

Resilience Bites

TO WELCOME CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FLEEING FROM WAR



UNIVERSITÀ
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RESILIENCE BITES

TO WELCOME CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FLEEING FROM WAR

*PRACTICAL RECCOMENDATIONS
TO PROVIDE ACCOMODATION
AND SUPPORT IN SCOLASTIC,
EDUCATIONAL AND FAMILIAR CONTEXTS*

BUILD HELPING RELATIONS: 6 STRATEGIES

“Resilience is the capacity of dealing with difficulties in life and coming out victorious.”

Schools, hosting families and other contexts of receptions assume the key role of *“Tutors of Resilience”* for children and families fleeing from war.

In which way?

Being in contact with refugee children and families is a sensitive process that requires care and attention. In particular, minors who have been exposed to experiences of war and forced migration feel the need to find security in relationships and in a solid and stable environment, where they can take refuge in order to be able to rebuild themselves and rebuild their lives.

Below, we propose six strategies that allow for the construction of a conscious helping relationship, capable of offering support and facilitating the activation of resilience processes.



1 Initial contact and first approach: *You are welcome!*

- Be ready to listen, devoting the necessary time.
- Identify and meet their urgent needs and concerns.
- Answer their questions and/or requests for explanations.
- Create an environment of trust and confidentiality.



2 Reassurance and protection: *You are safe here!*

- Create a climate of trust that allows them to feel welcomed and understood in their fears and thoughts.
- Offer an authentic helping relationship, which allows for the construction of a relationship of mutual trust.
- Be a stable and encouraging figure of reference.
- Act respectfully in a non intrusive way, maintaining a calm and reassuring attitude.



