



"Strengthening Families Internationally"
Tools for
the path to migration

"Strengthening Families Internationally"

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A home is not just a physical place:
it is the network of attachments
that creates meaning,
protection and dignity.

It is the world we carry within
us
and the world
we build together.



This booklet was developed based on the experiences of mothers and fathers with a migrant background who participated in the parent groups of the project **"Strenghtening Families Internationally"** by Mosaik Leipzig e.V. in the year of 2025.

In these meetings the participants shared their distress and their strengths, their thoughts and feelings, their experiences and their hopes with us.

This booklet preserves their traces and invites us to continue on our way.

It is intended as a companion for everyday life and as a collection of topics that we shared in our meetings.



Table of contents

Introduction

Module 1 Self empowerment as mothers and fathers

Module 2 Migrating with our body, heart and soul

Module 3 Stress in the family and children's emotional needs

Module 4 Families in transition

Module 5 The education system in Saxony

Module 6 Migration-related stress

Module 7 When our children are not doing well

Modul 8 Self-care within the family

Final thoughts

Tips for families

Table of contents Tips for families

Where can I find information?

	What kind of information	Where to find it
Nationwide	Migration counselling for adult immigrants (MBE) – information and counselling centres	www.migrationsberatung.org/de/
	Youth migration services (JMD) – Advice for young people with a migrant background (aged 12–27)	www.jugendmigrationsdienste.de/
	Federal Family Portal – Information on family benefits, counselling	www.familienportal.de/
	Federal Institute for Public Health – Parent and professional portal "Kindergesundheit-Info" (Child Health Information)	www.kindergesundheit-info.de
Saxony	Saxony Commissioner for Foreigners – Advice and contacts for migration and integration agencies in Saxony	https://sab.landtag.sachsen.de/beratung-und-kontakte-19086.cshtml
	Parenting and family counselling centres in Saxony	https://www.familie.sachsen.de/ehe-familien-lebensberatung.html
	Events calendar and leisure tips for Saxony	https://sachsen-net.com/veranstaltungen/
Leipzig	Welcome Centre of the City of Leipzig	https://www.leipzig.de/leben-in-leipzig/soziales/migration-und-integration/willkommenszentrum/beratungsangebote-und-informationen
	Offers and events in Leipzig	https://afeefa.de/leipzig?l=de

For writing or drawing



*One way to heal is to draw or write:
about what you are experiencing, what
you are feeling, what gives you strength
and what you are grateful for.*

Final thoughts

Introduction

Paths are made by walking

*Step by step along the way, as a parent
or caregiver in a new place*

**... Migrating means
leaving traces
and to tread new paths.**



Sometimes we have to change course,
pause,
take a deep breath
and carry on.

With courage.
With hope.

With people by our side.

This notebook is for you, who keeps going; loves,
educates and fights;
who is always on the move.

Self empowerment as mothers and fathers with migration experience

I can always look after:
my family,
myself
and my history.

I carry my experiences, my pain,
my strengths, my thoughts, my feelings
and my hopes within me.

And I decide when and with whom I talk about them.

I also decide when to remain silent.

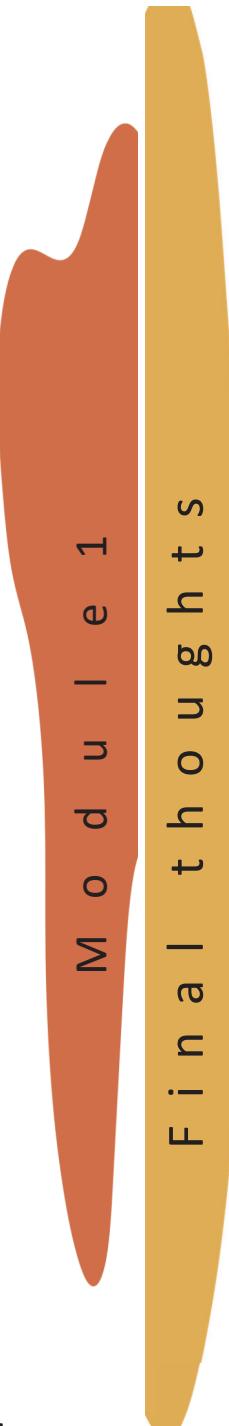
That is self-care and care for my family.

That is mental health.

