



People Raising Other People's Children Wish...

Presentation for Arizona Parents Commission

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11/18/20

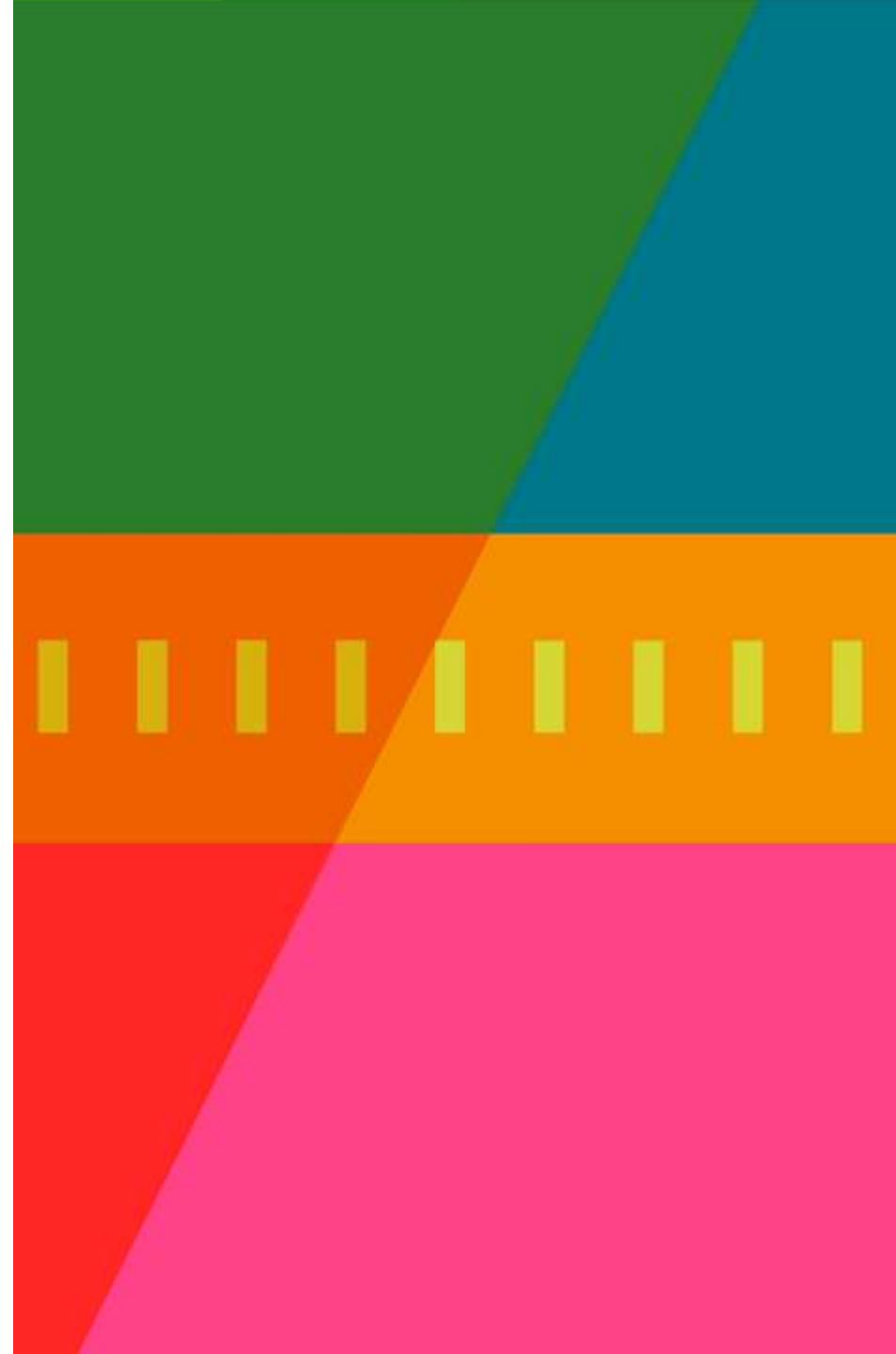
INTRODUCTION

THANK YOU, PARENTS COMMISSION.

