

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

FEBRUARY 2005



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QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



In This Issue

- 3 My Life**
By: Alex Smith
An adoption story as told by an adopted child.
- 5 Chadd of Utah**
Non-Profit Agency helping those with ADD.
- 6 Inducement: An Adoption Language We Need to Understand**
By: Maris Blechner
- 8 NAMI**
Non-profit group helping the mentally ill.
- 10 A Tale of Two Sisters**
By: Jennilyn and Loresha Kartchner
Poem written by two new sisters.
- 12 Adoption Respite Care: Give Parents a Break**
Respite care information provided by The Family Support Center.
- 14 Poems By Our Young Readers**
By: Angelica and Tino
Poems written by adoptive youth.
- 15 New Adoption Cluster Group**
New support for families in Salt Lake and Tooele.
- Adoption Audio Tapes and CDs**
Adoption Resources provided by von Ende Communications.
- UAC Conference 2005**
Date and location of upcoming conference.

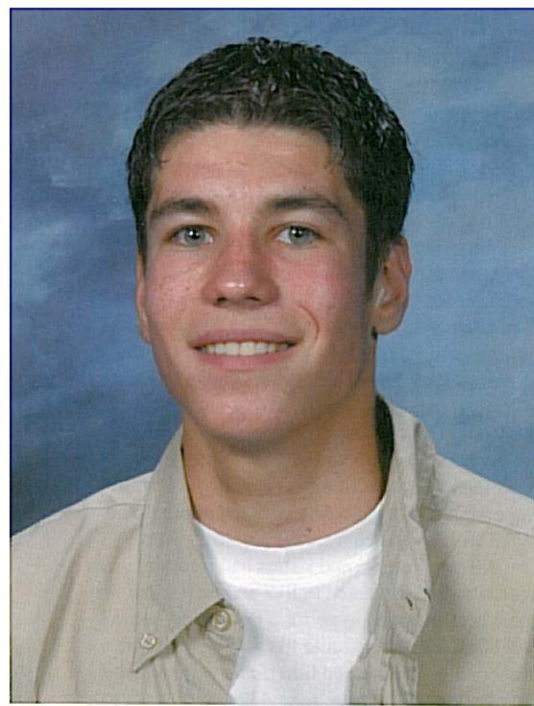
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My Life

By: Alex Smith



I was born in Russia in a city called Magnitogorsk, located in the Ural Mountains in Southwestern Siberia. I have a sister named Julia who was also born in the same place that I was born. Some of my family circumstances were pretty sad. My mom abused alcohol and she would abuse me and my sister when she and her boyfriend were drunk. I have scars from the cigarette burns they did, and three long scars from where my mom stabbed me with a knife. Then I and my sister were taken away from our mom by the government authorities. They placed us in the Magnitogorsk orphanage when I was 3 and my sister was 1.

The unpleasant memories of the orphanage that I remember are still hard to imagine today. I remember being punished once for something I did, but I don't remember what. The orphanage workers picked me up by my feet and held me upside down so that all the blood rushed to my head. Then they lowered me into a bathtub full of cold water until my head was under the water. They just held me like that. Now think about this. I was about 4 years old, and completely terrified. They held my head under water, and I couldn't breathe. I felt like I was going to really die and that it would be the last time that I ever saw my sister. It felt like they held me upside down with my head in the water for a long time, and I tried everything I could to get free. I was thrashing around and trying to get free. Finally, they took me out of the water and from there I don't remember what happened.

When I was 5 and my sister was 3 a family from Utah came and adopted us. I remember feeling so happy because I finally got to leave this dreadful place. I did not speak a word of English, so the parents that adopted me never understood what I said. The plane ride I thought was really neat and I think that my sister agreed with me.

When we arrived in Utah I was really hyper and my mom could not put up with me so she slapped me across the face and from there everything went downhill with her. I lived with this family for a year and a half. During this time I remember good things and bad things. There was abuse in the family but my sister never got any of

it. I was the one that always got hit. My parents were good people, but when my sister and I came out of the orphanage we had a lot of problems. Because I was older and had experienced a lot more abuse, I had more problems than she did. My parents didn't know any of this when they adopted us, and they weren't prepared to handle all of the issues we had. The hitting and other things came from their frustration, and not really having the knowledge of how to deal with me. Eventually my parents had to make a hard choice, and they decided to give me up for adoption and keep my sister.

I was reading a book to my sister the day that I was going to leave. My mom came in the room and said it was time to go. I gave my sister a hug and then I gave my mom a hug. I never saw my dad that day. I really didn't understand what was going on, and what was happening to me. My parents did make a promise that I would always be able to see my sister. After I was adopted by my new family, my first adoptive parents broke their promise. When I left that last day was the last time that I ever saw my little sister. We were so close, and it still hurts that I can't see her.

Now I was living with a second adoptive family and I really did not know what was going on. After getting adopted with this family, abuse started again. This family adopted a total of six kids, and I was the first of the six. Every time they adopted another child the abuse got worse. I was 13, in middle school, and life was very hard.

