

# Miessakit association

In support of men. For the benefit of all.

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# Organization

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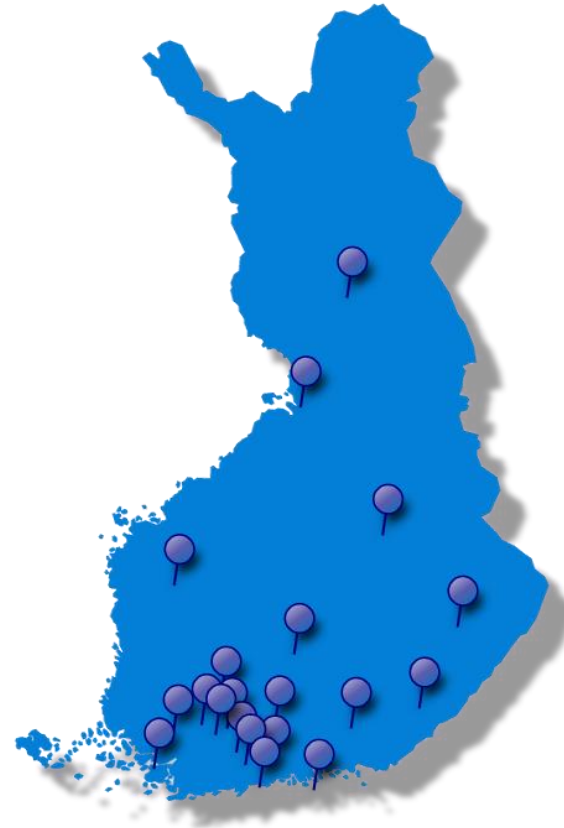
# Miessakit Association

- Strengthening the individual, communal and societal structures that support men's lives in order to promote the overall well-being of men.
- Miessakit ry nurtures the building of the common good in solidarity. At the heart of Miessakit association's idea is a vision of gender partnership as the basis for the well-being of humanity. People are basically seen as wanting good for themselves and each other.



# Miessakit is a nationwide non-profit organization

- Offices located in Helsinki, Kuopio, Tampere, Lahti, Turku & Oulu
- Divorce groups for men in (approx.) 20 cities per year
- Peer support and men's groups in 20+ cities per year
- Approx. 150 volunteers in 30 locations
- Lectures and training for 3000+ professionals every year



# Funding

- Veikkaus – a Finnish gaming company
- EU-projects (The European Social Fund (ESF) & Erasmus+)
- Nordic (NCM) projects
- Sales of trainings, services & publications
- Fundraising
- Donations
- Membership fees
- Annual budget approx. 1,5M€

# Core activities

**Lyömätön**  
LINJA

apua väkivaltaa läheisiään  
kohtaan käyttäneille miehille

**Väkivaltaa  
Kokeneet  
Miehet**

Apua henkistä  
tai fyysistä  
väkivaltaa  
kokeneille  
miehille

**VIERAASTA  
VELJEKSI**

kaksisuuntaista  
kotoutumista miehille

**Erosta  
Elossa**

erokriisiapua miehille

**isyysden  
TUEKSI**

isyys kuulluksi, näkyväksi  
ja osallistuvaksi

**MASI**

Apua isille masennusoireisiin tai  
niiden kohtaamiseen perheessä

**Toiminnan  
Miehet**

Hyvinvointia ja  
osallisuutta miehille

**miestyön osaamiskeskus**

tutkii,  
kehittää ja  
kouluttaa

  
**miesten viikko**

# About the everyday work

- One-on-one services with all means (face to face, Teams, chat, web-forums, phone, e-mail)
- Peer groups (Face to face & Teams)
- Online courses
- Consulting and training professionals
- Cooperation with public and third sector
- Impact work / influencing / communication



# About employees

- 22 employees
- Only men
- Social workers, psychotherapists, psychiatric nurses, etc.
- University or polytechnic degrees
  - (3 historians..!)
- Comprehensive work experience
- Average age 50 years





