



Building Trust Together: Creative Pathways for Families in Therapy

Bouwen in Vertrouwen: Ontwikkeling van een gezinsgerichte vaktherapeutische module voor gezinnen met meervoudige en complexe problemen (GMCP)

Hanneke Goldsteen & Harm Damen

Families living with multiple and complex problems (FMCP) face persistent challenges such as trauma, poverty, and mental health difficulties. These circumstances often lead to emotional overload, high parenting stress, and disrupted parent–child relationships. Within the *Building Trust Together* project by the Research Group Arts and Psychomotor Therapies in Healthcare (HAN University of Applied Sciences, 2025–2027), a new family-oriented arts therapies module is being co-developed to strengthen parental empowerment (particularly intrapersonal aspects such as emotional regulation and self-efficacy) and to foster connection in families under pressure. The module integrates creative, trauma-informed interventions within family-centered programs such as *Intensive Family Treatment* (IFT), *Multi-Systemic Therapy* (MST), and *Functional Family Therapy* (FFT).

This interactive workshop invites participants on a journey of encounter and transformation, echoing the ECARTE 2026 conference theme inspired by Cavafy's *Ithaca*. Through storytelling, lived experience, and two experiential arts therapy sessions, participants will explore how creative processes can help parents regulate emotions, rebuild trust, and reconnect with their children. These sessions draw directly from interventions developed within *Building Trust Together*, offering practical tools and embodied insights into how arts therapies can complement systemic family approaches. These interventions were developed through Intervention Mapping (IM) and Key Enabling Methodologies (KEMs) in co-creation with healthcare professionals, expert-by-experience parents from GMCP, researchers, lecturers, and students.



The workshop concludes with a shared reflection in which participants exchange experiences and discuss how the methods can be adapted to their own clinical practice. This workshop invites exploration, reflection, and transformation through a shared experience of reimagining trust, connection, and creativity in family care.

Biography

Hanneke Goldsteen, M.A., is an expressive arts therapist in family psychiatry and developer of *Building in Contact*, an intervention supporting family reunification for children in out-of-home care. She works with families facing intergenerational trauma, helping parents rebuild safe emotional and physical connections. Collaborating with professionals and foster parents, she promotes sustainable, systemic change. Grounded in experiential learning, attachment, and trust restoration, her work bridges clinical and home contexts and honors family resilience. Hanneke received the *Dutch Arts Therapies Award* in 2025.

Harm Damen, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Research Group Arts and Psychomotor Therapies in Healthcare, HAN University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands). Trained as a sociologist, he has extensive experience in practice-based research in youth care, focusing on effectiveness and professionalization within organizations. He has supervised the development of national monitoring systems such as *Families First* and the *In-Home Crisis Intervention Program (Ambulante Spoedhulp)*. Combining quantitative, qualitative, and participatory approaches, including action research and design thinking, his work integrates methodological rigor with a strong commitment to practical innovation in youth and mental health care.

Recent Publications

Damen, H., & Veerman, J.W. (2015). **The more the better: Adherence to program elements of Families First in the Netherlands reduces the risk of out-of-home placement.** *International Journal of Child & Family Welfare*, 16(1–2), 113–131.

Damen, H., Scholte, R.H., Vermulst, A.A., Van Steensel, P., & Veerman, J.W. (2021). **Parental empowerment as a buffer between parental stress and child behavioral problems after family treatment.** *Children and Youth Services Review*, 124, Article 105982. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.105982>



Damen, H. (2021). **Parents as agents of change: parental empowerment and child behavioral problems in families receiving family treatment.** [Doctoral dissertation, Radboud University]. Nijmegen, the Netherlands: Radboud University. Parents as Agents of Change

Goldsteen, H. (2023). **Bouwen in Contact** (Building in Contact). [Master thesis. HAN University of Applied Sciences]. Nijmegen, the Netherlands: HAN University of Applied Sciences.