

RESILIENCE STAY

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innocence
en **DANGER**



RESILIENCE STAY INNOCENCE IN DANGER THE IMPACT OBSERVED BY THREE THERAPISTS

Every year, the Innocence en Danger association organises resilience retreats for children and adults who have suffered sexual abuse in their childhood. These breaks from everyday life offer a safe environment, designed to support the rebuilding process step by step.

Created in 2002, these retreats are based on a simple philosophy: to enable everyone to reconnect with their body, their emotions, their creativity and their ability to connect with others. Equine therapy, music therapy, art therapy, theatre and yoga are just some of the ways to release what was holding you back, transform what was frightening you and rediscover your zest for life.

It is at the heart of this programme that we participated in the 2025 resilience retreat. This document was born out of our desire, as therapists specialising in psychotherapy and trained in the treatment of psychological trauma, to share what we saw, heard, observed and felt. Because what is at stake here is not limited to treatment: it is the regaining of a life force that enables a human being, even one who is deeply wounded, to get back on their feet and dare to take a step towards themselves, towards others, towards life.

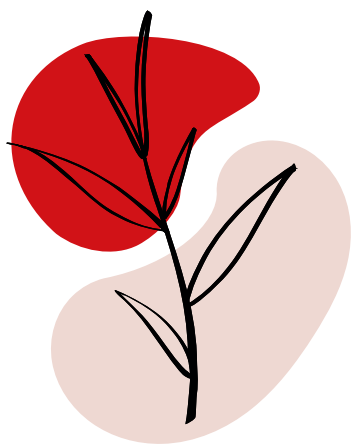
We have supported children and adults affected by early, complex, deep trauma. And we have witnessed powerful healing processes: a breath that is released, a gaze that opens, a word that is spoken, a bond that is formed, a fear that is transformed.



This document is neither a technical report nor a simple feedback report. It is a professional and sensitive account, at the crossroads of clinical practice, ethics and commitment. It is intended for anyone who wishes to understand the therapeutic impact of these stays and who, perhaps, is wondering how to support them.

These spaces exist thanks to the women and men who believe in them. And they continue to exist thanks to those who choose to make them possible.

CLINICAL FINDINGS



Based on our observations, the resilience retreats offered by IED are trauma-informed, drawing on psychophysical and expressive approaches tailored to children who have experienced sexual abuse and adults who were victims of sexual abuse in childhood. We are referring here to complex (type II) traumas, often experienced at an early age, which affect identity formation, the capacity for attachment, emotional regulation and body image. The children and adults we monitored during this retreat presented with post-traumatic stress disorders that manifest themselves, for example, in flashbacks, avoidance, hypervigilance, dissociation, difficulty feeling and expressing emotions, self-deprecation, difficulty making friends, mistrust of adults, sleep disorders, nightmares, night terrors, etc.

THE BODY AS AN ANCHOR POINT

Trauma related to sexual violence is inscribed in the body. This violence leaves more than just psychological scars: it profoundly affects bodily memory, self-image and one's relationship with one's body. The body, which has been the site of violence, often becomes a place of shame, pain or dissociation. Physical activities allow us to work directly where the trauma has been engraved and seem to restore a sense of security in the body. Before speaking or understanding, the person needs to feel that they are safe again in their body.

Activities such as yoga, equine therapy, dance, physical theatre or guided relaxation allow child and adult victims to gently re-inhabit their bodies, experience pleasant and non-threatening sensations, and reacquaint themselves with touch, movement and breathing.

This work forms the basis of therapeutic support. It promotes emotional regulation. Child victims often find it difficult to identify and express their emotions because they are too intense, confusing or forbidden. Bodywork helps to circulate emotional energy, to name what is happening inside, and to break out of dissociation or “emotional freeze”.

For young children, this emotional work through the body is often more accessible than talking. It reintroduces pleasure, play and relationships, as trauma linked to sexual violence often destroys the ability to use one's body in a healthy way, to relax and to trust others.



