THE FUN TIMES OF THE CHILDREN IN AMSTERDAM

HOW CHILDREN EXPERIENCE SUPPORT TO LIVE HEALTHIER



Care for Obesity | VU

IMPACT 360°
Network approach to childhood obesity

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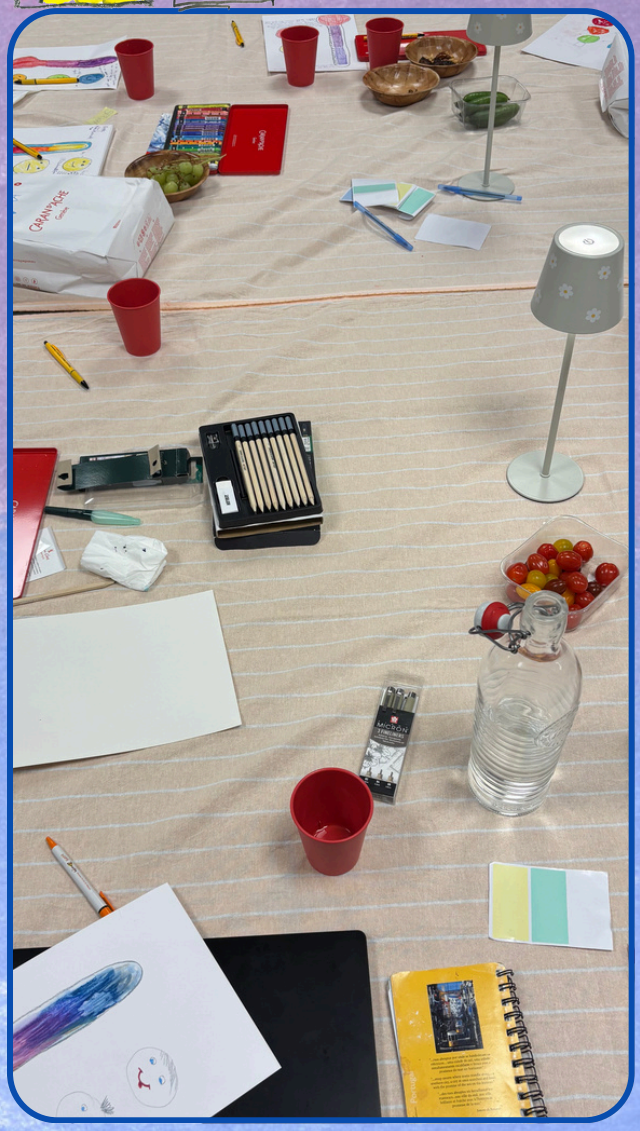

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Foreword

This magazine was made
for children, by children. It belongs to them.

Not to the doctors, not to the researchers,
but to the children who took part in the creative sessions.
The researchers helped and thought along with them,
about what it means for them to work towards a healthier life.

Two groups of children (9–12 years old) came together in a
community centre in Amsterdam. We did not know each other.
We also joined because we hoped the research would help us make friends
who were going through the same thing. And it worked!
Soon we noticed that we did not only share a love for music,
but also questions, tips and ideas.

In seven meetings we worked together on creative assignments.
We made music, chatted a bit and drew. Nice times, without stress.

What you read in this magazine is what we find important.
We share our experiences with support for living healthier.
What helps, what was difficult, what can be better.

This magazine was made for other children who might recognise what we
describe. But also for parents, caregivers and policymakers,
so that they can understand how it feels on our side.

Enjoy reading and looking!

Greetings,
The children from Amsterdam
and the research team IMPACT 360˚



Gross and Yummy

What do you think...

- Tasty? Draw a line to the green box!
- Gross? Draw a line to the red box!
- Okay or never tried? Draw a line to the yellow box!





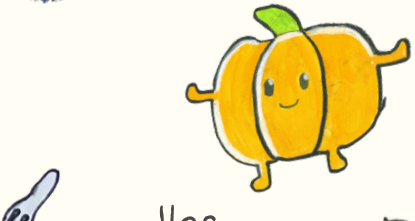


Newjork Vibes

chicken pesto pasta

Pasta lasagna

CUCUMBER



Can you think of more food or drinks?



meal salad



noodles

Pizza





Sush, unigizi

apple dessert



CHAPTER 1

Who are we?





Before we could talk about living healthier,
we first had to know:
who is actually in this group?



In the first session we introduced ourselves through
a drawn collage. It shows who we are.
We are all different, with different backgrounds and hobbies,
but that is not a problem.

We are also quite similar.
For example, we all like music, gaming
and doing things with friends.
Do you want to know what music we like?
Check page 18 for our playlist!



Some of us are in the first year of secondary school, others are in primary school.
Still, we all know what it is like to travel by ourselves on public transport,
go shopping with pocket money, play outside alone and do homework.

Speaking of homework... that gives us a lot of stress and takes a lot of time.
We all agreed that life would be much better if homework was got rid of.
We all like playing outside (if it is not too cold), but we do this less than when we
were younger. Most of us have full schedules with after-school activities,
homework, sports and care.
Busy, busy, busy...





WHO ARE WE?

My name is

What is your hobby?

What is your favourite colour?

Which country are you from?

What is your favourite animal?

What is your favourite subject at school?