That is respect: for myself and also for others.



Respect begins when I know my boundaries
and respect those of others.



Final thoughts on migration

Some traces are lost...
others become paths.

Migration means: leaving traces behind –
in what we were, what we are and what we will become.

But some traces remain:
those we leave behind when we accompany others,
when we listen and are there for one another.

**Home is not a place.
A home is created by people.**
A space filled with love, closeness and shared silence.

A home that carries the world within it.
Where your stories and mine touch.

Where children are allowed to feel:
**"This is where I belong.
Here I am good just as I am."**



*After winter comes spring,
even in the heart. (Russian proverb)*

Reflection 🖊

What small ritual can you perform for yourself?



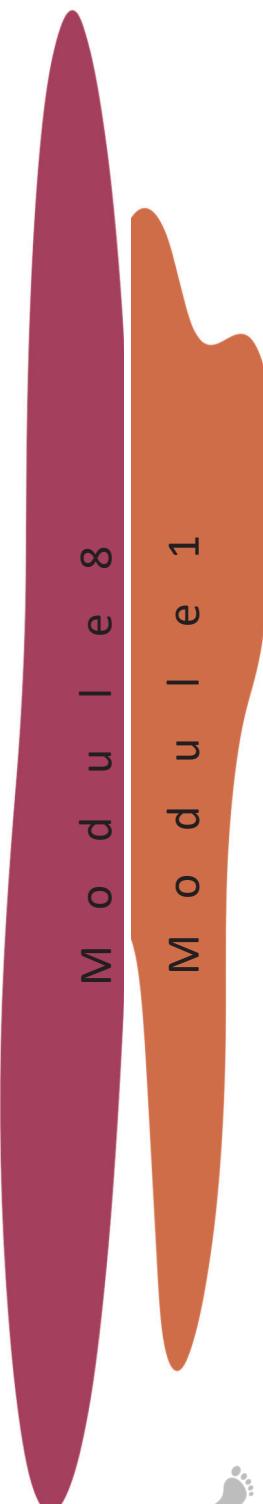
What beautiful moment can you experience together as a family together – without a screen?



What words do you need for yourself today?



Short breaks help you find true peace.



Sometimes we forget how much good we already do as parents.

This space is here
to remind us of that,
without judging,
but instead treating ourselves with affection.

Reflection 🖊

I am proud of my child because



I admire my child for ...



I felt like a good parent when I ...



*It's not about being perfect.
It's about being present with love, even when you make a "mistake".*

Migrating with our body, heart and soul

What do we feel when we migrate?

Migration does not just mean changing countries. It is changing routines, language, relationships and expectations, as well as the way we understand the world.

All of this evokes feelings.

And every feeling wants to tell us something:

- **Sadness** reminds us of what was important to us.
- **Fear** protects us when everything is new.
- **Anger** shows us what is not good for us.
- **Exhaustion** tells us: you need rest and care.
- **Hope** gives us the strength to keep going.

Emotions can be unpleasant, but at the same time they can be a sign.

It is important to name them, share them and find a way to take care of ourselves.



*When your heart is calm, the storm outside will also subside.
(Persian proverb)*

Small ideas with a big impact

- Take 10 minutes to relax
- Have tea with a friend
- Listen to music
- Take a deep breath before you answer
- Accept help – even with small things
- Say, “*Today I can’t*”, without feeling guilty
- Write down a beautiful sentence
- Take a break to laugh, dance, cry – anything goes

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*Taking a break does not mean standing still,
but to listen to yourself.*

Being able to take care of myself: Self-care is also love

And me? Where do I come into all of this...?

Caring, migrating, organising everything, being there for the children...

We often forget **ourselves** in the process.

But treating yourself well
shows the children:
My well-being is important too.

It's not about big things, but about **small moments of care**.

M o d u l e 8

Reflection

What feelings come to your mind when you think about migration today?



Which emotions have been present in your Family lately?



What do you do when an emotion overwhelms you?



*Small moments can
be a breather and a new beginning.*



It's a lot right now. And feeling tired, sad and confused at times is expectable.



Breathe – Feel – Calm

How can we regulate our emotions?

When we are afraid, stressed or worried, often times we breathe quickly or forget to breathe properly.

