

Hope for Foster and Adoptive Families

Healing comes through relationship

The children coming to your home are depending on you for relationship. They need a healthy, consistent, loving, supportive, connection with a safe adult. **Wounded children must learn about relationships again through daily interactions with you as the regulated, peaceful, attuned parent.** It does not matter how many hours, days, or months a child is in your home, every new positive interaction makes a difference. God designed the brain to learn through repetition and repetition creates new neurological pathways through those experiences. Transformative healing is possible.

Although each child is unique, all these precious children have one thing in common-Trauma.

According to Dr. Bryan Post of Post Institute, **trauma can be defined as any stressful event that is prolonged, overwhelming, or unpredictable.** As caregivers of these children, you may still struggle with your own trauma history. It is vital that you recognize your own triggers and learn to self-regulate.

The work of parenting these wounded children is not for everyone, only for those who are willing to stay the course and offer the gift of healing through a compassionate relationship. Take courage! God is able to transform you and your family into a place of safety where these dear ones can heal.

Create an Environment for Healing

1. **Affection, Attention, and Attunement.** Your children need this every day, but so do you. Create relationships that are full of affection and attuned attention that your family needs.
2. **WHAT you do matters-HOW you do it matters even more!** With understanding that all behaviors come from stress, parenting must emphasize emotional regulation to decrease the stress response. An important key is stress modification, NOT behavioral modification.
3. **Behaviors are simply an external manifestation of an internal dysregulation.** Regularly practice “slow and low” in your home with your spouse, children, and other family members. Slow the relationship down to a calm state (low voice, both volume and pitch and slow down all body movements.) Create a quiet space in your home- play soothing music, light candles with scent, decrease clutter!
4. **A regulated brain leads to regulated behavior.** Typical parenting strategies, such as consequences and rewards, are not effective with children who are in a state of persistent/heightened stress or arousal- The areas of the brain responsible for cause and effect, abstract and logical thinking are “hijacked” in this state.
5. **Regulation is relationship dependent!** Regulation must start with the parent. Only a healthy parent can provide the foundation from which the child will develop his/her own emotional regulatory system (which allows the ability to manage highs and lows of everyday living.) You must recognize your own triggers and develop strategies to self-regulate. Wounded children are not able to regulate on their own. They are dependent on a regulated caregiver to model and show them through repetitively how to calm their stress response systems.
6. **Calm the brain, calm the behavior.** When regulation increases so does attachment, as well as a reduction in difficult/negative behaviors. With little attention ever paid to the behaviors, change occurs with loving, consistent attention paid to the child.
7. **Their fear need not become your fear!** This job is one of endurance- a marathon. You must be spiritually and physically nourished so you can have enough energy to be in relationship with your child, every day. Make sure you are eating, exercising, using supports (support groups, coaching calls, friends, attending church), laughing and connecting with other creative outlets.

**Looking for more tools to build a healing relationship with your foster or adopted child?
Unlocking the mystery of your child’s TRAUMA could be a piece to your Parenting Puzzle!**

To learn about parent coaching or for more training on this topic,
contact Erin Blain at erin@solvingparentingpuzzles.com