Favourite school subjects:
history, Dutch,
art

drawing



















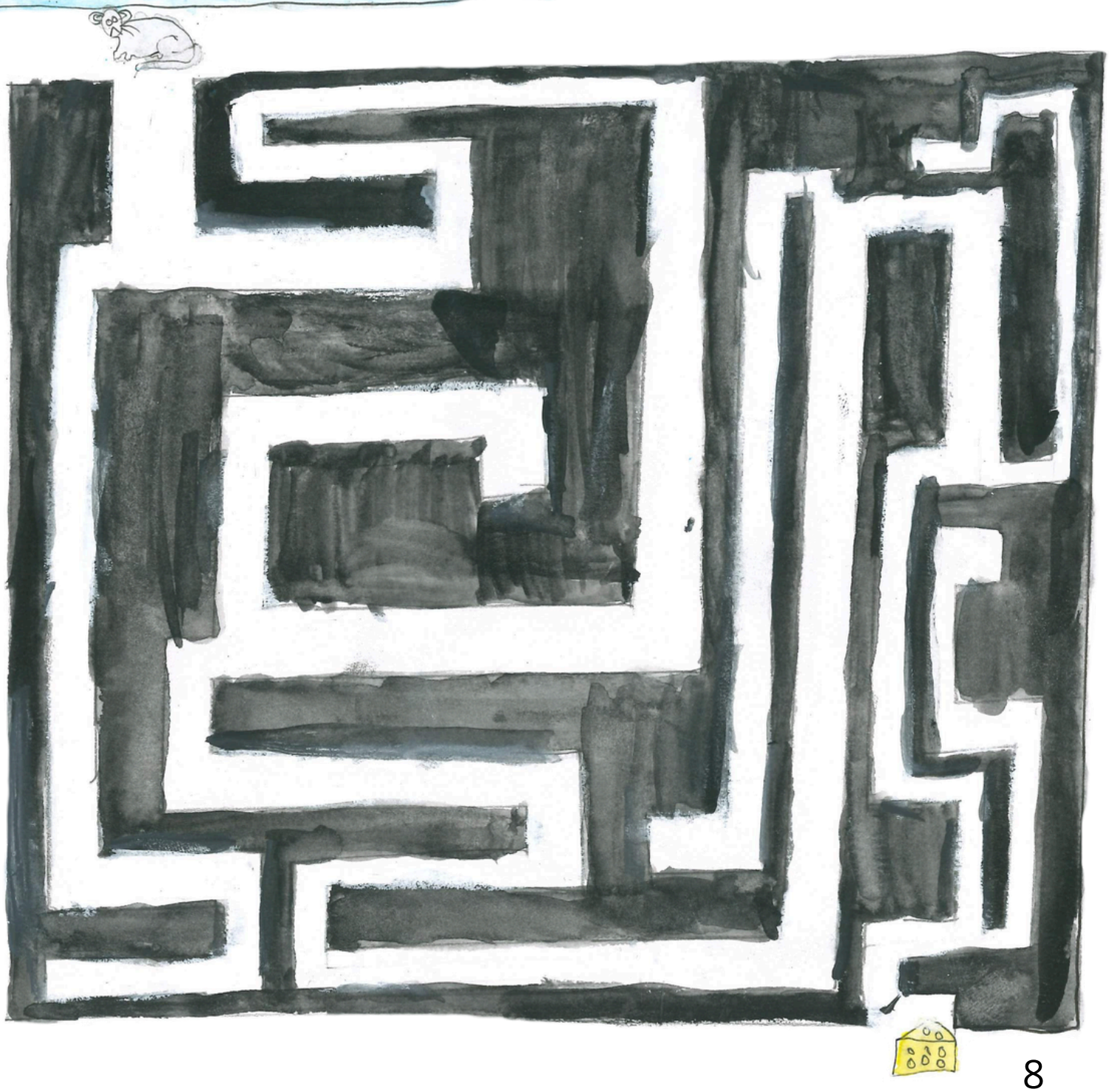


WHAT DO WE LIKE AND ENJOY?



HOW DOES THE MOUSE GET TO THE CHEESE?

MAZE



Chapter 2

Who helps me?

Asking for help as a child is quite difficult.
Some of us came to the healthier lifestyle approach because
a doctor advised it. Others because they did not feel comfortable in their body anymore
and told their mother. Or sometimes their parents suggested it themselves,
because they also receive help for their weight.
What stood out was that the help started in a different way for everyone.

We also talked about what helps and what does not.
If a professional thinks we need (extra) help, it is nice
if they just talk to us about it. Not when they show that my growth chart is in the red area.
Then it feels like I did something wrong.
With a good professional you feel comfortable and you are allowed to speak honestly.
And we would like it if the professional asks what we prefer.
For example how/where we want to be weighed and whether we want to know our weight
or not. Some of us prefer to weigh ourselves at home and keep track ourselves.
Others prefer the hospital, where you go to get help.

When people around us, family and friends,
help us in a kind way, that is great.
But all kinds of advice from family, classmates or teachers,
that we did not ask for, does not help.
And sometimes we only get tips about what is NOT allowed. That is very frustrating!

Some of us experience bullying, at school and also on the school playground
or in the neighbourhood, for example at the football pitch.
Because of this we go outside less or go to school with fear.
It is nice when there is a mentor who helps arrange things for you,
or a fit buddy (volunteer) who helps by playing outside together.

For others, the teacher at school did not help.
For example when the class was punished because they did not work well
and were not allowed to play outside.
Or when bullying was not properly noticed.

Who helps me?

What helps the most?
Moving, playing outside

You need to feel comfortable
You need to give honest answers

Asking the city council for more small football pitches with nets so the ball does not go away



Who helps me?



Who helps the most?
Family, teachers, friends and mentors

My mum helps me the most. Friends do not help, because they go inside to play.