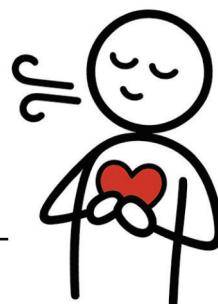
Emotions do not need to be controlled.

We can **accompany** them:

First we feel,
then we recognise what we are feeling,
and finally we learn to calm ourselves.

In a **stressful** situation:

Our heart beats fast,
our head is full,
we do not feel safe,
we are breathing shallowly and quickly –
and sometimes we don't even realize it.



Breathing exercises help us to
calm down again:
in our bodies and minds.

Our body and our emotions speak
when something is difficult
and also when something is good for us.

Self-care within the family

Some exercises you can do on your own or with your family:

- **Tapping technique:** tap lightly on your chest or hand.
- **Hand squeezing exercise:** inhale, make a fist and squeeze, release and exhale deeply.
- **Counting:** count silently to 10 in your native language, in German or a mix of languages.
- **Feel the ground:** consciously place your feet on the ground and feel them.
- **Breathing:** inhale slowly through your nose, exhale through your mouth (with or without arm movement).

You can also do the following exercises together with children, first one person, then the other:

- **Pizza massage:** "make" a pizza on your back; first "knead" your back, then draw the ingredients on it.
- **Spiral massage:** slowly draw a spiral on your back, starting small and get bigger and bigger



*Regulating emotions is a personal journey:
Find your own way.*



*Where there is love, there is strength.
(Latin American proverb)*

Things you can do now:

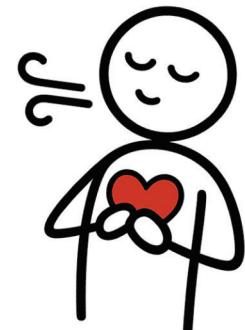
- **Being there – without asking for anything.** Sometimes quiet closeness is enough.
- **Create a gentle daily routine:** this gives the child stability
- **Create little moments together:** go for a walk, paint, bake, look at the sky, eat ice cream, count clouds, look at the stars, etc.
- **Say something supportive.** "*I'm here. You're not alone. I like you.*"
- **Inform the school:** perhaps there are temporary solutions (e.g. educational agreements).
- **Create little moments of calm for yourself as a parent, too,** to recharge your batteries and get new energy
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Here are three simple steps that may support you and your child:

1. Breathe

Breathe in for 3 seconds and out for 5 seconds.
Do this three times, without any rush.
Your body will feel it.



2. Name what we feel

Say out loud:
"*I am angry.*"
"*I am sad.*"
"*I am nervous.*"

When we name what we feel, it often helps to calm us down.
What is named can be held.

3. Connection with the body

Take a break.
Feel your feet on the floor.
Place your hand on your chest or stomach.
Go for a walk or shake out your hands, arms and legs.
Your body knows, too, how to calm down.



Simple things can be significant steps along the way.



*Breathing is universal,
but the way we breathe is unique.*

Reflection

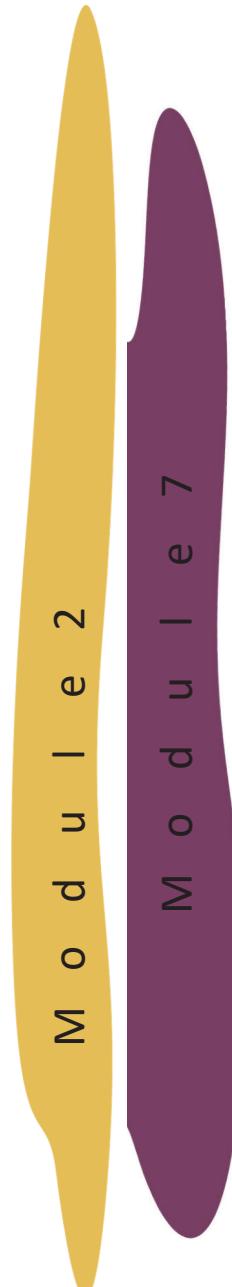
Which breathing- or emotion-technique do you like best?



Which of these techniques can you share with your child?



What are you already doing to feel better?