# Networks and partners

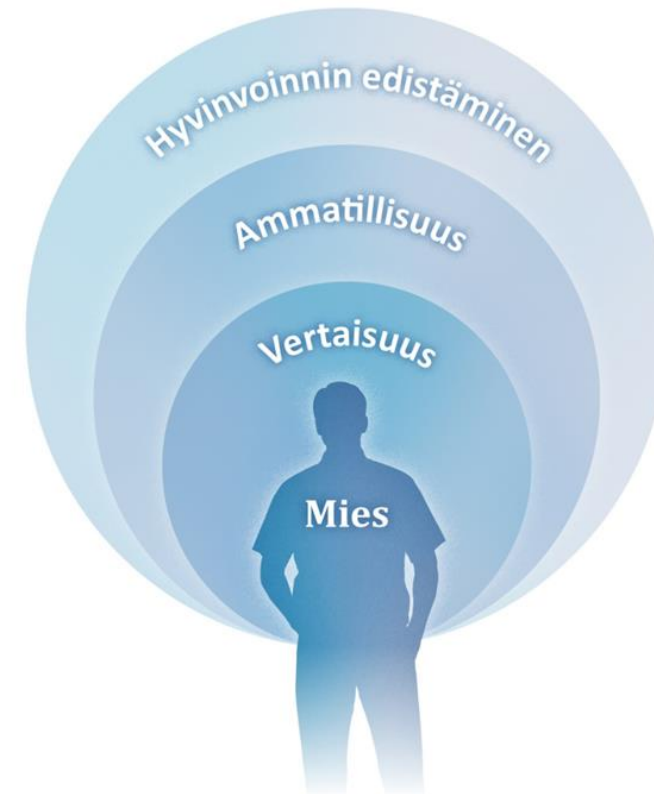
- Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
- The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment
- Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
- Other NGO's
- Police & mediation & The Criminal Sanctions Agency
- Family law services
- Family counselling
- Maternity and child health clinics
- Educational institutes
- The Central Association for Men's Organizations in Finland
- Lawyers and courts



# Guiding Principles of Miessakit

# Values

- Male specific approach / Gender sensitivity
- Peer support amongst men
- Professionalism
- Supporting & promoting wellbeing



# Male specific and gender sensitive approach

- Understanding biological, psychological, sociocultural and historical matters that concern men
- Having only male workers and working only with men
- Working extensively on men's problems
- Working for men with them – a man can be the subject (not object) of his own life
- Safe space for men