The church and family

What makes you the happiest?
When I do not have homework

Physiotherapy with several children is fun.



WHAT CAN HELP:
DOCTOR: NO
SPORTS WITH A GROUP: YES
SPORT GAMES: YES
WEIGHING / MEASURING: NO
TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS: NO
CHEF AT HOME: YES

WE DREW OUR SUPERHEROES ON PAGE 24

DRAW YOUR OWN SUPERHERO



Music



Chords.

Song:

D
Throw AND CATCH
A
Throw AND CATCH
D
Throw AND CATCH
G
JIKELEZA (=Spin around) JIKELEZA

D
LALALALALALALA
A
LALALALALALA
D
LALALA LALALA
G

Chapter 3

The thermometer





In the third session our parents also came.
Together with our parents we indicated how satisfied we were with the help we receive.
We used a colour thermometer: from the bottom (not satisfied) to the top of the thermometer (very satisfied). We chose the colours ourselves.

We talked about when we would be very satisfied with the support for a healthier lifestyle. Some of us wanted the help to last longer (more than a year).
Sometimes professionals cannot arrange that easily,
but then we would like them to be honest about it.
Our parents wished that more help could be organised in total.
Not just a lifestyle coach once a month or a fit buddy once a week.



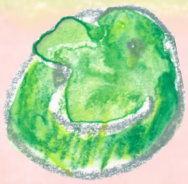


And that it would not be made so difficult by subsidy rules.
Some children said it is nice if the help matches what
their parents or other family members receive.
Often there are several people in their environment receiving help to live healthier.
It is nice if you can exercise together. For example with your mother
to the gym or with your cousins to physiotherapy.

What we noticed about our help is how important trust is
and having familiar faces in care.
We hope for people who are kind to you, even when things are not going well.
If you feel that someone understands you and will help you for a longer time,
you keep going. Or if they (the lifestyle coach) just do fun things with you
and talk about difficult things in the meantime.
That can actually be nice.













Unfortunately that is not always the case.
When weighing happens, the doctor or dietitian can look quite strict.
Not everyone, though! There are also very kind ones! But if, for example, a dietitian was not nice, we often do not feel like going to another dietitian again.
Still, we understand that it has to happen.

Or that you see someone different every time you go to the OKT (Parent and Child Teams) check-up appointment.
Even though that person wants to help you, they do not know you very well yet.
They then cannot really think about what suits you and
what you have already tried.

Actually, everyone had at some point experienced something in care that was not nice.
Something they have a bad memory of or even a sad one.
Many of us experienced this with a dietitian, who gave strict, unsuitable advice.
It would be nice if there was a magic pill
that made all healthy food taste good!

Several children also had bad memories of health check-ups
by the nurse in a room at school. That boys from the class would suddenly open the door or afterwards demand that you tell them your weight.
Luckily you can refuse that check-up. But then your parents have to agree.







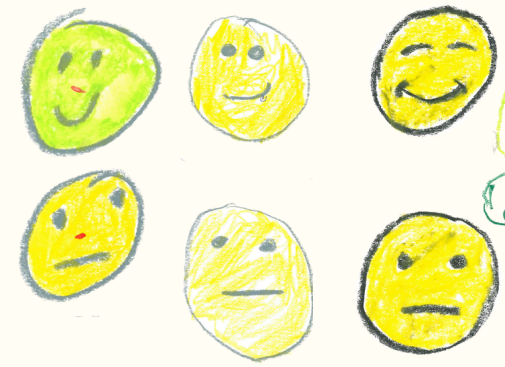
What works well?

From us

I think they should spend a bit more money, for example to build something where children can play sports and have fun.



I personally really like dancing, so I would also enjoy dancing once a week. In short, doing sports in a fun way.



Neutral because: it is fun with friends, but games should stay fun.

