

# User Manual

*“Fostering mother-child communication in the context of domestic violence”*

## Context

**Our Mailbox** is a tool that fosters mother-child communication in the context of domestic violence. It can be used by women and children during or after their stay at a shelter.

There are five specific objectives:

- To break the silence on domestic violence;
- To create a safe space for women and children to communicate with each other;
- To encourage women and children to express their emotions;
- To emphasize the positive aspects of their relationships;
- To empower women and children.

## The Tool

The tool includes:

- A mailbox
- Letters and envelopes
- Postcards
- Stamps

Themes:

- Our Story
- The Shelter
- What We Like
- What We Don't Like
- Violence
- A Moment We Cherish
- Our Future
- Significant People

## Let's Personalize your Mailbox

Before building your mailbox, you can personalize it with drawings, stickers, etc.

## Let's Communicate

You can use the letters or the postcards to communicate. While the letters suggest specific themes, the postcards can be used to express yourself freely on any subject.

### Letters

The letters suggest a number of activities related to the themes. On the back of the letters, you can find instructions for younger children, older children and women. Once the activity is completed, you can put it in an envelope, add a stamp and place it in the mailbox.

Mother and child can also complete the activities together if they choose to do so.

### Postcards

The postcards allow you to express yourself on any subject. After writing or drawing a message you can add a stamp and place the postcard in the mailbox.

### Stamps

The stamps represent a variety of emotions. They can be added to the letters, envelopes or postcards in order to facilitate the expression of emotions. They can also be used to decorate the mailbox or to personalize an activity.

### Talk about it?

A legend allows you to let the recipient (the mother or the child) know whether you wish to talk about it. Put a check mark in the appropriate circle.



Talk about it?

## Let's Get Creative!

To access a printable version of this tool, visit [www.femanvi.org](http://www.femanvi.org). You will also find creative ways to build your own mailbox with recycled materials.



## Note to Professionals

The content of this tool was developed based on the findings of a study conducted with children, women and shelter workers in three Canadian provinces. It draws on a feminist analysis of domestic violence and on the principles of feminist practices. When using this tool, it is essential that workers respect women's and children's pace. The activities are optional, and women and children should be seen as those who know best what activities are relevant and appropriate for them to complete. The presence of a professional is not required to use Our Mailbox. Finally, it ought to be noted that this tool was not created to evaluate the quality of mother-child communication and relationships, and therefore should not be used for this purpose.

## Acknowledgment

Special thanks to the children, women and shelter workers who participated in this research project that resulted in the creation of **Our Mailbox**. This tool could not have been developed without their input.

We would also like to thank the individuals and organizations that contributed to the development of this tool. The complete list is available on our website [www.femanvi.org](http://www.femanvi.org).

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## Questions and Comments

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