

# „IT SEEMED LIKE I WAS DEAD ALL THE YEARS AND SUDDENLY I WAS ALIVE“ – WOMEN'S REFUGE CHILDREN AND THEIR WAY INTO LIFE



**Women's refuges as a temporary socialization agent** can take on a helpful role with regard to resilience if they are aware of their responsibility and have the means and resources to fulfil their tasks.

9 girls and 11 boys who are mostly adults today and whose stay in a women's refuge sometimes dates back decades, were interviewed in the context of a **qualitatively oriented empirical study** and were asked about:

- Their retrospective view of their **DV-experiences** at that time, their processing of the events (before, after and in the women's refuge)
- Their **relation** to other adult persons, such as co-residents and employees
- Their personal significance of **bonds and relationships** with other children living in the refuge.

The investigation focused on their domestic experiences of violence, which they had previously **observed** or immediately **experienced** in their families, and which led them to a women's refuge with their mothers.

In addition the interviewed persons were tested with the common personality test NEO-FFI.

## Results:

- **Resilience factors** can be individually supported and promoted in the context of a stay in a women's refuge.
- Numerous and varied activities offered by the women's refuge provided the former residents with the opportunity to **broaden their horizons**, with **community experiences**, opportunities for **participation, personal recognition** and **relationships** with others.
- From the available data of the **NEO-FFI**, in particular those on the dimensions neuroticism, conscientiousness and social compatibility, it can be plausibly concluded that the interviewed persons on the whole may possess an **unexpectedly stable degree of resilience**.



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As the life paths and developments of the interviewees show,

- They have succeeded in coming to terms with their experience of violence, perceiving themselves as **efficient, self-effective, caring** and **reliable** and **full of hope**.
- They have developed a **fundamental trust in themselves and in life**, while the stay in a women's refuge, according to their stories, seems to have helped them not only because they escaped violence.
- Their **personality** development was obviously not weakened by the corrective socialization experiences made in the women's refuge, but **rather strengthened**.