**When you have to wait too long for help..
What you can do in the meantime:**

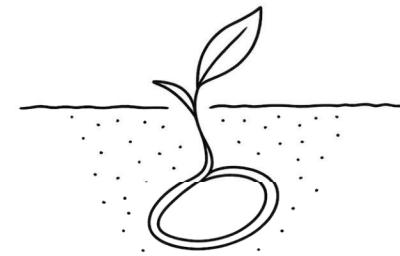
"We're waiting for an appointment... what should we do in the meantime?,"

Seeking help for your child is an act of love.

But sometimes it takes a while to get support; sometimes **months** to get therapy, treatment or counselling.

That doesn't mean you are helpless.

There is **a lot you can do right now.**



Each person has their own rhythm, each soul has its own way of breathing.



Even in powerlessness, new strength can grow.

Reflection

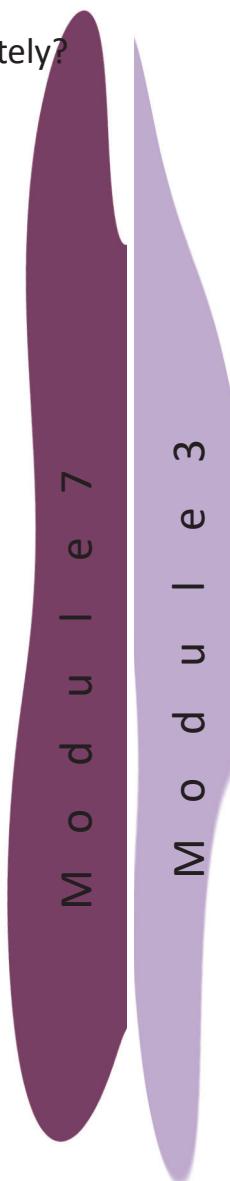
Have you noticed any changes in your child's behaviour lately?



What could you say or do to make your child feel better?



Who can you turn to if you need support?



Stress in the family and the children's emotional needs

What do children need when there is too much stress at home?

All families experience **moments of stress**: being tired, arguments, financial worries, migration problems, appointments with the authorities, forms, documents, letters...

In stressfull times, adults **react more quickly** and children can **feel this**.

How does this show in my child?

If my child:

- has strong mood swings
- does not want to play
- sleeps poorly or isolates themselves
- cries often
- has violent tantrums

What do children need in such moments?

Children do *NOT* need *perfect adults*.

They need love, attention, the feeling that they are important, and space to just be children.

*The pain does not take away your strength.
It shows you how important something is to you.*



*Patience is the key to relief.
(Arabic proverb)*

Basic emotional needs of children

Type of need:

1. Secure attachment
2. Recognition
3. Showing feelings
4. Structure
5. Freedom to explore
6. Belonging
7. Protection

What the child needs:

- Knowing that someone is there
- Feeling seen, heard and valued
- Being able to show your feelings without fear
- Experiencing routines and boundaries with love
- Being allowed to make mistakes without punishment or shame
- Feeling that you are part of something and belong somewhere
- Trust that the environment is safe

Reflection

What stressful situations have you experienced at home recently?



What helps you to calm down in these moments?



A calm voice, a gentle gesture and an understanding look can be more effective than many explanations.

When our children are not doing well

What can I do if my child is sad or secluding themselves?

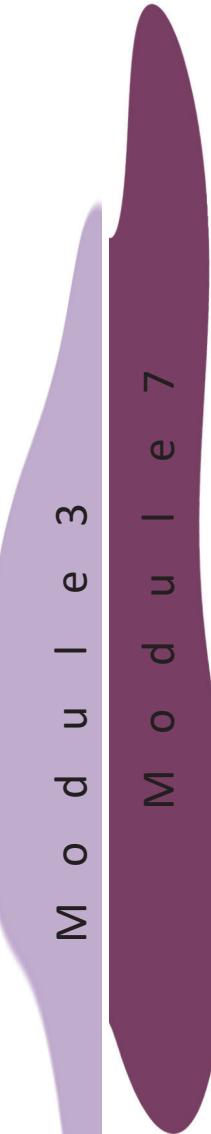
Sometimes children cannot put their feelings into words, but **they show them with their body, through their mood or behaviour.**

Some warning signs:

- They are unusually quiet or irritable
- Sleep disturbances or excessive sleep
- No appetite or constant eating
- Isolating themselves, not playing or no contact
- Statements such as: "*I don't want to be here anymore,*" "*I'm just a burden.*"

It is not important to know everything, but rather:

- Listen without judging
- Being there, staying calm
- Seeking help if it lasts longer (several weeks) is not a sign of weakness, but of care



The body speaks without words.