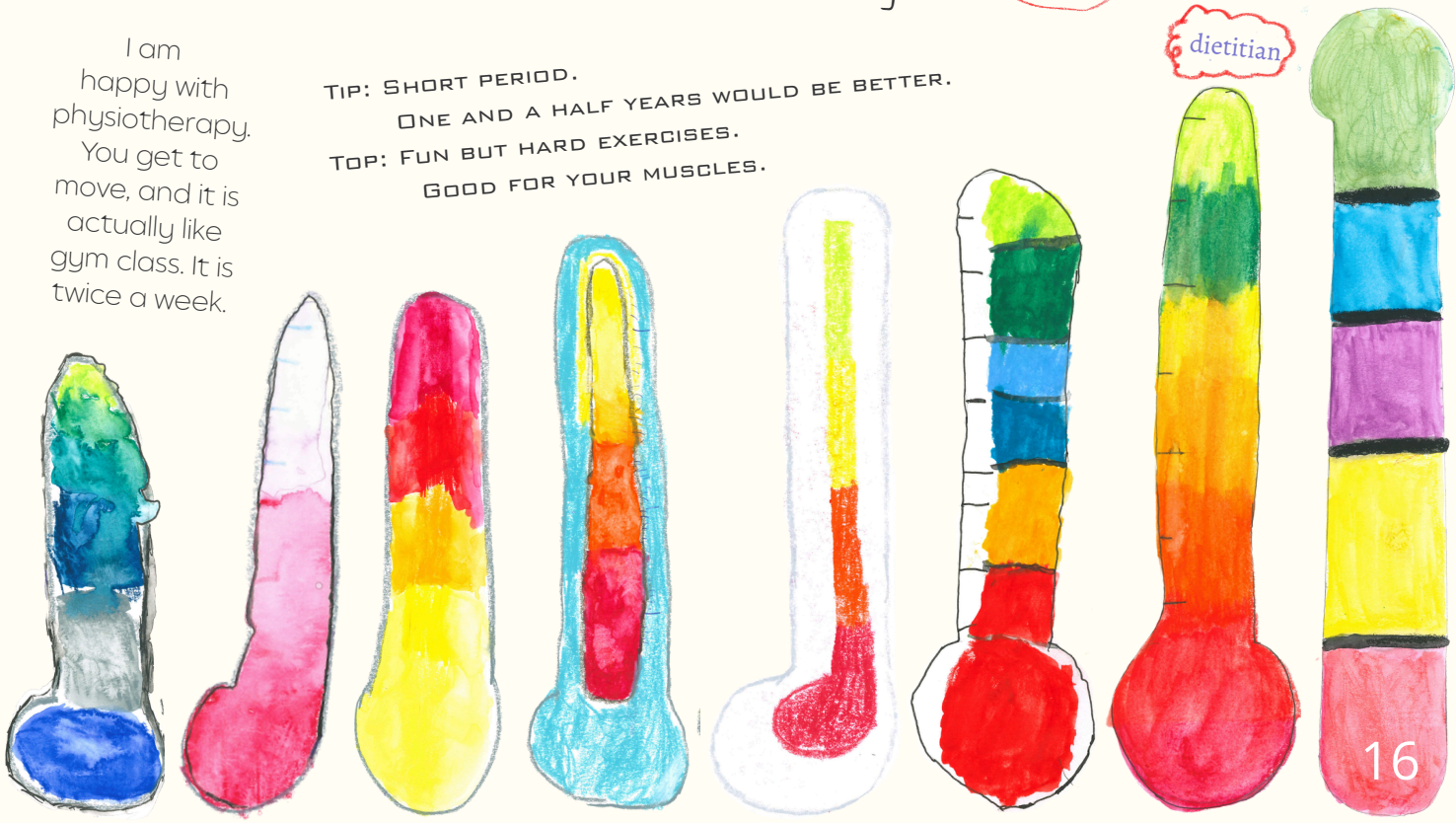


→ Not happy, because they keep telling me what is right or wrong.



I am happy with physiotherapy. You get to move, and it is actually like gym class. It is twice a week.

TIP: SHORT PERIOD.
ONE AND A HALF YEARS WOULD BE BETTER.
TOP: FUN BUT HARD EXERCISES.
GOOD FOR YOUR MUSCLES.



What works well?
From our families

Which support has worked? No idea yet?
She really likes table tennis.
The dietitian was not a success, I heard. Haha, not nice, no.

They should put them on diet and sports
Fat goods should also be avoided They should also be guided by a dietician.

If there was more support from the district for children with overweight instead of coming up with a pill, I would prefer that. I am strongly against a pill. There are many ways that lead to Rome, but not a pill.

That he comes with me to the gym every Sunday.

I AM HAPPY BECAUSE I HAVE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE. I ALSO LEARN GOOD THINGS FROM PEOPLE.

I am also satisfied with smaller sizes so far.

personal support
hospital

I started thinking about how I could help them. Then I raised the alarm and contacted the "GGD" GP.

- I THINK THERE ARE TOO FEW OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH OVERWEIGHT. MORE LIFESTYLE COACHES WOULD HELP, SO CHILDREN CAN LEARN TO COMBINE EATING AND EXERCISE. THEY CAN LEARN HOW TO STAY HEALTHY.
- THERE ARE NOT MANY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AROUND 10 YEARS OLD.

When it started, I felt helpless.



OUR MUSIC



Did you know that a drummer and a guitarist played with us during our group sessions?



Chapter 4

My living environment

In the fourth session we made a map of the route from home to school.
The maps were all different. Not everyone has the same environment.

Some of us are already going to secondary school,
others are in the process of choosing a secondary school.
We visit schools and pay attention to:

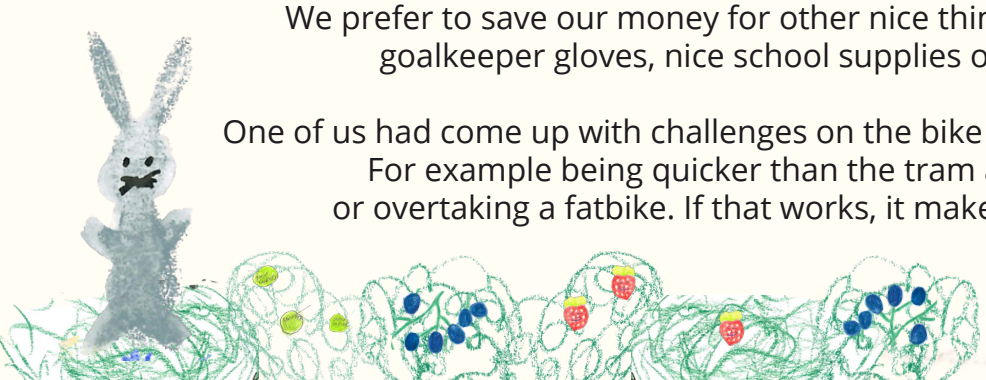
- Safety: are there stories about weapons or a lot of fighting.
- Friends: who goes there, and what do people who already go there say about it.
- Background of most children there and whether there is discrimination.
- Healthy school: there are schools that sell healthy food in the canteen or that do not allow children to go outside during breaks. That would help, because it makes it fair that nobody can go to the supermarket. Or only on Fridays.