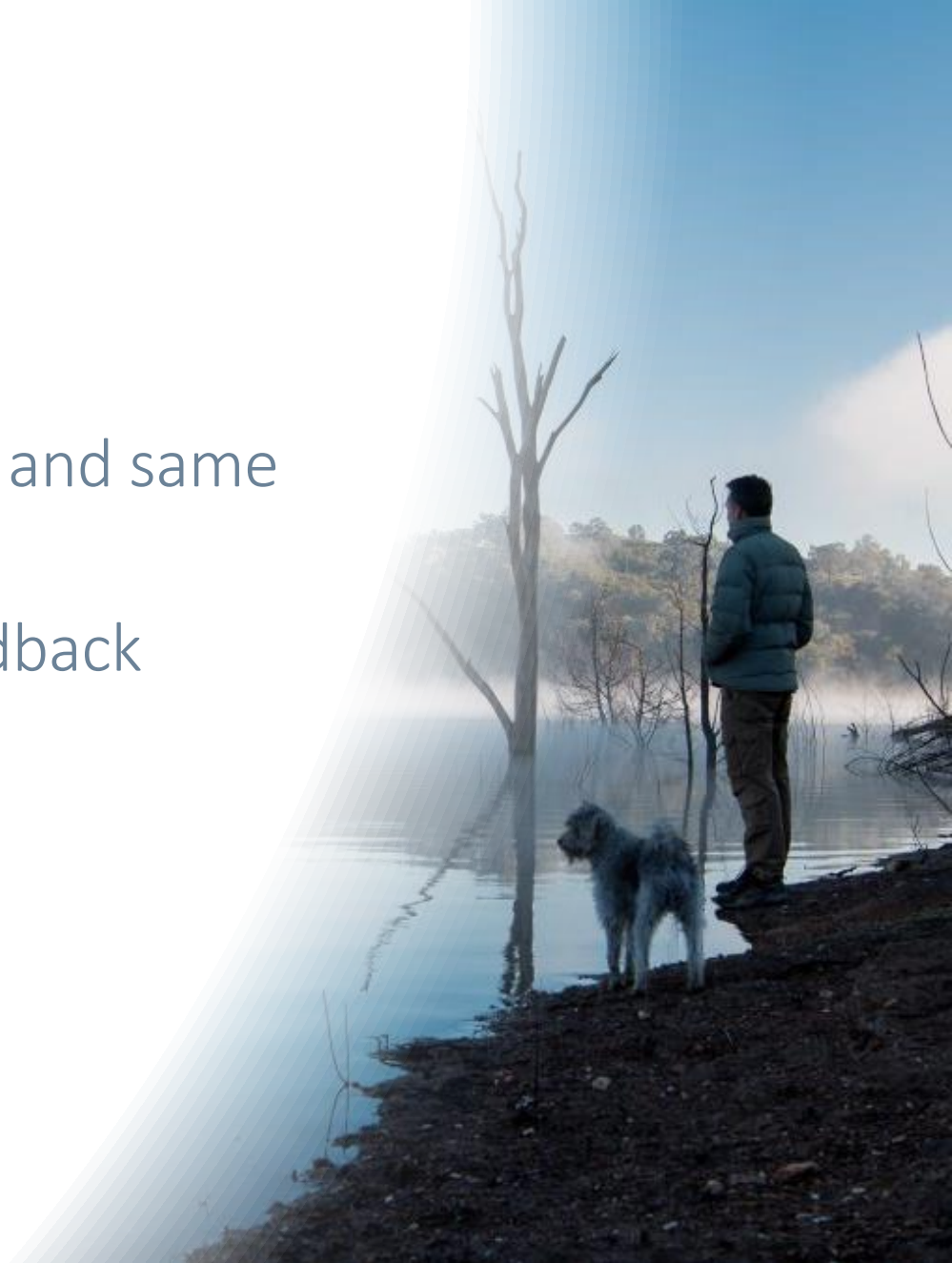
# Male specific and gender sensitive approach

- Lowers the threshold for seeking and receiving help
- Reduces the feeling of shame
- Increases the trust
- Strengthens the engagement