Families in transition

When our children experience unfair situations, we tend to feel helpless and do not know what to say. Here a few ideas that may help you:

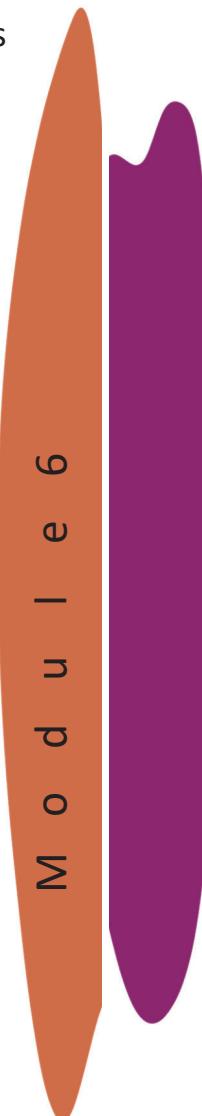
- *"What happened to you is not right. It's not your fault."*
- *"I am here to support you."*
- *"You did the right thing by telling someone."*
- *"Let's see what we can do together.."*

Reflection

What can you say to your child when they experience discrimination?



Who can you turn to as a parent?



Migration brings many changes:

- Families become smaller (from extended families to nuclear families)
- Children translate the language and rules for the family
- New rights and responsibilities change the roles of women, men and also children
- Rules vary from country to country

Reflection

What changes are there in your family?



Which rights do affect you in particular?



Which rules do support you in your everyday life?



"We set an example for our children how it is possible to live together respectfully."



*Change is part of life.
Step by step, new paths emerge.*

Where to seek support?

Change can strengthen families

In every family there are important times: pregnancy, nursery, school, puberty, partner relationships, work, but also challenges such as illness, loss or death, and much more.

Reflection

What are you currently experiencing in your family?



Every family has its own story.

Some are stories of joy.

Others stories of pain.

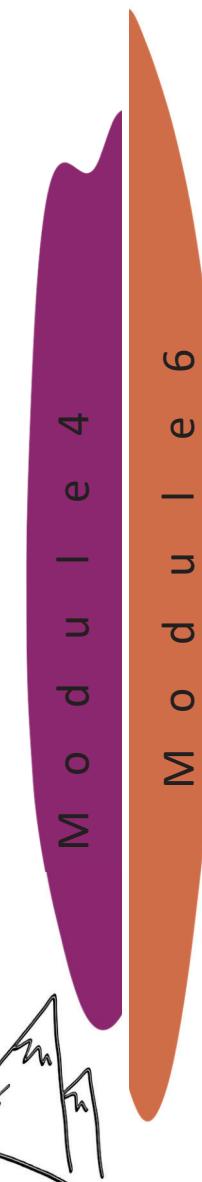
Many are both: joyfull and painfull.

Reflection

Which beautiful experiences do you carry in your heart?



Which difficult experiences accompany you?



Type of support	Organisation	Contact
In cases of discrimination	Anti-Discrimination Office Leipzig	www.adb-sachsen.de/ 0341 30651880
Advice for victims of politically motivated, racist violence	RAA Saxony / Victim counselling	www.raa-sachsen.de/ info@raa-sachsen.de
Parent-teacher conferences	School social work / Class teacher	Directly at school
Migration counselling for adults / young people	MBE / JMD	www.mbeon.de
Anonymous, multilingual support	Help hotline Counselling & violence	08000 116 016 (free and anonymous)



*Every family has its highs and lows.
These experiences give us new perspectives.
They can enrich and strengthen us.*



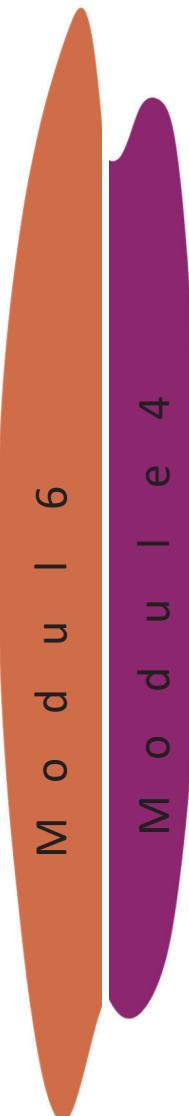
Seeking help can also be a sign of strength.