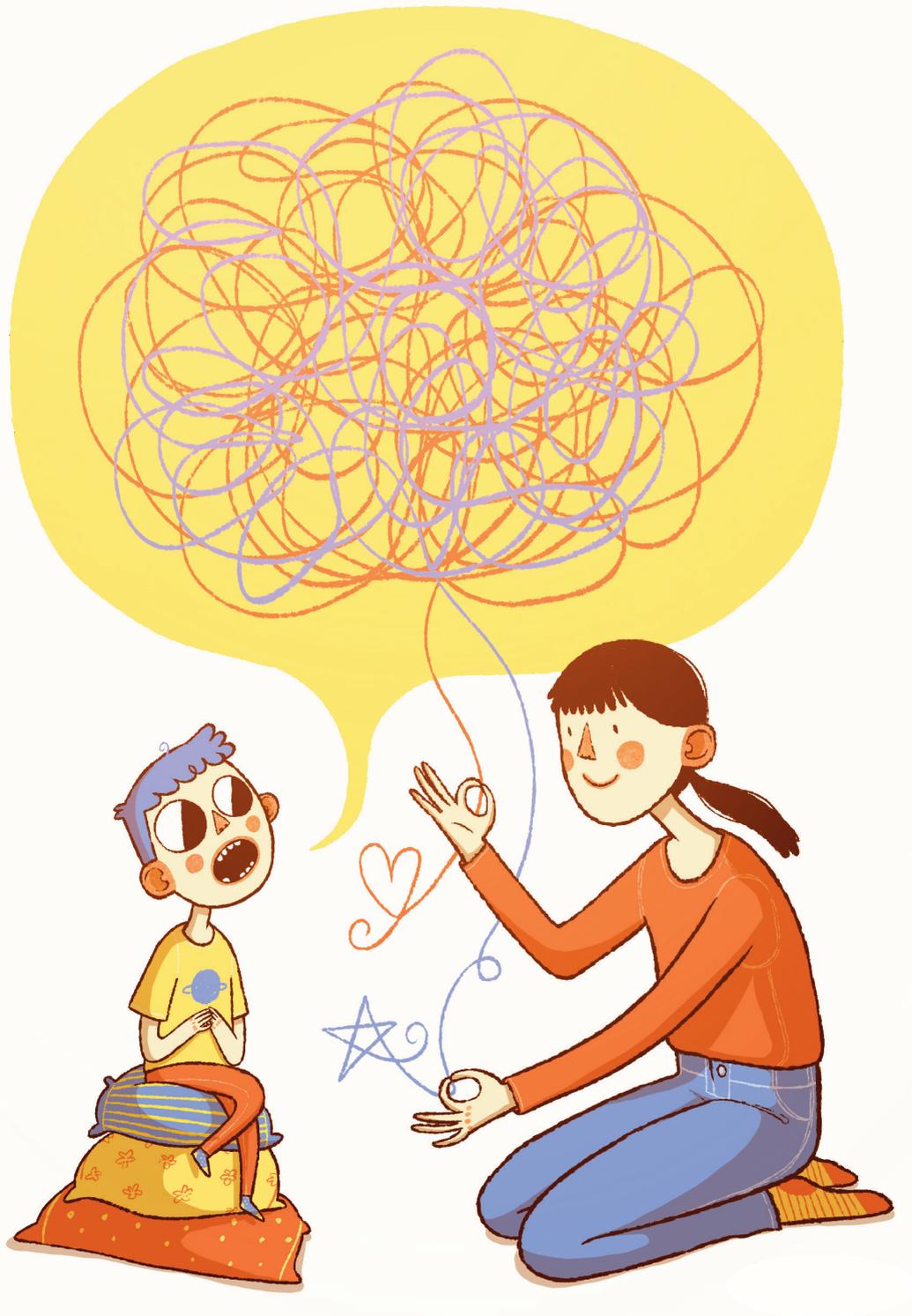
3 Together we can... *Have fun!*

- Help them engaging in social and playful activities with you and others.
- Offer them the opportunity to engage in leisure activities and thus increase talents, imagination and creativity.
- Use child-friendly expressive languages (games, music, drawing) to encourage communication, exchange and reciprocity.
- Make them feel important by valuing their actions and their contribution.



4 Together we can... *Face the challenges!*

- Be a reliable supporting figure that offers practical help to meet their needs.
- They might lose hope: help them understand that challenges can be faced together.
- Boost their self-esteem by empowering them in dealing with situations.
- Help them understand that dealing with difficulties allows you to discover new resources and talents



