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## LEADER'S GUIDE:

**One Child Felt Like One Thousand** by Ilka Perez  
Family therapy helped my son and me handle his ADHD.

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### DISCUSSION FOCUS:

**Communicating with your child.**

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### ACTIVITY GOAL:

**Participants will understand how improved communication can reduce children's acting out behavior.**

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### STORY SUMMARY

*Ilka writes about her journey to find help for herself and her son, who has ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Ilka searches for good information about ADHD, a condition that can make it harder for children to stay focused and calm. With the help of family therapy, Ilka works to understand her son and to create structures in his day and week to help him remain in control and feeling good about himself.*

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### GROUP INTRODUCTION: 10 minutes

Today we're going to talk about communicating with our children. Many parents underestimate what children can understand and what children need to know to feel safe and in control of their lives. Explaining what children can expect to do each day or from each activity can help even very young children feel comfortable and behave well. Parents can also underestimate how much children are trying to communicate their needs. Listening to your child's needs can prevent tantrums and conflicts.

- How do you feel about this topic?
- Do you have experiences related to this topic that you'd like to share before we get started?



## READ AND DISCUSS STORY: 15 + 30 minutes

Read the story out loud as a group. Help participants recognize the writer's emotions and coping mechanisms and their own. Go back over important moments in the story and ask the participants about how they've handled similar experiences:

STORY MOMENT	DISCUSSION QUESTION
Ilka goes to a family therapist who says it's important to explain things to a child, like the daily routine.	How do you explain daily routines or changes in the routine to your child?
Ilka writes, "I treated my son almost like he would never grow up, so I didn't pay close attention to what he said."	How does your child show you his needs, frustration or concerns?
Ilka learns that better communication can help reduce children's tantrums or acting out behavior.	How might you prepare your children for new experiences or use communication to avoid a conflict?
Being busy or stressed can make it more difficult to take time to know or listen to your children.	What is getting in the way of communicating with your child now?
Ilka communicates more with her son and sees that he has improved his ability to start and finish a task.	How have you seen changes in your children (positive and negative) when you've made changes in your family life?

## JOURNAL TIME: 15-30 minutes

By writing in their journals, participants can more deeply reflect on their experiences and the steps they can take to strengthen themselves and their families. Hand out the "Journal Reflections" worksheet and give participants 15-30 minutes to write. They can share their responses with the group or in pairs, or after the workshop with a counselor, therapist, or peer.

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

**JOURNAL REFLECTIONS: One Child Felt Like 1000** by Ilka Perez

By attending family therapy with her son, Ilka learns that when her son is better prepared for daily tasks, he's more able to behave well, complete tasks and handle changes in his routines.

Take some time to think over how you communicate with your child and how you could improve communication in your family. Use the questions below to guide your reflections.

1. How do talk with your children about what they can expect from each day, especially changes in the daily routine?

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2. How do you make time to listen to your children's daily experiences?

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3. How do your children express their needs or feelings with behavior instead of with words?

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4. How do you prepare your children for new or difficult experiences, like starting school or staying with a new babysitter?

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## **ACTION STEPS**

What behaviors do you think you could help your children change by communicating with them more? Write down 2-3 steps you could take to improve how you listen to and talk with your children.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **A SUPPORTIVE CONNECTION**

I plan to get support and encouragement by talking about my reflections and action steps with:

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