- **Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention Education**
- **Grant funding STEP parent education at Children's Advocacy Center in Tucson**

COLLABORATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD

- **Parents, Courts, Education, Law Enforcement, Mental Health Services, and Drug Treatment**
- **Addressing the direct and indirect results of substance abuse.**



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA

A safe, compassionate, healing environment for children who have been a victim or witnessed a crime

<https://www.sacacenter.org/>

A child-sensitive environment providing the following services in one place:

- Investigative and advocacy services to child victims & their non-offending family members.
- Expert medical evaluations, videotaped forensic interviews, crisis intervention and case coordination with law enforcement and Department of Child Safety
- Children who cannot return to their family home receive clothing, books, a blanket and teddy bear to take to temporary foster care. They are fed at the Center if they are hungry, and they are comforted and cared for by trained staff.

Community outreach to prevent child victimization and to stop the cycle of abuse:

- The Prevention Specialist teaches school age children annually how to keep themselves safe and report abuse.
- The Outreach Coordinator provides training to adult professionals throughout southern Arizona on the Mandated Reporting law, including staff from schools, day cares, hospitals and agencies working with children.
- STEP parent education classes

QUESTION FOR THE MONTH:

How can we best support all caregivers who answer the call to care for other people's children?

Kinship caregivers

Foster parents

Permanent Guardians

Adoptive parents

...anyone who commits to caring for a child separated from birth family...

**NOVEMBER IS
NATIONAL
ADOPTION MONTH!**

Consider foster care and adoption.



National Adoption Month 2020

LSIowa.org/foster

Alcohol & Drug Abuse IMPACT ON EDUCATION

EDUCATORS & SUPPORT STAFF face students who are...

- Hungry
- Chronically stressed
- Emotionally fragile
- Challenged in learning - brains changed by trauma and/or exposure to alcohol and/or drugs
- Grieving separation from parents

**Building Relationships as a
Foundation of Trauma-Informed
Practices in Schools**



Alcohol & Drug Abuse IMPACT ON CHILD WELFARE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

CHILDREN REMOVED FROM HOMES...

FACE PLACEMENT in...

- Kinship Care
- Community Foster Care
- Permanent Guardianship & Adoption

GRIEVE separation, losses, abuses

SOME receive MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES...

SOME face JUVENILE DETENTION...

ALL involved in COURT HEARINGS.



Child removals in SWFL

Year	Removals
2008	~100
2009	~80
2010	~90
2011	~110
2012	~120

— DCF Child Welfare Services Trend Report

Removed from home

— living in bureaucracy

A spike in children entering Florida's child welfare system has led to a need for more foster families, better services

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
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BY THE SECOND HALF OF LAST YEAR, CHILDREN IN South Florida were entering the state dependency system by "leaps and bounds," one official said.

Removed from intensely troubled homes and taken into custody by the Department of Children and Families, they were spread out through that bureaucracy, filling foster

SEE FOSTER, AN ►



THREE WISHES

- **Multiagency collaboration**
- **Training for providers - how to support adoptive parents**
- **More support services for kinship, foster, & adoptive parents**