Unfortunately, in Amsterdam you have to be assigned a secondary school through a lottery. And you have to choose 10 schools. Because of that you have little choice. We discussed whether not having to draw lots would help with living healthier. That did not matter much to us. It is mainly very nice to go to a school where your friends also go.

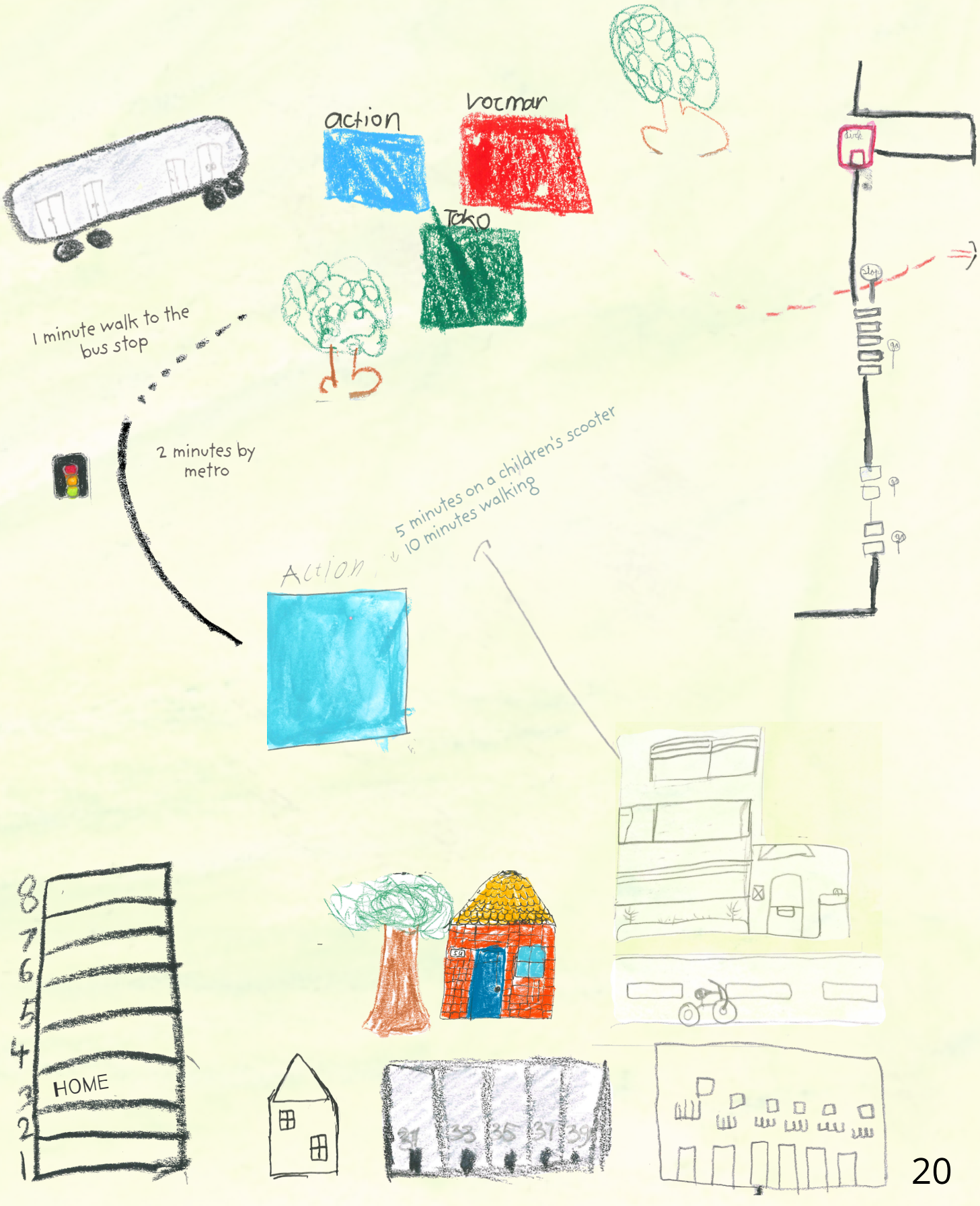
Some of us walk to primary school,
others go by electric scooter, or by public transport.
Sometimes together with family members or friends, but also often alone.
The primary school is often close to home. If we have to cross busy roads, it does not really bother us. On the way back it depends whether you still have after-school activities, whether you can go back with friends.
It is sometimes nice if you can play together. Outside or online.
But some of us already have other things to do (homework, physiotherapy, football, babysitting brothers or cousins).

Classmates also often stop by Action or the supermarket.
It is hard not to buy anything and also unfair
that other children who have a low weight and a lot of pocket money can do all that. Therefore, some of us mostly look at nice school supplies instead of food in those shops.
Food in snack bars is often still too expensive.
We prefer to save our money for other nice things. For example new goalkeeper gloves, nice school supplies or a fun activity.