What can I do, when my child experiences discrimination?

You have the right to be treated with respect, always! And so does your child.

Here are some ideas that may help you:

- **Listen calmly.** Let your child know that you believe them and that they are not alone.
- **Clearly name what happened.** “*What you experienced there is discrimination. That's not fair.*”
- **Get support from the school or kindergarten.** Talk to the teachers or the management.
- **Write down what happened:** date, place, what was said or done. Name witnesses.
- **Seek help from outside.** There are counseling centers, helplines, and support groups.
- 
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Some families also have experienced very difficult situations:
violence, war, dictatorship, persecution, flight, etc.

Such experiences can cause fear and be a big burden for the entire family.

They can also scar our soul, even when everything is already over for a long time.

Reflection

Have these experiences left their mark on your family?



Has anything changed in your family since then?



What helps you and your child find peace?



 Naming what hurts is not a sign of weakness.
It is the first step toward change.



Even pain can give rise to new strength.

Fear does not disappear just like that.
But it can become smaller.
For us and also for our children.

We can talk to our children about it and be there for them.
Despite the difficulties, families show great strength:
for their children
for safety
for a good life

Reflection

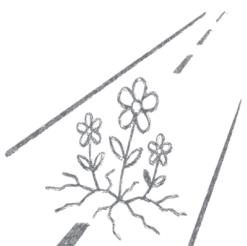
What strengths can you see in your family?



What strengths can you see in your child?



What small steps show you: *my child is doing better?*



*Our strength can be like a flower:
it finds its way, even in hard soil.*



Prejudice, discrimination and racism

Prejudices are thoughts, opinions or generalisations about people, groups or situations before we really know them. They arise from what we have learned and experienced. Sometimes prejudices help us to orient quickly. But often they are negative, can limit our view and hurt other people.

Discrimination occurs when someone is treated badly or excluded because of a prejudice, for example because of their language, religion, gender, age, origin or appearance.

Racism means that people are divided into groups and treated in a pejorative manner because of their skin colour or origin, for example.
This is a violation of human dignity.

All people have prejudices.
The important thing is that we can recognise, question and change them.
This creates respect and genuine togetherness.

More information: www.adb-sachsen.de/de/glossar



*Experiencing discrimination is not your fault.
Facing it with dignity is your strength.*

Reflection

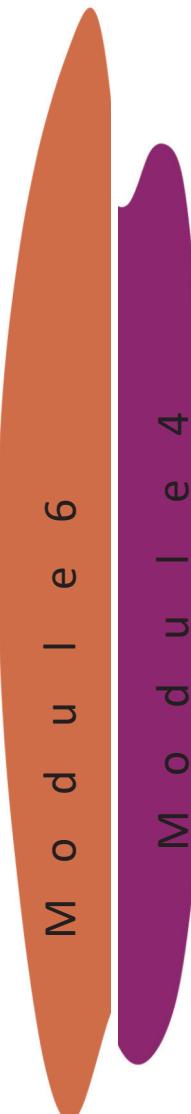
What difficult situations have you or your family experienced?



How did you feel about it? What would have helped you at that moment?



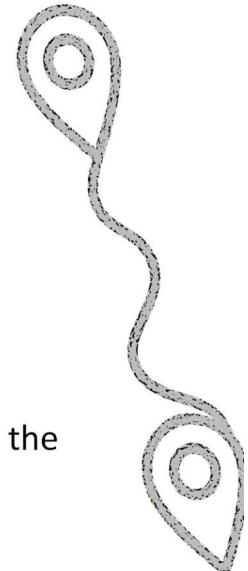
What can you tell your child if they experience something similar?



Parenting from afar

Sometimes families are separated for various reasons.

Sometimes children have to live in a different country.
Or parents have to stay behind.



Then we are families from afar.
But in our hearts we are close.

This distance brings worries, doubts and guilt.

Many questions come up and often we cannot find the answers.

Nevertheless, we can be there.
We can keep in touch:
by telephone, video or messages.
We can show with words, pictures and small rituals: our children are important.
Our family is important.

Reflection

What helps you to stay in touch with your family?