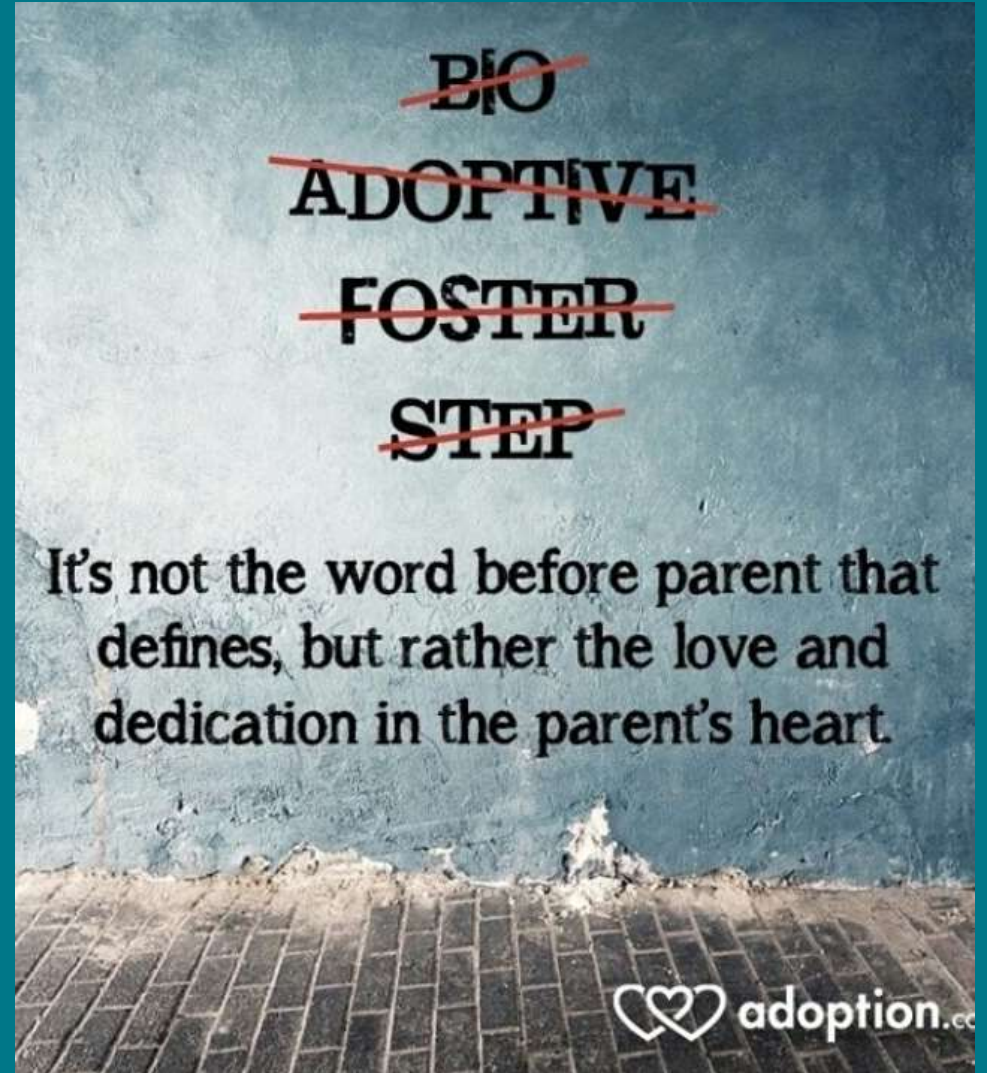
TWO CAVEATS

- “Adoptive Parent”
- Shifting Perspectives

“ADOPTIVE PARENT”

For this presentation:

~ any person who is raising another person's child - no matter the official or legal title.





SHIFTING OUR PERSPECTIVES

REACTIONARY

Why did he/she do that?!