THE BODY AS AN ANCHOR POINT



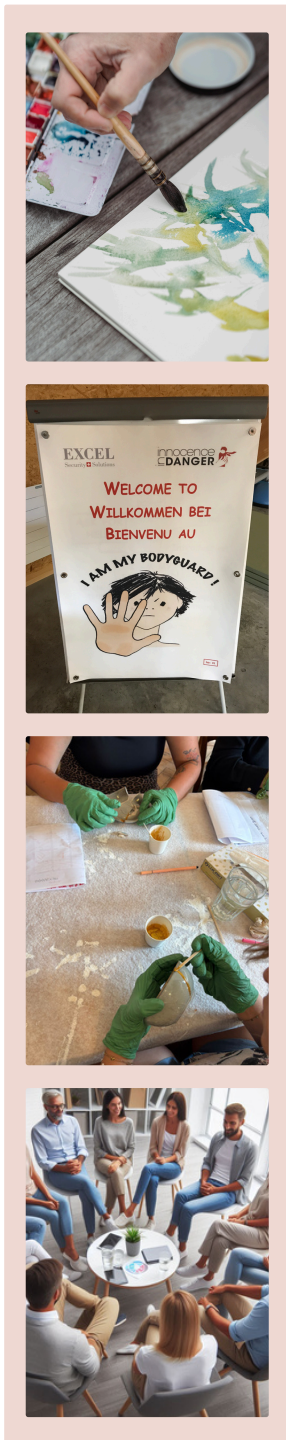
Supervised, creative and respectful physical activities allow us to reconnect with our bodies in a different way: no longer as an object of violence, but as a means of expression, play and connection. They reconnect children or adults with their bodies in a safe environment, repair damaged or dissociated body image, and promote indirect emotional expression, relaxation, confidence and joy. We believe that this sensory reappropriation is an essential foundation for supporting psychological resilience.

Working on the body is not enough if the participant does not feel safe or free to make their own choices. To support this reappropriation of the body, the association pays particular attention to consent: to this end, participants are provided with coloured wristbands, a simple and visible system. The red bracelet means 'I do not want to be touched' while the green one means 'I agree'. This approach allows everyone to feel safe and gives professionals a clear reference point for adapting their actions and attitudes (in yoga, for example, to help the person get into the right position). Being able to set boundaries explicitly and have them respected without having to justify oneself gives people back power over their bodies and choices. It also allows children who are victims of sexual violence to integrate or reintegrate the concept of consent into their daily lives.

EMOTION AS A PATHWAY TO TRAUMA

Based on our observations, emotional activities such as art therapy, theatre or music therapy play a particularly important role in supporting children and adults who are victims of sexual violence. They offer indirect, safe and symbolic access to what often cannot yet be expressed in words.

When speech is impossible, symbolic expression becomes vital. We find that sexual violence often creates unspeakable trauma, surrounded by shame, fear or amnesia, as well as a dissociation between emotions, memories and language. Emotional shock prevents the child or adult from thinking about what they have experienced. In this context, artistic and emotional mediation allows them to express what cannot be told directly and offers an alternative language for dealing with pain, fear or anger.



EMOTION AS A PATHWAY TO TRAUMA

These activities mobilise psychological functions that are essential in the treatment of trauma: Symbolic distancing: the child/adult speaks through a character, an image, a melody. Projection: what is felt inside can be projected outside, observed and transformed. Mentalisation: gradually, the child or adult understands their feelings and connects them to their thoughts and history, allowing them to integrate the traumatic memory without being overwhelmed.

We also observe that these mediations give children or adults an active role in telling their story. The traumatic impact of sexual violence has often frozen participants in a position of victimhood. Art, theatre or music allow them to become creators, subjects and actors: choosing a role, transforming an ending, representing their emotions without judgement, or releasing internal tensions through sound and rhythm.

These practices promote a secure emotional reconnection, which is essential for children or adults who are often dissociated or overwhelmed by their emotions. They provide a supportive and regulated environment for identifying, expressing and transforming what is felt.