**Every person deserves respect, always;
even if others do not show it.**

*A mother's heart knows no bounds
(Kurdish proverb).*



Migration-related stress and discrimination

Parenting – even on your own

Being there for your children as a single parent

Single mothers and fathers in Germany can receive various types of support.

We have advice centres, youth welfare offices, financial assistance and groups where you can get information or talk about your situation.

But: it is not always easy.

Single parents have a lot of responsibility.

Often times we are tired.

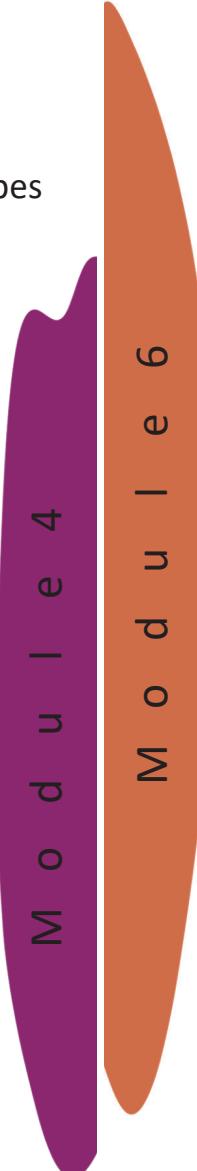
We often feel alone when we have to make decisions.

Sometimes we don't have time for ourselves.

Raising children alone can also be a strength, with a lot of patience, love and courage.

You take on two roles in one person:

tenderness and protection,
strictness and warmth



Being a single parent means carrying two voices within oneself and listening to both.



When we are strong ourselves we are able to provide good support

Migration does not end at the border.

Every day brings new challenges that can be tiring, unsettling or hurtful.

It can be a word, a silence, a glance.

Or it is the fear of doing something wrong; misunderstanding something; the feeling of being overlooked or experiencing hurtful comments about language, appearance or origin.

This can trigger stressful feelings, but having feelings does not mean failing.

It is part of being human and our journey as a family in a new world.

Recognising such experiences can make us stronger.



What happens outside, is often beyond our control, but how we protect ourselves internally is up to us.

The education system in Saxony

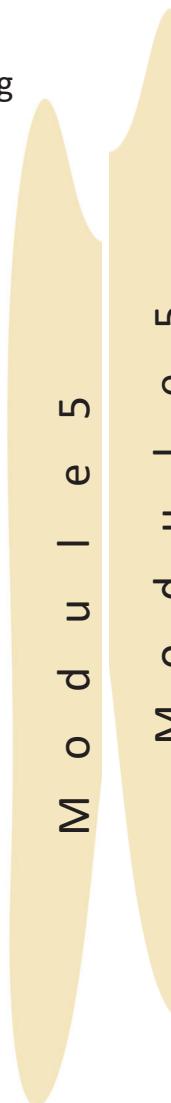
How can we support our children at school ?

You don't have to fully understand the school system to be able to support them well.

What really matters is being there, showing interest and asking questions.

Simple ideas that can help:

- Ask: "*How did you feel today?*"
- Read and keep school letters
- Attend parents' evenings – ask for notes or translation if necessary
- If you have any concerns, talk to the teachers
- Get to know other parents
- Tell your child: "*You don't have to be perfect. Just do your best.*"
- 
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After migrating, many parents want their children to "get ahead", to study, to be strong and to achieve everything that "we" couldn't achieve.

That is love.

But sometimes this love can also be pressure.

The school system is new and sometimes difficult to understand.

And not all of the children take the same path.

The most important thing should be:

My child should feel comfortable, safe and supported.

They should find their own way, at their own pace, using their own strength.

Reflection

What did my parents expect from me?


What do I expect from my child today?


What is really important for my child so they can feel good?


*A child is like a mirror: it shows what it sees.
(Turkish proverb)*



*Your child doesn't have to become "somebody",
...they already are.*

How does the school in Saxony work?

In Germany, **school attendance** is compulsory from the age of 6 – public schools are free.