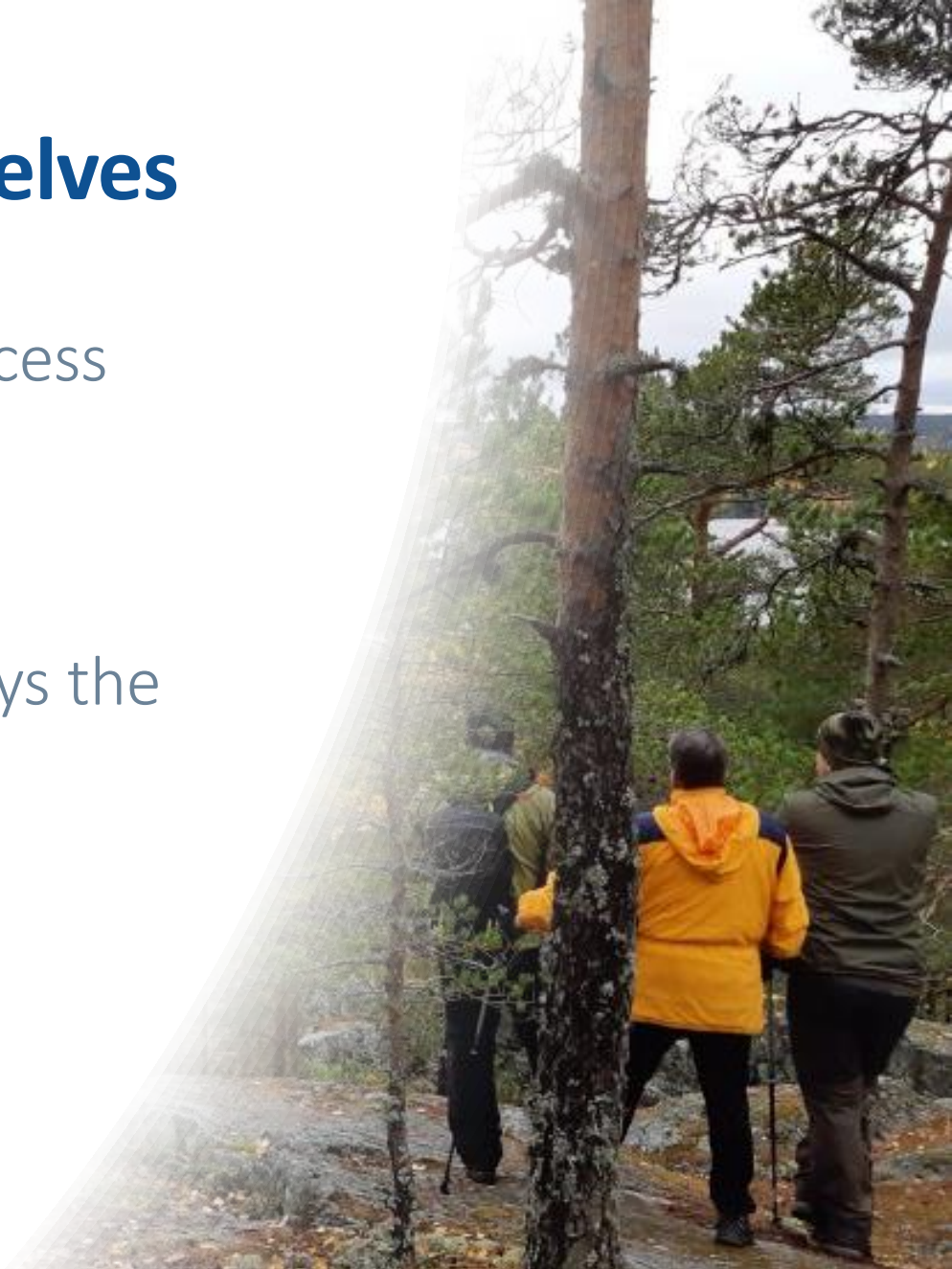
# Why are men willing to participate?

- Men helping men makes things easy
- Services with simple names, clear programs and same basic goal: better life for the participants
- Services customized for men, input and feedback taken into account
- Quick route from contact to support
- Anonymity (with some caveats)



# The work is done by the men themselves

- Main focus is on men's personal change process
- The men come in with a need for change
- Gradual confronting is easy among peers
- After participating in programs there are ways the men can participate as volunteers



# New manhood – as a byproduct

- Focus is on men and the change they want in their lives, nothing else
- The processes gives the men an opportunity to contemplate their own behavior and ways of conducting themselves
- When change is not forces upon the men, they change themselves and each other







# Support Programs

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# Support for ending intimate partner / domestic violence



# Lyömätön Linja

- Support men to stop using violence in close relationships
- For men who have used physical or mental violence
- For men who are worried that they might use violence
- Individual work, couple sessions and group sessions
- Services face-to-face, in video sessions and by phone
- Referrals not needed, clients contact us themselves

# Lyömätön Linja

- What do we do or offer?
- Crisis work
- Tools
- Information
- Self-understanding
- Therapeutical discussions

# Lyömätön Linja

- Why Lyömätön Linja?
- Violence causes more violence
- Violence causes fear and mental problems
- Violence causes financial costs to the society
- Safety is a human right
- Punishments and penalties are rarely effective
- More than 2/3 of our clients stop violence altogether and 1/4 behave less violently

# Support for men who have experienced violence

**Väkivaltaa  
Kokeneet  
Miehet** Apua henkistä  
tai fyysistä  
väkivaltaa  
kokeneille  
miehille

# Key points in this presentation

- Violence experienced by men is common in Finland
- Violence traumatizes – also men
- Men remain often silent about violence they experience
- We have good experiences helping men who have experienced violence