I was messed up. I was in grade 7 at the time and I enjoyed going to school instead of being at home. When I was at school life felt better because I was not getting abused. But when school ended at the end of the day I never looked forward to it. My parents were good parents, they did a lot of good things, they just were making wrong choices.

Some of the good experiences that I had with my second adopted family are pretty neat. Some of the things that we did as a family were really fun like going to Disneyland.

As I grew up with the family I had ADHD which is having a lot of energy, and not being able to focus on one thing for very long. Now you probably understand why my first adoptive mom hit me while I was at the airport. My first adoptive family used to have me on pills when I lived with them. But after I got adopted by my second family they thought that I did not need the pills so they took me off them. So during all my school years I have missed a lot of learning. When I was in school I could not focus because I was hyper.

As I grew up over the years with this family things were feeling very different for me. My adopted brother Mark [not his real name] was ten at the time and he and I were really close. When Mark came into the family at first the abuse was very bad for him. I got to know him a lot before we adopted him and seeing him get abused was so hard for me. I wish I could have done something.

Some of the abuse in the family was like getting choked, kicked, hair pulled, hitting, slapping, punching, and getting the willow. When we got the willow the dad made us go outside and cut a willow branch off the tree. Then he would take us into the basement, close the windows and doors so the neighbors wouldn't hear us scream, make us strip to our underwear, and then beat us with the willow branch. As I grew up in this family I thought that this kind of treatment was all normal because it had been going on my whole life.

The parents also did some strange things that were just mean. There was one time when for a punishment the dad made a piece of toast. Then he took the entire piece of toast and crumbled it into tiny little crumbs in my bed. He made me sleep in that bed full of toast crumbs that night.

One of the hardest things for me while I was at the age of 13 was when the parents came to school and made me feel two inches tall. They would say my name real loud in the halls at school so that everybody looked at me. When I tried to ignore them the dad would say my name even louder. Then they would call me a baby or say other things like that in front of all my friends. Those days were very hard at school. I was worried about what other people thought of me and I felt like I just wanted to hide, not knowing what to do.

When my birthday came around I was so excited for it. I was able to get some new things and have family members come over and we would all have cake, ice cream, and root beer floats. When I was eight years old the dad was not rude at all. I had received a model car from my grandparents and I remember asking him if I could have his help putting it together and he was kind enough to do so. Those times I always enjoyed because I was able to get along with my dad.

After that my birthdays got to be pretty bad days. He seemed to use my birthday as a time to make me feel bad about myself.

As I got older the dad became more abusive. It seemed now that if I ever said anything wrong or attempted to help him with something that he would hit me or ground me to my room because I messed up. The mom was also abusive, but she did not abuse me as much as the dad. When I would ask if I could do something like go to a friend's house I would always ask the mom because I trusted her more and because half of the time she would say yes. The reason that I never asked the dad about anything like that is because he would always have something else for me to do.

I learned at the age of thirteen to become a very hard worker. That is one of the best qualities that I learned from these parents. Sometimes I never wanted to work because I was so afraid that if I screwed up on something the dad would blow up in my face. But I had to get rid of that fear and learn that he would always get in my face, no matter what.

I had to learn to just listen very carefully which was very helpful. As I think about this today I feel amazed because since then I have learned so much. Thankfully I never screwed up and so I never got abused about that.

My friends that I had were pretty neat. One of them was a great example for me. He and his brother had music that I thought was really cool. We would jump on his tramp and hang out a lot.

I really never knew where I was from or who my birth parents were because no body ever told me. I remembered my sister, and I really missed her. I would send letters and candy and stuffed animals for my sister to a social worker that kept everything that I sent in a box. The social worker would then give the box to Julia when she turned 18.

One day me and my brother decided to run away because we could not take the abuse any more. We felt like we could do nothing in our lives. So I told him to go and pack some stuff at night when everybody was asleep. He did, and so did I. We felt like we were really going to do it. The next morning when we woke up our clothes were in our back packs. Our parents were packing to go on a camping trip, and at the time me and Mark were both grounded. The dad told us that when were up there on our camping trip all Mark and me were going to do was sit, and not move.

When he told us this it gave me even more of a reason to run away. After that me and my brother told our parents we loved them and we gave them a hug. Then we both left to go to different schools. The path that I usually took to school I did not take that morning. Instead, I went to Mark's school and told him to meet me in front of the park where he enters the school. When I got there Mark had not yet showed up so I sat in a swing, waiting. I was so ready to leave this family, and I thought Mark was too.

Finally Mark came out at the end of school and said: "I still don't want to go." I said: "Well I'm not going to get abused any more!" When I said that, Mark said: "Okay, lets do this."

Mark quickly ran inside the school to grab some things and then ran back out and I told him to "follow me and keep up because we are hauling butts outta here!" We jumped a white fence and ran past some houses. The wind was in our faces, and we felt free. All the rules in our lives left our minds. We were so excited to be gone and grow up on our own. We really thought that we could live on our own, and we were determined to do just that.