TO

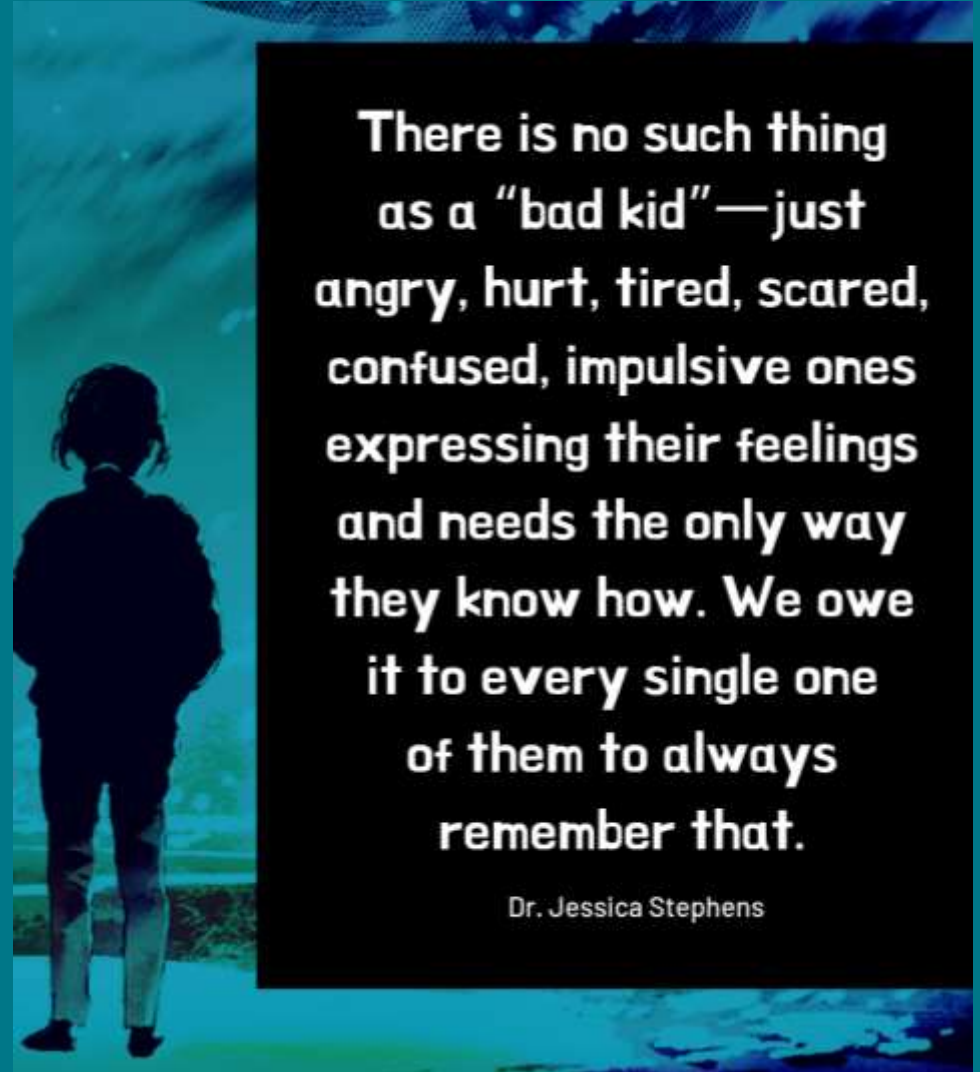
REFLECTIVE

**What happened to her/him
that led to that behavior?**

WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT YOUTH'S LIFE?

It is only as we “adults... pass tests of increasing difficulty that the most severely troubled youngsters begin to trust that [we] adults really care more about *who they are* rather than *what they do.*”

(Dennis & Lourie, *Everything is Normal until Proven Otherwise*, 2006, p. 71)



There is no such thing as a “bad kid”—just angry, hurt, tired, scared, confused, impulsive ones expressing their feelings and needs the only way they know how. We owe it to every single one of them to always remember that.

Dr. Jessica Stephens

PLACEMENT to PERMANENCY to DISRUPTION?

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) requires that child welfare agencies find permanent families for children who cannot return to their birth parents.

- Kinship caregivers, if not,...
- Community foster parents...
- Adoption or permanent guardianship...
- Disruptions... why???



POST-PLACEMENT SERVICES

Historically, once a permanency plan is put into effect, information, support and services for kinship and adoptive families go away.

Efforts to provide post-placement services to families were not always considered necessary, nor the responsibility, of the child welfare agency.

"IT'S INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO RAISE CHILDREN IMPACTED BY THE EFFECTS OF EARLY TRAUMA. FAMILIES FALL APART. MANY ADOPTIONS FAIL. BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY. WHEN WE SUPPORT ADOPTIVE PARENTS, WE SUPPORT KIDS FROM HARD PLACES."

-IACD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FORREST LIEN



**Institute for Attachment
& Child Development**
Families strengthening families



**AFTER PLACEMENT:
WAYS TO SUPPORT ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

MULTIAGENCY COLLABORATION

- **Governor's Office**
 - **Child Welfare**
 - **Education**
- **Mental Health Services**
 - **Drug Treatment**
 - **Law & Courts**
 - **Others...**



Provider Attributes

Adoptive parents wish providers ...

- Saw through a family systems perspective;
- Were culturally competent; and
- Used trauma-informed practices.