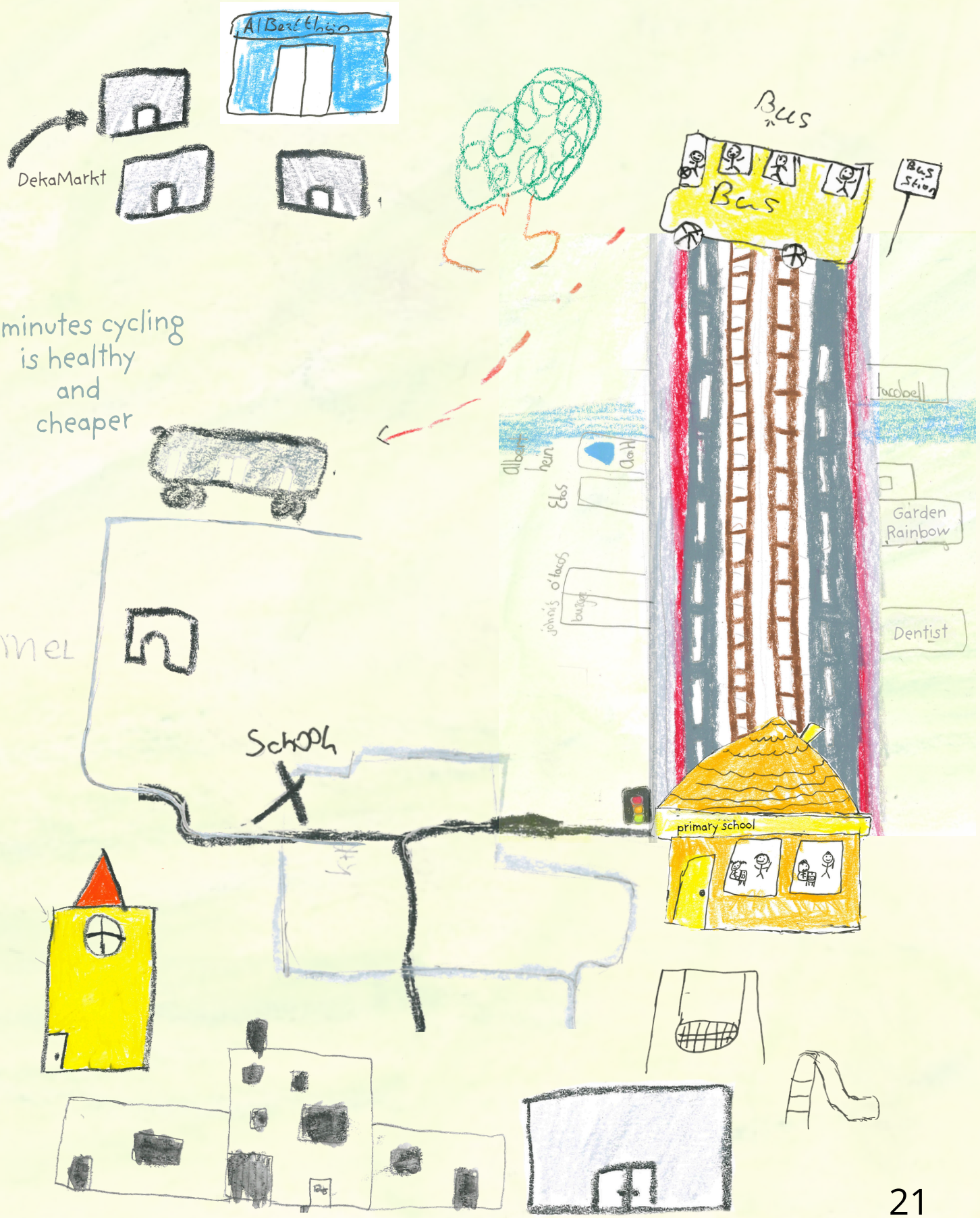
One of us had come up with challenges on the bike to school for themselves.
For example being quicker than the tram at a traffic sign,
or overtaking a fatbike. If that works, it makes you very happy.



My living environment



My living environment



OUR QUOTES

We now have a fitness buddy once a week, and we are very happy about that. It is a shame that there are not enough volunteers.

I used to play outside a lot. I played football on a small football pitch with my friends. Then a group of children came who were not nice to us. So now we don't go there anymore. What do I think could help? Maybe we can ask the city council to build more small football pitches, with nets over them so our ball cannot be kicked away.

I know what I want. I want to dance at the dance school downstairs in our building. But it costs too much. My support worker once sent me to a physiotherapist. They also suggested a secondary school that offers dance classes. But they teach ballet, and I want to do Afro dance. The physiotherapist helped me with fitness training, but I stopped after three sessions.

School makes you tired.

My lifestyle coach asked if I do anything else to live a healthier life. I told them that I come to this group, but unfortunately there are only 7 sessions.

Someone who takes the time to listen when you are angry or sad.

Being happy helps. Doing things that make you happy.

The physiotherapist was nice, but the boys in that group were not.

The best place for a (health) check-up is the hospital. They are kind to me there. The paediatrician just talks with me.

Then they say you should not eat hamburgers anymore. But they do not say what to eat instead.

A scale with smiley faces instead of numbers would be nice.

I want a pill, like in Willy Wonka, that makes healthy food taste good.

I actually like weighing myself. It helps me see how I am doing.

CHAPTER 5

Care superhero

In the fifth session we drew our own care superhero:
a figure with qualities that we find important in someone who helps us.
Helping with planning and keeping going. Listening to what you need.
Also when it is about school and not directly your health.
Or distracting you when something is scary to talk about.

At the same time, the professionals present made a drawing of their superpowers. Humour. Giving strength and energy. Daring to be open.
Respect for everyone. Patient and loyal.
After that we talked about this with each other.

What stood out: professionals were sometimes surprised by how well we knew what we need. Especially about the daily stress and tiredness that school and all after-school activities (including homework) give.
At the same time, professionals do know that we have a lot of stress from the performance we have to deliver.