Finally, they contribute to social cohesion and relational healing. In a protected group setting, theatre, music or art can help to rebuild trust in others, restore empathy, playfulness, laughter and peer acceptance.

In our experience, these mediations are not secondary: they are a central tool for helping children or adults rediscover their voice, their body and their identity.



PSYCHOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION THROUGH SYMBOLIC ACTION

According to our observations, psychic activities such as self-defence, kintsugi and martial arts are particularly powerful tools for supporting children, adolescents and adults who are victims of sexual violence. They have a profound effect on rebuilding the self, restoring identity and regaining psychic and symbolic power.

We find that they go far beyond occupational activities or simple technical learning. These practices offer an opportunity to repair what the trauma has damaged: self-confidence, sense of worth, ability to act and protect oneself. The psychological injury associated with sexual violence often leads to a breakdown in psychological continuity, marked by dissociation, shock or loss of inner unity, accompanied by a collapse in self-esteem.

In this context, self-defence, kintsugi and martial arts allow us to work directly on these inner flaws. They restore coherence between the body, the psyche and self-esteem, promoting a new experience of personal power and inner continuity. This process actively contributes to psychological healing and identity reconstruction.



Kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken objects with gold without hiding the cracks but rather enhancing them, offers a direct metaphor for resilience. In the context of sexual violence, this symbolism resonates deeply on a psychological level: it helps to acknowledge one's wounds without shame, transforming shame into dignity and weakness into strength.

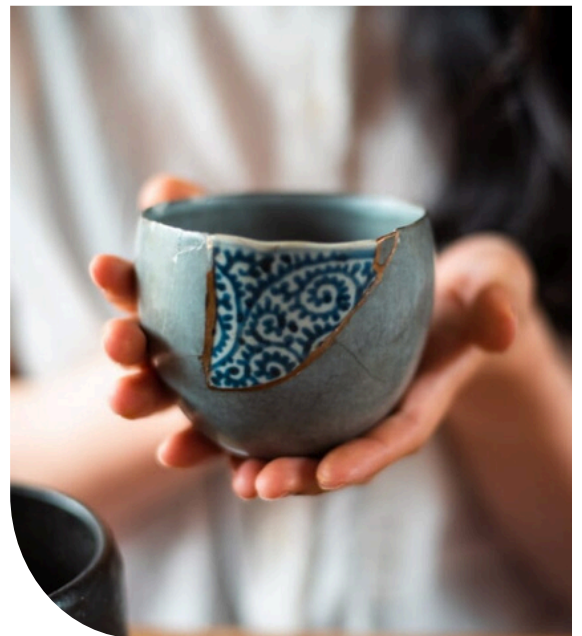
ANCHORING AND REGAINING POWER



These activities enable participants to break free from the passivity imposed by the assault. They work on self-control, mastery of movement and presence in the moment, and offer a ritualised and secure framework that promotes the regulation of stress and aggression. They rehabilitate the body as a legitimate tool of defence, no longer as a target or object, and restore participants' sense of strength, capability and dignity

From gesture to unified self

At the heart of the process, these practices contribute to the unification of the self, which is often fragmented after trauma. Children or adults may feel 'broken' or disconnected from themselves. Psychic activities bring these fragments together through gesture, ritual and symbolism, promoting the recognition of limits and resources, and allowing for an implicit narrative of the journey: the break is not hidden, it is transformed into an active process of repair and inner coherence.



THE HEALING RELATIONSHIP

In the field, we have observed that relationships play a central role in the recovery process for children and adults who are victims of sexual violence. The stay, designed in a safe, non-medical environment and supervised by caring adults, offers several types of healing relationships.

With peers: group dynamics create a mirror effect: each participant realises that they are not alone, which helps to break the isolation caused by trauma. These daily interactions also enable participants to recognise and respect each other's limits and resources, while promoting solidarity and mutual support.