# Intimate partner violence experienced by men

- Almost a quarter of intimate partner violence reported to police is directed at men (23 %). About 80 percent of suspects are men. (Approximately 10 000 cases annually)
- A third of women and almost a fifth of men have sometimes experienced physical or sexual violence or being threatened with it in a relationship  
Statistics Finland 2022
- Almost half of women and 42 percent of men have experienced emotional violence  
Statistics Finland 2022
- It is estimated that only 3–4 percent of men who have experienced intimate partner violence report the act to the police



# Forms of mental violence

- Declining to communicate, ridicule, blaming, intimidation, silent treatment
- Control and isolation; heightened jealousy, controlling man's contacts
- Violence after separation; alienation, harming paternity, false reports to authorities, preventing the father from meeting his children

# Our clients

- Most have experienced intimate partner violence, emotional abuse
- Applies on own initiative (60 %)
- Middle aged, employed
- Highly educated
- About one in four are from bicultural couples
- Most have an acute crisis
- Some have realized the gravity of their situation afterwards

# Services available by service

- Telephone emergency counseling
- Individual meetings on the phone, online and face to face
- Guided peer groups
- Development, training, influencing
- Network cooperation



# Man often adapts to violence

- Men often choose a coping strategy
- Man avoids confrontation, makes sacrifices or submits in a relationship
- Defending own boundaries and identity can be challenging
- Aggression is often absent
- Self-esteem and self-respect need confirmation

# What concrete benefit did you get from the service?

- "I was able to tell openly what was wrong with me and I was listened to. I realized concretely that I am not the only one who has experienced something similar, and it gave me new perspective on life.
- "Through the meetings my current and past situation has become clearer and more understandable."
- "I got perspectives on my problem on many levels. I wouldn't have been able to look at things as objectively on my own."
- "I was able to talk about experiences that I haven't talked about before with others."

# How the meetings affected your life?

- "It has helped me to accept my own feelings better."
- "I have calmed down."
- "I have come to feeling that I am better able to focus on what is essential."

# Support for Immigrant Men

**VIERAASTA  
VELJEKSI**

kaksisuuntaista  
kotoutumista miehille

# Vieraasta Veljeksi – “From Stranger to Brother”

- Mentor & support programs, Finnish Discussion group
- Mentoring: Finnish professionals help immigrants to integrate into the Finnish labour market, preferably based on immigrants prior education, experience and interests.
  - Group activity & working pairs
  - Pairs are formed from applicants with similar professional background
  - Education required (University/vocational degree)
  - Duration is six months
  - approx. 130 people in six years have gone through the program
  - Success rate approx. 70 %
- Support: similar to mentor program, but more focused on general help, social activities and personal issues
- Discussion group – intended to lower the barrier to use spoken Finnish. Various topics, immigrant and native Finnish participation



# Vieraasta Veljeksi – “From Stranger to Brother”

- Miessakit as an organization is interesting to Finnish volunteer men, who are generally difficult to reach for volunteer activities
- Both Finnish and Immigrant men seem to prefer working with other men
- Collegial benefits when group includes several men from same occupational field
- Gender segregation in the labour market & work communities?
- “The real deal” and the discussion group

# Support for men in dealing with divorce crisis



# Erosta Elossa = Alive through Divorce



- Founded in 2005
- Nationwide service
- Supports men in breakup/divorce crises before, during and after breakup /divorce
- One of the goals is to support a good relationship between father and child after divorce → cooperative parenting



# Personal support

- Personal meetings, 5 times (personal meetings/Teams/phone)
- Professional, confidential divorce counselling
- Making plans for the future: for example divorce group, support person, family counselling, therapy...
- Also more general information; beginnings of divorce groups, service guidance etc.
- Different stages of divorce
  - Threat of divorce → repairing the relationship, weighing the options
  - Active divorce crisis → emotional processing of crisis, divorce and changing fatherhood
  - After the divorce → changes in circumstances, coping with everyday life, psychological coping