We also talked about the help during holidays.
Many programmes stop during school holidays.
Also at the OKT (Parent and Child Teams) there are no appointments scheduled. Some children liked that, because they then have more freedom to do spontaneous things. Others felt that during the holidays there was actually more time to work on what we learned through the support we receive. Fun activities are organised in the neighbourhood, but if you do not go on holiday, you also get bored.

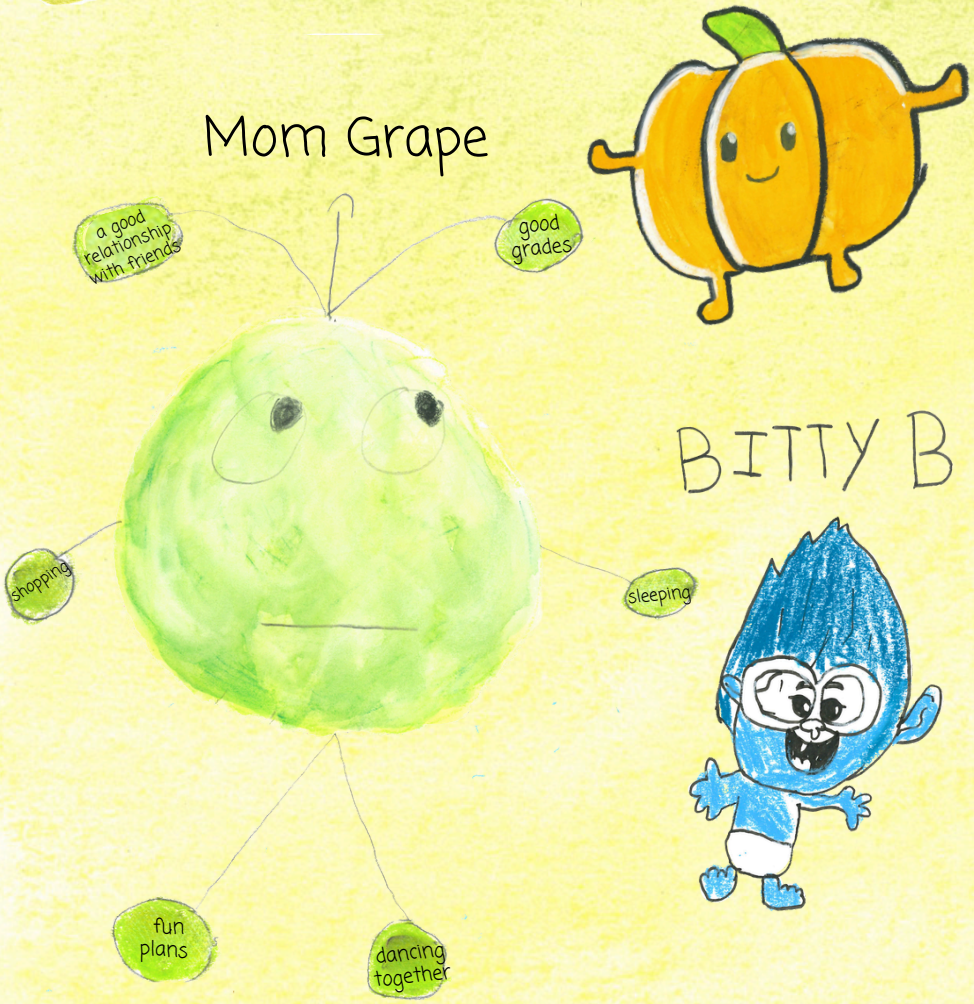
We also talked about cultural differences.
A professional does not need to have the same culture or religion, we think.
But it is important that someone makes an effort to understand it.

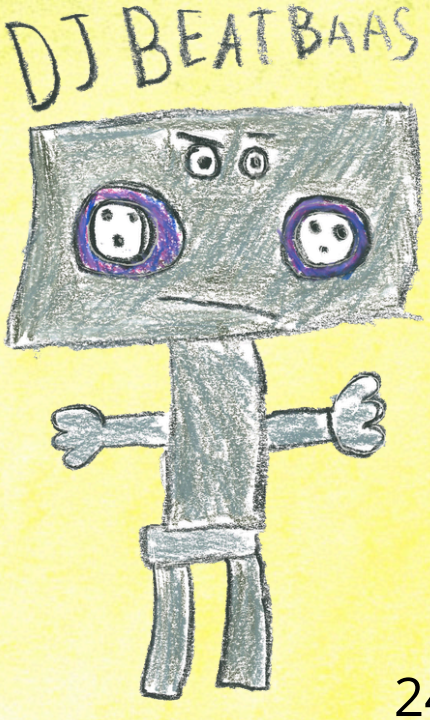
The professionals saw how nice we were together in this group and wondered whether we would prefer to receive help more often in groups.
Some of us already receive help in a group, at physiotherapy.
Just like here in the creative sessions, forming a group felt very nice.
But it is not always like that. It depends on whether there is a good connection with the other young people.

CARE SUPERHERO

From us







CARE SUPERHERO

From our care professionals











TEST YOURSELF

Which superhero are you?

For each question, choose the answer that fits you best!

1. A friend is sad. What do you do?
   a. I listen carefully and give a hug.
   b. I try to cheer my friend up.
   c. I think of a smart solution.

2. What do you do when you have a difficult task at school?
   a. I keep practicing until it works.
   b. I ask someone to work with me.
   c. I think of a helpful trick.