With the support team: the consistency and kindness of the adults allow participants to experience reliable relationships, without fear of aggression or betrayal. This safe environment helps to reduce hypervigilance and provides a space to explore one's emotions, body and boundaries.

With families and loved ones: in some cases, the stay helps to restore or strengthen family and friendship ties, which are essential for the continuity of care and the integration of the resilience process into everyday life.

In this way, the relational bond is not limited to a simple welcoming environment: it is a genuine therapeutic tool, essential for overall recovery after trauma related to sexual violence.





THE SUPPORT GROUP AT THE HEART OF THE HEALING PROCESS

Based on our observations, discussion groups provide an essential therapeutic framework for the recovery process of children, adolescents and adults who are victims of sexual violence. This collective space allows participants to express themselves safely, without fear of being judged or rejected. This relational security is an essential foundation for breaking the silence that has long been marked by shame or fear.

Sexual violence often leads to deep feelings of isolation, difference and guilt. Sharing one's experiences within the group allows individuals to feel recognised, understood and less alone in their suffering. These interactions foster the creation of bonds of trust, empathy and mutual support, offering healing relationship models in contrast to the traumatic relationships of the past.

Listening to peers' stories also helps to normalise one's own reactions and reduce shame and guilt. This collective validation contributes to identity repair. By putting words to the unspeakable and organising their stories, participants begin to integrate their experiences into a coherent narrative, a key step in psychological reconstruction.

THE INNOCENCE IN DANGER TEAM: A CENTRAL THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT



During a therapeutic stay for children, adolescents and adults who are victims of sexual violence, the team plays a much broader role than simply providing support: it is a genuine therapeutic tool.

It is thanks to the stability, kindness and diversity of skills brought together that a safe environment is created, which is essential for in-depth work. The consistency between psychological, physical and creative interventions allows the support to be tailored to each participant, respecting their own pace.

We also observe that the consistency of the bonds formed with professionals promotes the experience of reliable, supportive and restorative relationships. This collective presence plays a key role in restoring self-confidence, trust in others and, gradually, openness to family and social ties.

The strength of teamwork is therefore a valuable support in the reconstruction process. The organising team and speakers take care to respect each other, express their limits and apply consent themselves in their interactions. This consistency creates a real mirror effect for participants, who observe a cohesive and congruent team that embodies what it teaches. This reinforces the feeling of security and shows that it is possible to have relationships based on respect and listening.



RESILIENCE RETREATS: A VITAL IMPACT

The resilience retreats offered by Innocence en Danger are much more than just a break from everyday life: they offer children, teenagers and adults who are victims of sexual violence a safe and structured space where their bodies, emotions and psyche can regain balance and where the process of reconstruction can truly begin.

Throughout our observations, we have witnessed profound transformations: eyes opening, words emerging, bonds forming, fears transforming, and bodies becoming spaces of safety and pleasure once again. Every physical, emotional, or symbolic activity contributes to the healing of psychological wounds and the reappropriation of the self, laying the foundations for resilience.

But none of this would be possible without the strength and commitment of the Innocence en Danger team, the therapists, facilitators and volunteers who work to create a reliable, caring and consistent environment. Their consistency, expertise and humanity embody a model of restorative relationships, enabling participants to regain confidence in themselves, in others and in the world.

These stays serve as a reminder of how crucial it is to invest in prevention, support and recovery after sexual violence. They are concrete proof that the process of resilience is fostered in these safe spaces through appropriate practices and relationships of trust.



We would like to extend our warmest thanks to everyone who makes these stays possible: the Innocence en Danger association, the teams involved, the volunteers, and all the partners who believe in the value of this work. Their commitment transforms the lives of those who have been deeply wounded and offers everyone the opportunity to get back on their feet, to rediscover their voice, their body, their emotions and their dignity.

By making these experiences and their effects visible, we hope to raise awareness among as many people as possible about the importance of these unique spaces and inspire other initiatives to support and promote them. By raising awareness of these experiences and their effects, we hope to sensitise as many people as possible to the importance of these unique spaces and inspire other support and reconstruction initiatives.



