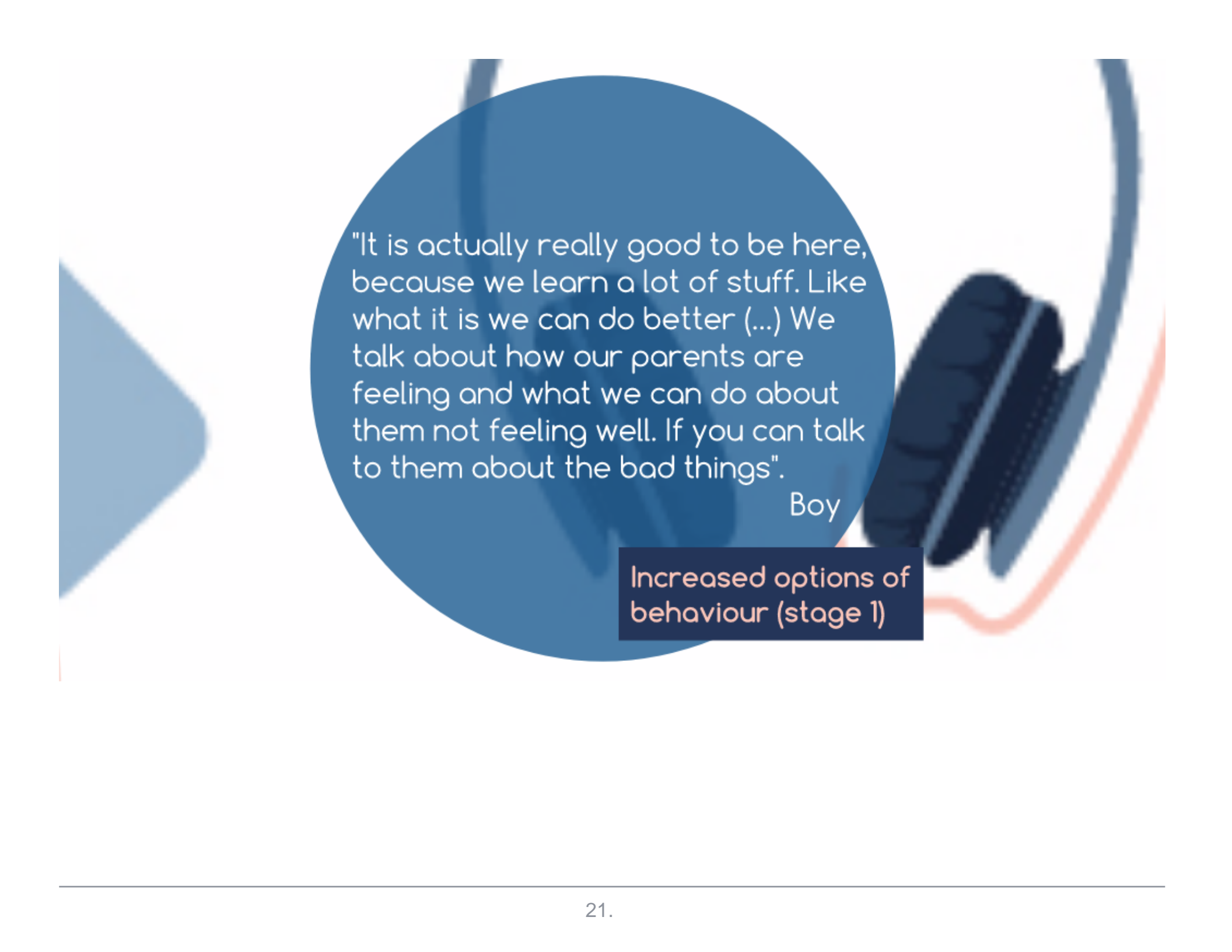
## Share experiences and experience mirroring

"You were almost able to see how they straightened oneself, when they sat around the table and dared to tell the story, that was so heartrending. That they were glancing at the others, having this consideration: Have I said too much? Is it just my imagination? Will they laugh? Am I crazy? And then the other 3 children say: It is the same way at my place!"

Group leader

experience  
experience mirroring





"It is actually really good to be here, because we learn a lot of stuff. Like what it is we can do better (...) We talk about how our parents are feeling and what we can do about them not feeling well. If you can talk to them about the bad things".

Boy

Increased options of  
behaviour (stage 1)

# Language of emotions/ reactions and mentalization

Boy: “Well, this thing about telling people, that your daddy has PTSD. It was really really difficult for me in the beginning.”