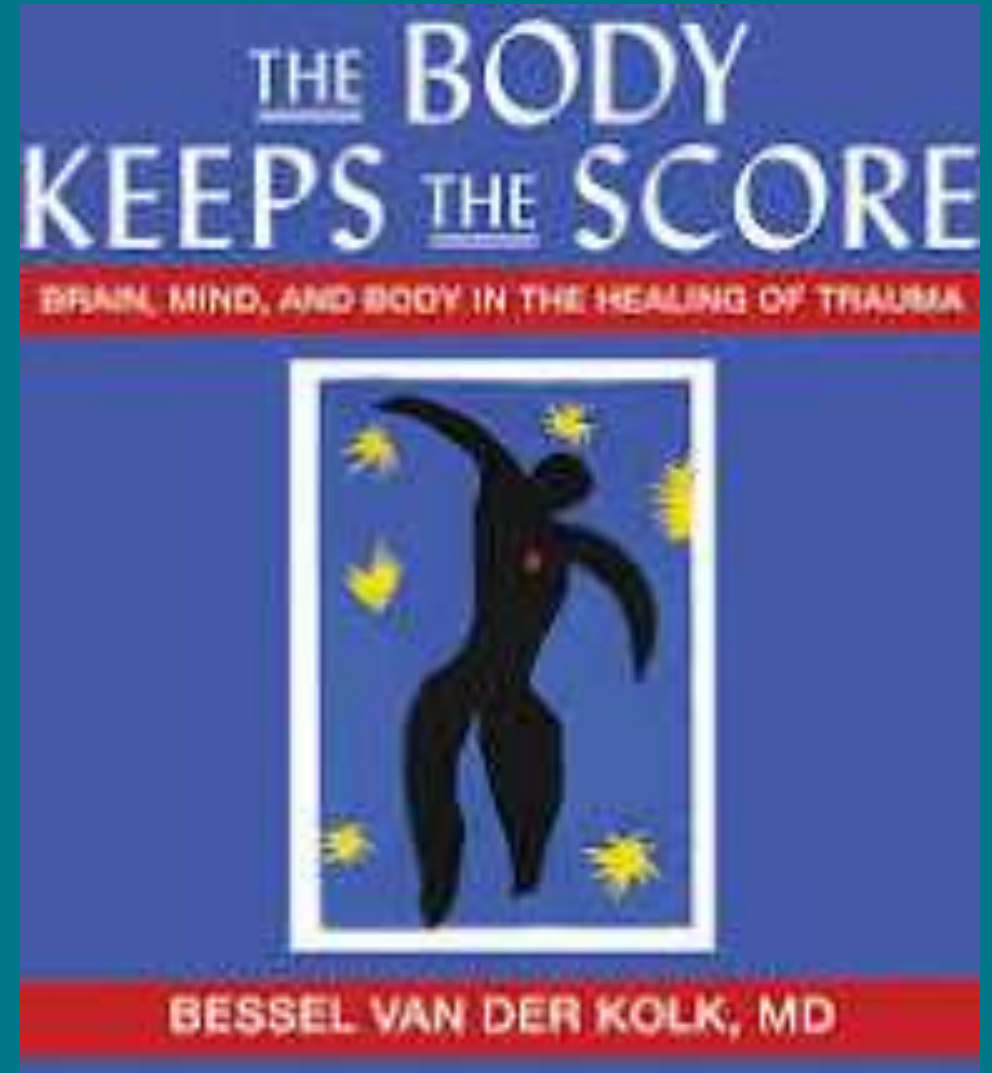


THE ADOPTED FAMILY – NOT AN ORDINARY FAMILY

All families face challenges. However,...
adoptive families face complex issues
different from birth families.

We need help addressing the effects of:

- adverse childhood experiences,
 - developmental trauma,
 - separation & losses,
 - grief,
- and long- lasting identity issues.





Adoptive Parents' Wish List

- **Kinship Support Services Centers & Kinship Navigators**
- **Peer Support Groups**
- **Trauma-Informed Parenting & Self-Care Education**
- **Respite Care**

KINSHIP NAVIGATORS URGENTLY NEEDED!

Apply if you ...

- Can listen to L...O...N...G ...stories without looking at your watch
- Have excellent connections in the community
- Are willing to look under & around rocks for solutions
- Are a non-dualistic thinker; love to be innovative
- Encourage self-empowerment and advocacy in caregivers



Kinship care is the full time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with a child. This definition is designed to be inclusive and respectful of cultural values and ties of affection. It allows a child to grow to adulthood in a family environment.

PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Adoptive parents who finally attend an effective support group,...