LENGTH OF STAY: A DECISIVE FACTOR

The stays currently offered last a minimum of seven days, which is essential to enable real therapeutic work with children, adolescents and adults who are victims of sexual violence. A shorter period is not sufficient to achieve the necessary depth of reconstruction.

Establishing a safe environment takes several days: trust is not built immediately, and fear must subside before participants dare to open up. Emotional expression and regulation also require a gradual process, and therapeutic activities—art therapy, body mediation, self-defence—require repetition and continuity to produce a real effect.

Seven days, a necessary amount of time

An extended stay allows for workshops, discussion time and individual follow-up, promoting the integration of benefits. It also provides the necessary time to support fluctuating post-traumatic reactions and build strong relationships, both with the team and between participants, which is essential for repairing social bonds.

Finally, the end of the stay requires dedicated time: each child and adult must be able to recognise their progress, put their experiences into words and prepare to return to their usual environment with a heightened sense of security.

Therefore, seven days is the minimum duration required to provide a safe environment, enable effective emotional expression and achieve constructive closure. These are essential conditions for initiating a genuine process of resilience to complement the therapeutic work carried out outside the stay.



TESTIMONIALS

Because the words of those who have experienced the stay speak with even greater accuracy and force than our professional observations, we have chosen to give them a voice to testify to the therapeutic impact of this experience.

01.

"My daughter has been transformed since her resilience stay this summer and she thanks you all from the bottom of her heart. She loved the whole team and felt confident. It's a true act of resilience when you know her personal history. As for me, I can never thank you enough for everything you have given my child. It's almost a miracle: it makes me stronger and happier."

02.

« "I saw my children open up, laugh, stand up straight again, assert themselves, speak up, grab the microphone, mature, heal, be protected, know how to express their feelings, say no [...] I see them so much more composed since their return... My daughters experienced, and I quote, 'wonderful joys, unforgettable smiles, justice, strong friendships'. ».

03.

« Hello to the whole team,

Thank you again to the team for this wonderful stay.

I am convinced that resilience stays should be recognised and supported by the state as part of the process of reparations for victims. Your work inspires me and reinforces the requests that our collective is making to institutions regarding the provision of psychosocial support for victims of the X case, and beyond. The holistic treatment and, in particular, the spiritual care offered has put my concepts of support into perspective and enriched them. It is a precious and lasting gift that I will carry with me. »

« Your kindness, your listening ear and your presence have brought much hope and strength to our family. »

04.

05.

« "[...] You have all helped us to feel better, to give us tools that we can use again in our daily lives.

« Thank you for the organisation, where everything was thought out with care and kindness.»

06.

07.

« I saw my daughter smile, rediscover her love of creating, learning and forming bonds. I saw the light of childhood daring to become joyful again. Your presence, your words, your actions were a real balm for our wounds. This stay was a breath of fresh air that gave us the strength to continue on our journey. You showed us how a gesture, a listening ear, a smile can transform a struggle into hope »





TESTIMONIALS

08.

« Thank you for this space for research and inner, mental and physical reconnection. The encounters have a wonderful aspect that everyone will take with them on their journey. You are GEMS, thank you for your commitment, thank you for this wonderful opportunity »

09.

« I would like to thank you all for this extraordinary stay! (and that's an understatement). When I received the invitation email, I could never have imagined all this! Everything has been thought out so that we feel comfortable, down to the smallest detail. The red and green bracelets, the discussion groups where we felt so free to express ourselves, the kindness of the team... The therapists (and the rest of the team) are brilliant and great listeners without being intrusive! The group was great and we felt like family... I think this stay created a bubble of security that I could never have imagined (in a world where no one pays attention to others, a violent and dangerous world that is the opposite of this resilience stay). This bubble of safety and kindness created by the whole team and this wonderful group made me feel emotions I never thought I would be able to feel, comforted me despite the horrible stories and allowed me to begin to heal gently. »

« Hello to the whole team,

10.