The school system consists of **different stages**:

1. Elementary school (**Grundschule**):

- Years 1 to 4
- All children learn together

2. After elementary school:

Based on the teachers' recommendation (in Year 4) and the decision of the parents, there are the following options:

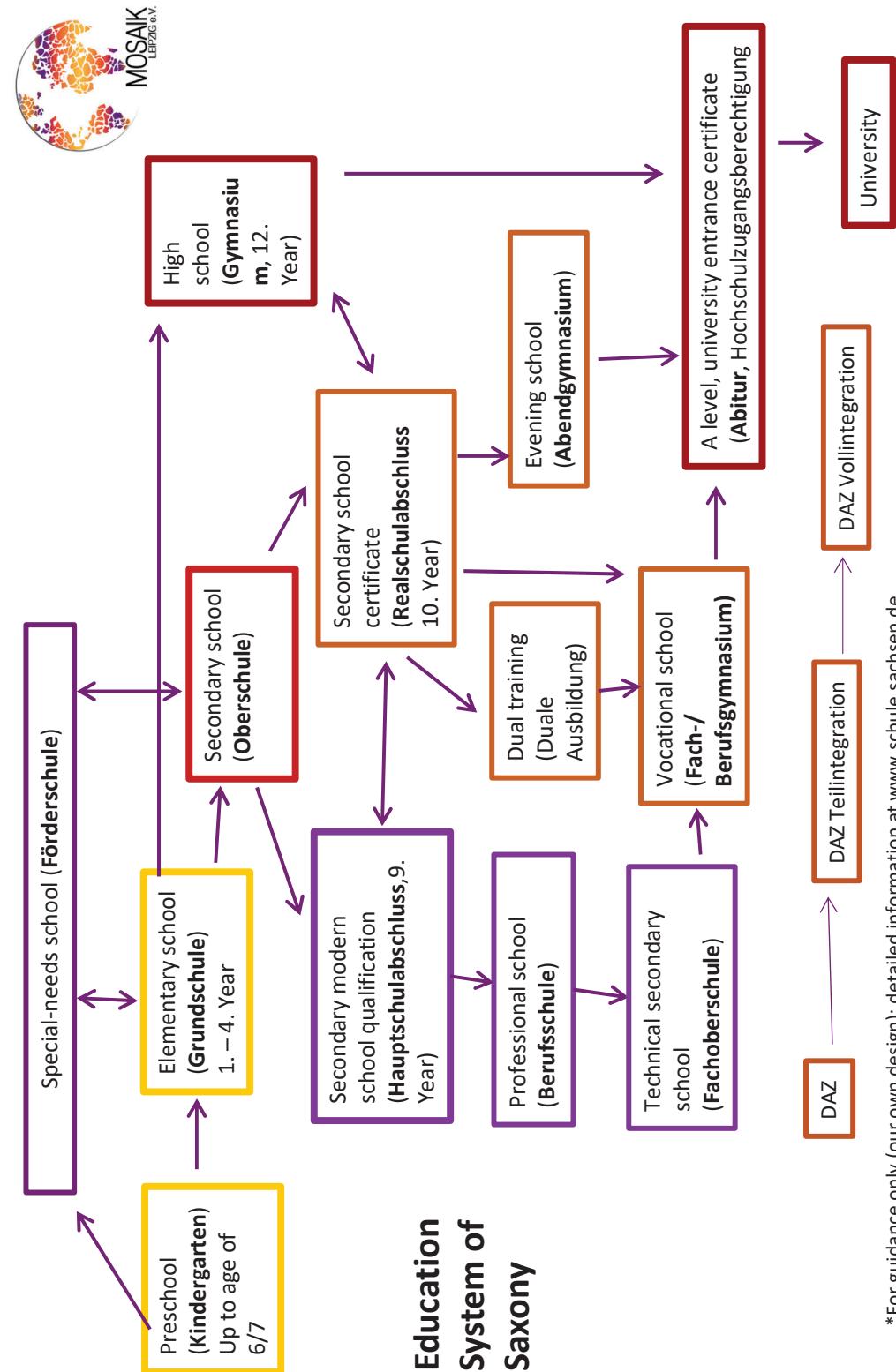
- **Secondary school (Oberschule):** Grades 5 to 9 or 10
- **High school: (Gymnasium)** Years 5 to 12

From Year 5 onwards, the paths diverge, but **it is still possible to change later**.

Many children receive support in **DAZ** ("German as a Second Language").

Sometimes this journey is not easy, for children and also for parents. But every step counts and every day brings new opportunities.

M o d u l e 5



Not every path is straight, but every step is important.