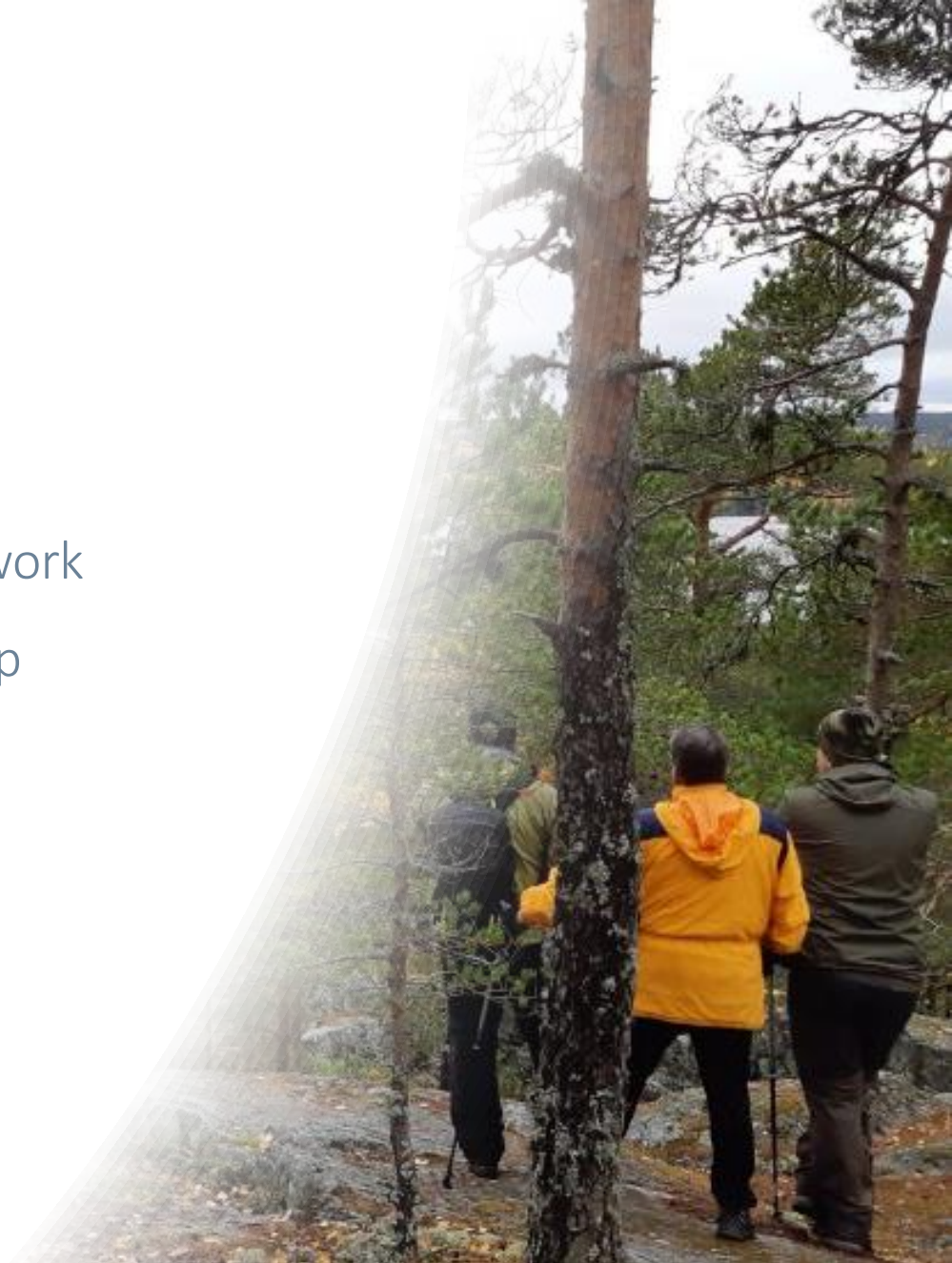
# Divorce goups

- Trained group leader
- 10 times, 5-8 participants
- Goals:
  - Face and accept the situation
  - Recognize and name emotions
  - Improving selfconfidence
  - Relationship with children
  - Awareness of rights
  - Analyzing the reasons for the divorce
  - Finding sources of well-being
  - Orientation to the future
  - Creating a support network