3. What superpower would you like the most?
   a. Never giving up.
   b. Making people happy.
   c. Helping people grow.

4. What do you like to do most in your free time?
   a. Sports, moving around, or going on adventures.
   b. Doing fun things together with others.
   c. Reading, learning, or making something.

5. What do others often think of you?
   a. You are strong and keep going.
   b. You are kind and friendly.
   c. You have smart ideas.

DRAW YOUR OWN SUPERHERO ON PAGE 12

See which letter you chose most often!

Mostly A's



Sport Avocado

You do not give up easily. Even when things are hard, you keep trying. That is a real superpower!

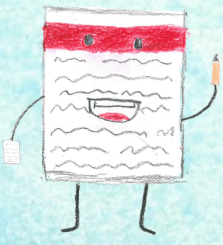
Mostly B's



Mom Grape

You like being around others and enjoy helping people. With you there, everyone feels welcome.

Mostly C's



Super Homework

You like smart ideas and solutions. You help others understand things.

A mix of everything?



Mixed Superhero

You have more than one superpower.

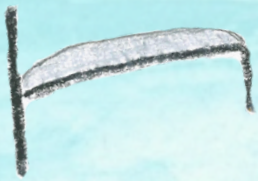
Chapter 6

Care in our week



In the sixth session we made a comic drawing of our week.
For each day we wrote or drew something typical for that day.
For example on Monday: waking up early, school, then immediately
an after-school activity and afterwards also
football training or swimming lessons.
You can already hear it: such a day seems very tiring.
But if the activities are fun, then it is not a problem.

Others had not such full days.
More often boring long afternoons, without appointments with friends.
Then you can still meet friends from your room online in a game
or on TikTok or Snapchat.



But actually those are not our favourite days.
We would rather go to a dance or music school,
if we had money. Or go swimming an extra time.

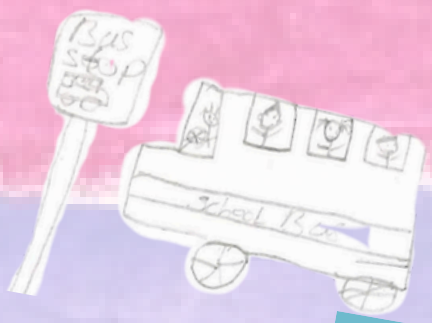
Still, we all agreed that Saturday and Sunday
are the best days of the week. Going to bed late, sleeping in,
not having to do much and having time for fun things with friends and family.

We also talked about long holidays. Is that the best time of the year?
Not for everyone, because then you miss your friends from school.
But most of us liked it very much to not have to do anything for a while.
Some of us then went on a long holiday, visiting family.

And we all also enjoy all the extra activities organised in the neighbourhood.
For example by the church or at the community centre.



Care in our week





"WE GOT A TABLE TENNIS TABLE IN THE ROOM"



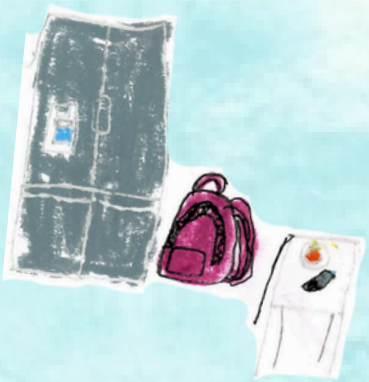
"ON TUESDAYS I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO GO SWIMMING, BUT MY BROTHER ALREADY HAS SWIMMING LESSONS THEN"

"I REALLY LIKE FREE TIME"





Care in our week



Monday 08:30 to 14:15 school 17:30 to 18:30 football	Tuesday 08:30 to 14:15 school	Wednesday 08:30 to 14:15 school 15:00 to 16:00 17:30 to 18:30	Thursday 08:30 to 14:15 school 14:30 to 17:00 homework 17:00 to 21:00 gaming 21:00 to 07:00 sleeping
Friday 08:30 to 14:15 school 14:15 to 17:00 sleeping 17:00 gaming	Saturday 09:00 to 11:00 football 11:00 to 21:00 gaming 03:00 sleeping	Sunday 13:00 waking up	

"I like the weekend, because then I can go to bed late and sleep in"



"I do my homework right after school and then we have dinner"





"Tuesdays and Thursdays are boring. I would like to dance more at the dance school under our building"

THANK YOU NOTE

This magazine started with an idea in the consultation room:
children are the experts themselves.
How can we make sure we share their ideas and experiences
with many more people?

Many sessions later we have the answer:
in collages, route maps, superheroes and conversation reports.
We have experienced so much together and are actually not finished yet.
Still, we wanted to show our ideas to you in this magazine.
We are proud of it. Not because we have all the solutions,
but because it belongs to them.

This magazine was created from the courage and openness of all the children who participated. Together we shared thoughts and experiences that were not always nice. Still we had good times together and became a close group, in which everyone had their own place.

We want to thank the parents who supported the children to take part in this research. And who trusted us to go on this journey with you.
We also want to thank the professionals who were willing to sit next to the children and make their own superhero and listen to them.

Many thanks to Lilian, who guided this process with care and made sure the children felt safe and valued.
And thank you to everyone who reads this magazine.
We hope it means something to you.

Kind regards,
The IMPACT 360˚ research team



IMPORTANT !

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within the IMPACT 360˚ project.
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For more information about the approach to live healthier
or about Care for Obesity,
visit www.thuisarts.nl and search for “kind te zwaar”
or www.vu.nl/C4O

THE END OF THE FUN TIMES OF CHILDREN IN AMSTERDAM











Hello. We are children from the fun times in Amsterdam.



