I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for this resilient stay. My daughter came back delighted, and so did I. In this place, thanks to your kindness and attention, we found a bubble of gentleness, a breath of humanity that did us a world of good. [...] She felt supported by your words, by your listening and by the attention she received throughout her stay. It gave her the courage to talk and explain what had happened. Her solicitor, who had heard her before, was amazed[...] She perceived a new confidence, a real legitimacy to express herself. I am convinced that the support and love she received from you contributed greatly to this. I also noticed a real change at the start of the school year: whereas last year she had a lot of apprehensions, this year she approached this moment with more confidence and serenity. It is an immense gift. Finally, I would like to congratulate you and encourage you to continue what you are doing. What you offer goes far beyond simply being 'wonderful': it is genuine psychological, moral and emotional support for children, and also for parents. You may not always be aware of the extent of your impact, but I can assure you that I have seen it, experienced it and measured it in my daughter. Your presence and commitment leave a lasting impression, and for that I am infinitely grateful. With all our gratitude. »

TESTIMONIALS

« [...] Here, we have learned. We learned to transform mountains into pretty bumps. We learned to appreciate scars, yes, I dare say it, yes, perhaps even timidly. Thank you is too small a word to describe this week of letting go in our rebuilding, in our healing. For me, you made me feel like something clicked, even if in reality, it's only one step.

11.

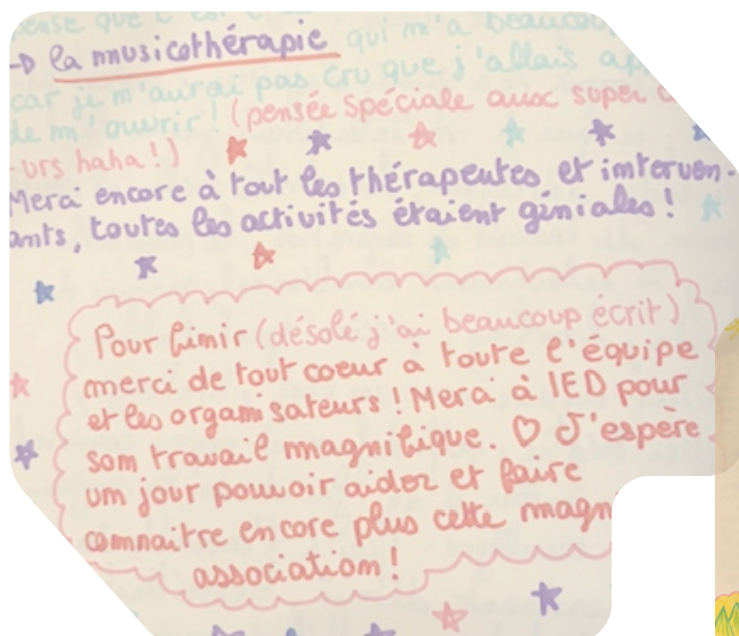
You have a committed, touching and determined team. I thank you for coming into my life like bright shooting stars at a time when I wanted to give up. I won't give up anymore. You have given my life new meaning. »

12.

« We would like to thank you and the entire team once again for inviting us. We had an extraordinary stay, filled with kindness and positive emotions, not only from the team but also from many guests. We met some wonderful people. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for offering us this timeless interlude, which will remain etched in our memories. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for offering us this timeless interlude, which will remain etched in our memories. The children, like us, discovered through you a world filled with kindness. You are a wonderful association, which offers hope. The stay allowed us to realise that we were not alone, that we were supported, and this now brings light to our vision of the future. With all our gratitude. »

13.

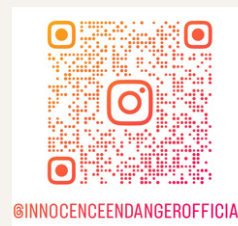
«« I don't feel the same as I did at the beginning of this trip. I really think something has changed in me...»



Thank you for your
attention.

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✨ Together, let's break the silence ✨