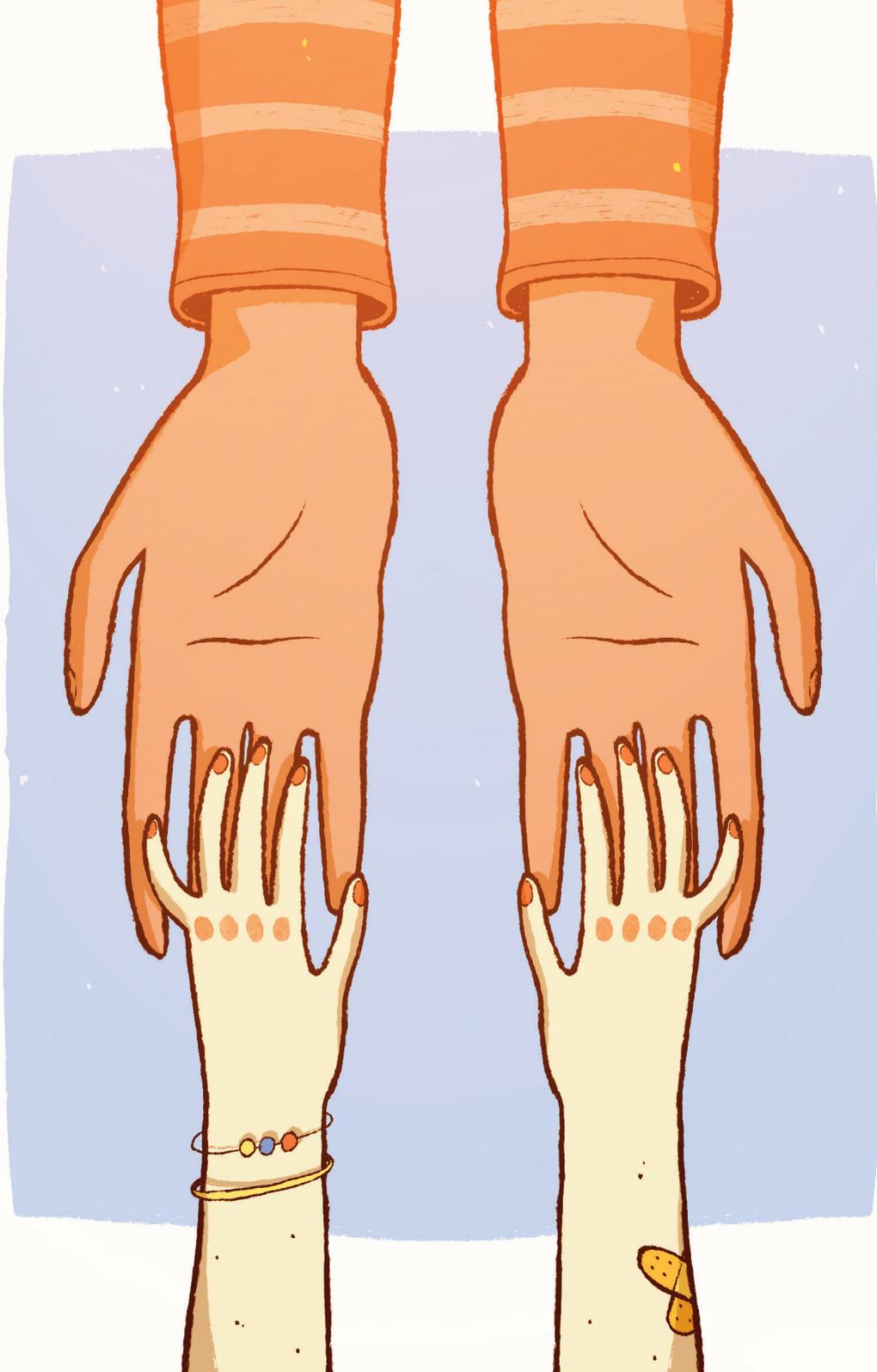
5 Together we can... *Enjoy emotions!*

- Do not rush them: give them adequate space and time.
- Help and guide them in shaping and sharing their thoughts, emotions, fears and what they feel.
- In the event of impulsive responses, help them make sense of their emotional reactions, by giving these emotions a name.



6 Together we can... *Rebuild ourselves and rebuild our lives!*

- Promote the reconstruction of a feeling of normality by offering them a daily routine, helping them to orient themselves in the environment and to better organize their time.
- Help them strengthen ties with primary caregivers and make new contacts.
- In times of trouble, help them “change their perspective” to look to the future rather than getting stuck in past and present difficulties.
- Support them in accepting changes, stressing that they can bring surprises and opportunities



Remember that...

***You are not alone,
you are not the only one!***

***We are not alone,
we are not the only ones!***

- Build ties with other children and families of the same nationality / community.
- Communicate the importance of emotional support (listening, hugs, understanding) to the social network around them.
- Build a network of people / entities around you who are facing the same challenges to consult in case of doubts or needs.
- If difficulties and problematic behaviors persist, look for present and available services in the area that can offer support.

The Resilience Research Unit (RiRes) of the Psychology Department of the Università Cattolica di Milano has been operating for several years in Third Mission projects in emergency and vulnerable contexts, through action-research and capacity building.

The goal of RiRes is to detect, promote and disseminate resilience-oriented best practices that guide the care of minors, families and communities exposed to traumatic events of various kinds.

This initiative is the result of a collaboration between the **Resilience Research Unit - RiRes** and **IED Istituto Europeo di Design** in response to the Ukraine emergency.

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 www.resiliencerires.com

 RiRes – Unità di Ricerca sulla Resilienza

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This booklet is dedicated to Cristina Castelli
- full professor in Developmental Psychology in the
***Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* in Milan -**
who has taught us by her example about the importance of
knowledge transfer from Universities to other portions of
society, in order to contribute to community development
and social wellbeing.



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