- **Wish they had done so sooner**
- **Find companions who understand them**
- **Freely share what hurts most, parenting tips, resources, progress made by children, celebrations**
- **Guard their WEEKLY (or bi-weekly) meeting time**
- **Make lasting friends**



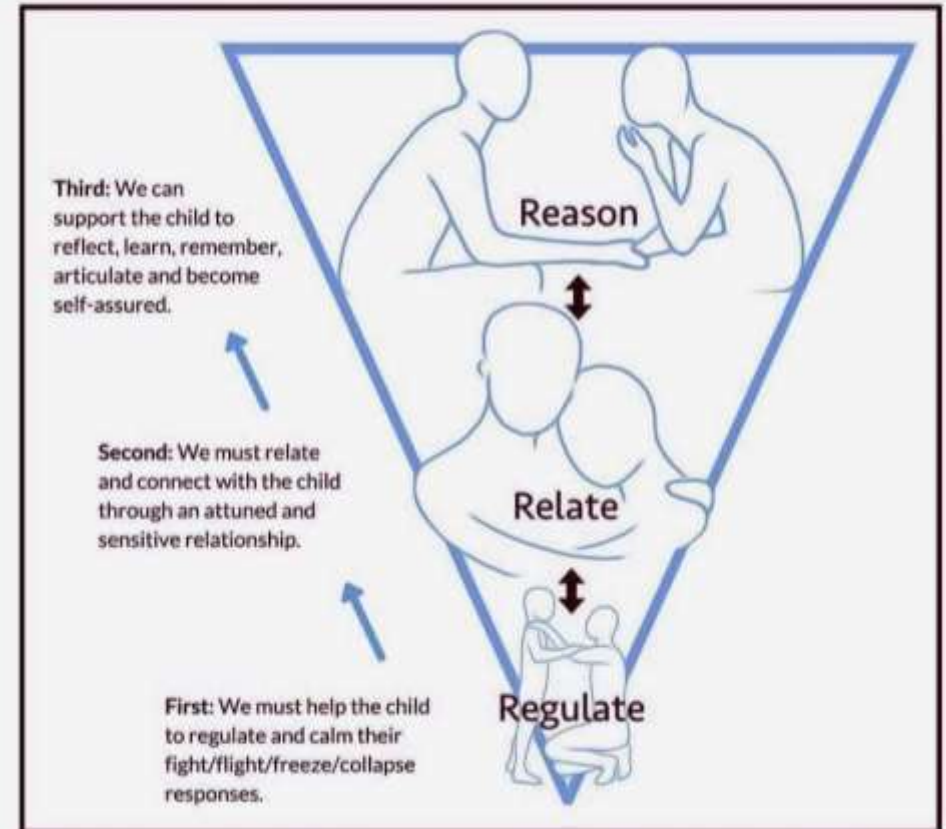
TRAUMA-INFORMED PARENTING & SELF-CARE EDUCATION

Adoptive parents who invest in parenting and self-care education...

- understand their children's behavior in the context of trauma,
- build their capacity to cope with challenges,
- identify appropriate strategies to meet their children's needs,
- choose providers who are trauma-informed,
- are eager to pass on their knowledge, and
- reduce stress as they learn new skills.

The Three R's: Reaching The Learning Brain

Dr Bruce Perry, a pioneering neuroscientist in the field of trauma, has shown us that to help a vulnerable child to learn, think and reflect, we need to support them in a sequence which prioritises regulation first so that the brainstem can be calmed.



Heading straight for the 'reasoning' part of the brain with an expectation of learning, will not work so well if the child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.

RESPITE CARE URGENTLY NEEDED!

Adoptive parents dream about respite care ...

- Time to fill up their wells to keep going and giving to their children
- Not a luxury
- Especially needed by kinship caregivers – often grandparents on fixed incomes



SPREADING THE PIXIE DUST

...by shifting our perspectives of how we view complex blended families... we begin to understand how we can be of greater support

- Treat the family as a whole unit.
- Be culturally sensitive.
- Be trauma informed.

Continue to spread the pixie dust for collaborative efforts wherever we go!



YOUR REFLECTIONS

How does supporting adoptive parents align with your efforts in the prevention of alcohol and substance abuse?

What might you share from this presentation with others to garner more support of adoptive parents?

Questions?



References

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