# Divorce groups

- Group leader
  - Are trained for the group leading
  - Many of them are professionals of social- and health work
  - Long experience and commitment to leading the group
- Over 30 divorce groups / year.
  - Groups are located all over Finland.
  - Groups in English and in Arabic
  - Also online divorce groups by Teams



# Support person / peer support (EETU)

- A coached peer, a man who went through a divorce and got over it:
  - Helps to get over the worst stages of crises
  - Listens, answers, understands
  - Available, present and support the divorced man
  - Strengthen self-respect and confidence, encourage
  - Experience of survival in divorce crises
  - Support meetings 3 times, if necessary another 3 times
  - Meetings in a neutral environment, cafe etc.



# Erosta Elossa-online support

- Erosta Elossa – online support
  - Anonymously, but participation requires registration with a pseudonym
- Erosta Elossa -chat
  - A live group run by support person. Men can talk about their experiences in a divorce situation with someone who understands
- Erosta Elossa – open discussion group
  - All registered men can participate and discuss issues related to the divorce crisis.
- Erosta Elossa – professional support
  - With divorce counsellor. By messaging or by individual chat

# Men of Action - Low-threshold peer group activities for men



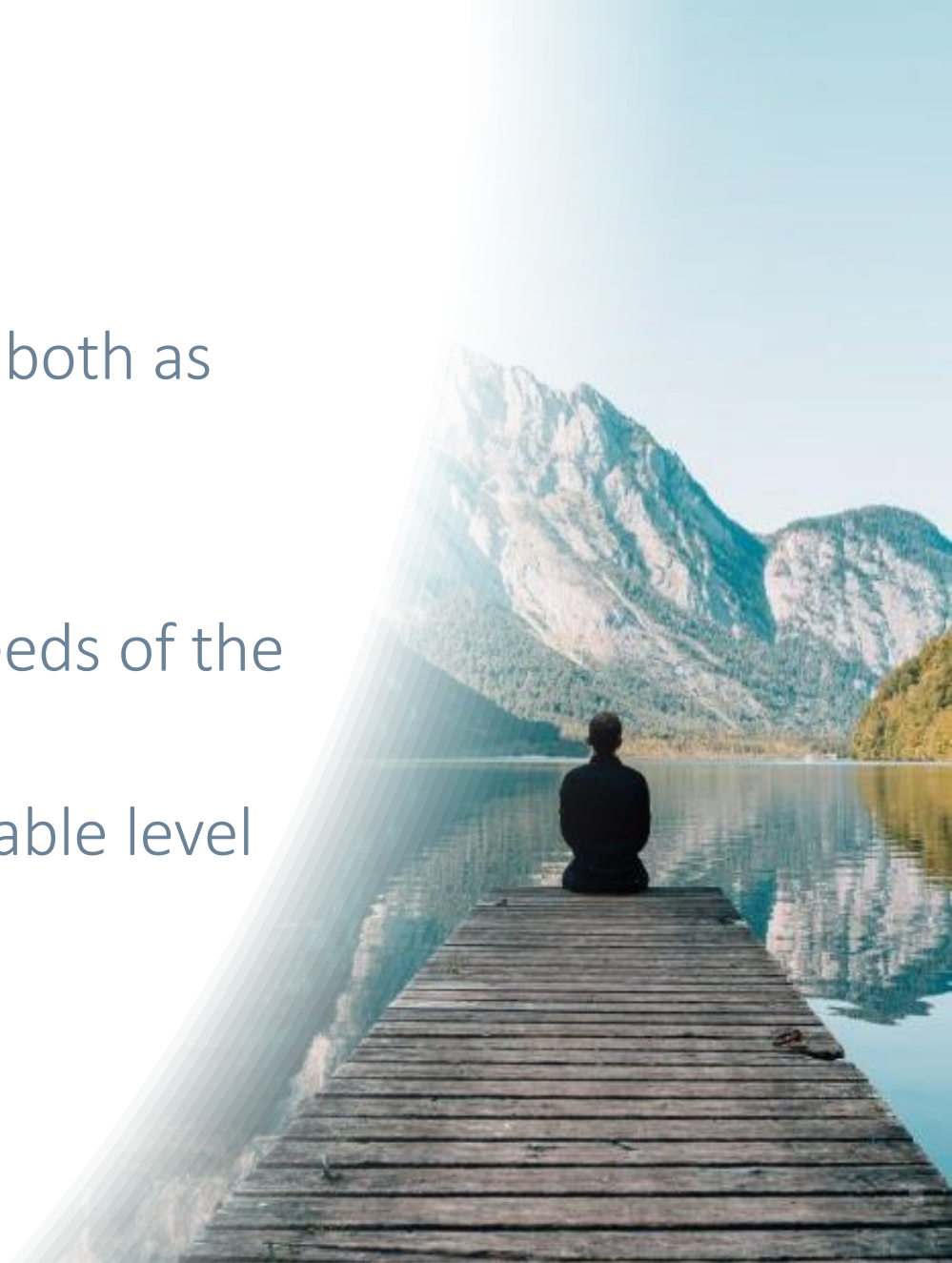
# Men of Action

- Supporting social activities and well-being through peer network
- A chance to work as a volunteer and peer support person
- Ideas for groups come from the participants
- Originally funded from 2018 to 2020 with two employees
- At the moment based on volunteer work, further funding being applied



# Fundamentals of Peer Group Action

- Men themselves form the core of activities, both as sources of ideas and executors
- Men act both as receivers and providers
- The level of organization must reflect the needs of the group.
- Meanwhile activities must stay at a manageable level to not exhaust the group organizer



# The Role of the Peer Support Mentor

- To have a clear idea for group
- To shape the idea into practical action
- To start and collect members for the group
- Maintain and support the group during its run
- Keep men enthusiastic about the group
- To collect structured feedback at the end



# The Role of Personal Enthusiasm

- The energy and enthusiasm of the person running the group is essential key element
- Thus it is fundamental to start a group you yourself would love to take part in