Interviewer: “Before you joined this group?”

Boy: “Yes. And then I spoke to my teacher about it, and she could see that something was wrong. And then I told her, that she should tell it to the rest of my class. So that they would know why, if I was sad, and that this could be the reason. (...) It was just like, maybe I should just say what it was - how the feelings were inside.”



## Increased wellbeing

“My son, he used to have stomach ache, before we started this. Sometimes, where he had to stay at home and so on. After we started in this group, there hasn't been a thing. Not at all. Not a single time. So this has definitely brought him something.”

Parent



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# Perspectives on impact

Parents' attitudes and perceptions of support groups

Group dynamic

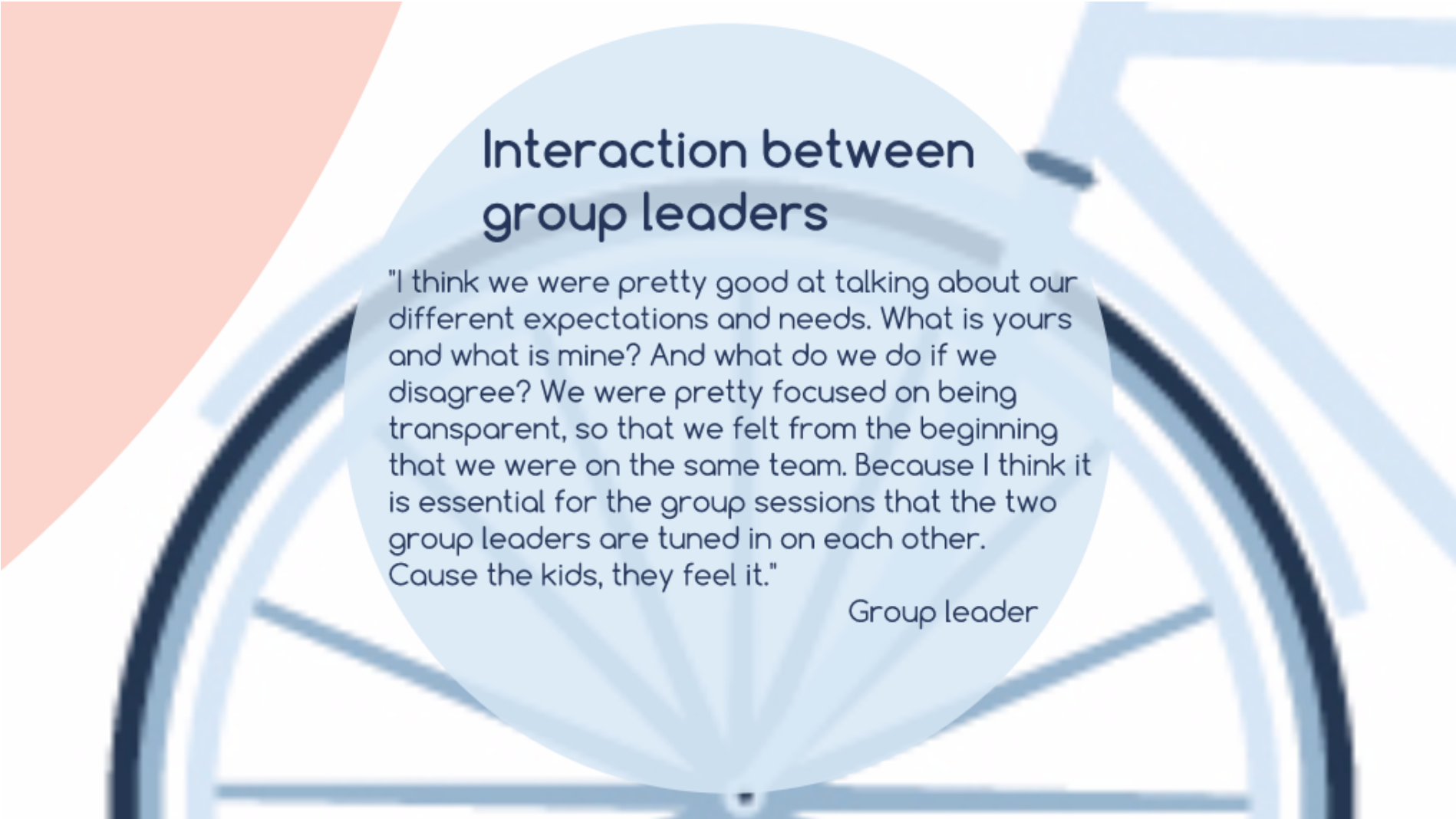
Interaction between group leaders