# The Core Principles

- Men as a point of reference – Men themselves are the best experts when it comes to understanding the conditions, challenges and possibilities in the life of men.
- Men as sources of knowledge and action. Activities are based on the interests and needs of the participants.
- All kinds of men are welcome to join.
- Volunteer work is unpaid – being part of a community, being helpful to others, enjoying activities and giving and receiving mental support are the rewards
- Confidentiality – all information shared and learned during the meetings is strictly confidential
- Equality and neutrality – Social status, personal situation, ethnic background and sexual orientation are not dividing aspects. Honesty, fair treatment, empathizing with others and helpfulness when asked are the binding values.
- Non-professionality – Peer activities and support land somewhere between personal friendship and professional support. A peer is not a therapist, expert or authority.

# Support for fathers of families with depressive symptoms

**MASI**

Apua isille masennusoireisiin tai  
niiden kohtaamiseen perheessä



# Masi – depression support for fathers

- Promotes fathers' well-being in families where either parent has depressive symptoms
- Especially for fathers with small children
- Provides ways to maintain control over one's life as well as the support for fatherhood in a challenging situation
- Phone, email, Teams, face-to-face, online course
- Guided peer groups
- Cooperation with public sector and third sector
- Consulting and training professionals



# The Center of Expertise for Men's Work



- A unit specializing in development and training activities
- The aim is to strengthen the skills related to men's work in the social, health, education and youth work sectors.
- Training and development projects with various cooperation networks.

# Support for fathers and professionals working with fathers



# Yearly theme weeks and campaigns



HYVÄT  
MIEHET

# Examples / online channels

- Online courses: <https://www.hyvakysymys.fi/?s=miessakit>
- Chats, forums: <https://tukinet.net/toimijat/miessakit-ry/>
- Youtube channel – explanatory videos:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P11NkyWTTCY&list=PL5pXyfBFaf1xJwv2VnbwdOS0lqitddhxV>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/miessakit/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=miessakit%20ry>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Miessakit>
- www: <https://www.miessakit.fi/>