## Parents' attitudes and perceptions of support groups

# Group dynamic

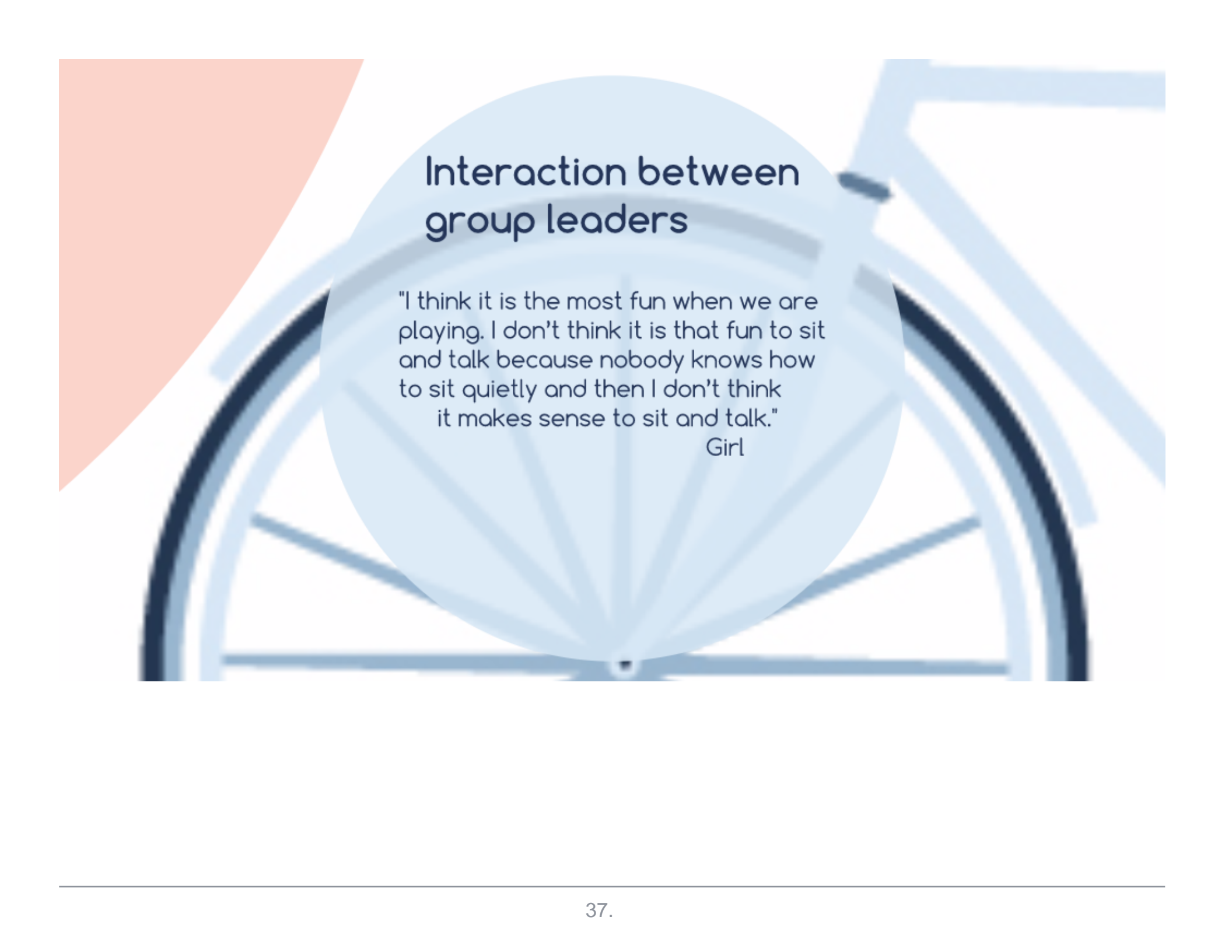




## Interaction between group leaders

"I think we were pretty good at talking about our different expectations and needs. What is yours and what is mine? And what do we do if we disagree? We were pretty focused on being transparent, so that we felt from the beginning that we were on the same team. Because I think it is essential for the group sessions that the two group leaders are tuned in on each other. Cause the kids, they feel it."

Group leader



## Interaction between group leaders

"I think it is the most fun when we are playing. I don't think it is that fun to sit and talk because nobody knows how to sit quietly and then I don't think it makes sense to sit and talk."

Girl

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