Darkness came and we went to a grocery store. It was around 10:30 p.m. when we entered the store. In that store we stole a lighter and some cardboard airplanes. We took our stuff and left the store. It was somewhat cold outside, and me and Mark were both hungry.

Mark said I could fall asleep and he would keep a lookout. So I did, and later we switched off and on during the rest of the night.

The next morning we woke up and it was cold. We started our morning by grabbing our cap guns and pretending to shoot at each other. We had such a great time. I was so grateful that we were not going to get abused any more.

We rode our scooters on the Provo river trail, and from there all the way down to the Kmart at the South end of town. In there I went to go and steal

some sling shots, and Mark said he was going outside. So I grabbed what we needed and left the store.

When I left the store a voice behind said: "Sir, did you pay for that?" I replied to the gentlemen "no," and he said, "can you please come this way." So instead of running I just went with him. I went into a room that had TV screens everywhere.

When my parents showed up I felt so hopeless, sad, scared, and I just wanted to have my life end instead of going home and getting the worst punishment that I could imagine. I was so close to Mark at the time and I could not bear having him get it too.

We arrived at home and I had fear like when someone puts a gun to your head and says "where is the money?" The dad told us each to go and cut a willow. Now I knew what the punishment was, and I wished I could have done anything to escape it.

To this very point in my life I wish I could have had a miracle.

He hit me once with the willow, I screamed, then he hit me again but this time it hit the bare skin of the upper part of my leg and it cut the skin open. Blood started to run down my leg, then he hit me again and the skin split open on the other leg. Blood was all over my legs. Then he hit me again and again and again. By this time the mom said "that's enough," but he did not listen. "Whack!" and I was crying my eyes out and the thought came to me my brother will be getting this but that wasn't right because it was mostly my idea to run away. He got hit with the stick but was so lucky because he got hit only three times. All our privileges were taken away and we had to sit on the couch and could not speak to each other or say a word. From that day on we were never allowed to wear pants when we were home, because we wouldn't run away if we were just in our underwear.

We went to court for our stealing spree. While we were in court I gathered up the courage and tried to say that the parents were extremely abusive, but right when I was going to say it someone said something and I lost my nerve and just gave up. We went home after court and sat on the couch all day, and then we went to bed. The next morning we had to go and start our service hours so the parents dropped us off and left. After we were done working the lady driving the van dropped us off at our house. Me and Mark got out and went inside. We realized that no one was home and that they were all in Park City.

Then the thought came to me that we should call the police, so I said to Mark "lets call the police," and Mark said "okay, but you call." I already felt like I should, so I dialed 911. When the lady answered I asked: Is it okay for kids to get hit with sticks?" The operator replied: "Did this happen to you or someone else?" and I said it happened to some of my family. She then asked: "Do you want to tell me what has been happening or do you want me to have a police officer come over?" I asked if I could have a police officer come over.

The police officer came over and I told him everything that was going on in the family. After I had told him everything he looked at me and said: "I think you're full of crap." I felt helpless. Then he asked if he could talk to my brother.

I said yes and I told Mark to come and talk to the officer. He told his story, which was the same as what I had said, and the police officer then apologized to me for not believing me at first. He stayed in his car at the house and said: "if your parents ask why the police are here just play stupid and say you don't know."

When my parents came home they arrested the dad and then all of us kids were taken into State custody and placed in shelter facilities. I was separated from all of my siblings and that was hard because I was hoping to stay with Mark. As I was staying at the shelter a person named Rick Smith came and I had to tell him my whole story, detail by detail, and that was so hard for me. He was my Guardian ad Litem, which means that he was a lawyer whose job was to look out for my best interests. I then went to a foster care family and while I was there I went to a big meeting with my siblings and some social workers to see were we wanted to live.

All my brothers and sisters had different ideas and places where they wanted to live and then when they asked me where I wanted to go for a permanent home I pointed at Rick and said I would like to live with him. Later the social workers asked him if this was something he would consider doing, and he said he would have to go home and talk it over with the family. Then the social worker replied: "great, but we need an answer by 9:00 tomorrow morning." Rick went home and talked to the family and they thought it would be a great idea.

Rick didn't get fired. Instead, his boss thought it was really awesome that Rick would adopt me. Five days later Rick and his wife Elizabeth had a license to be foster parents, and they came and picked me up and brought me to my new home. I was so grateful to have found a family. My other brothers and sisters also got adopted a little while later. I was adopted on my 14th birthday and I was now back on the right track to begin my life the right way.

I have lived with my new family for three years and am now sixteen years old. In my new family I have three brothers and two sisters. I have not seen my biological sister, Julia, since I was six. We have tried everything, but my first adoptive parents still won't let me see her. I am waiting patiently until that day comes, and I know that one day I will be reunited with Julia.

During the time that I have lived with my new family I have learned a lot about myself and how to find a lot of positive things out of all the bad things that have happened. One of the main positive things that I have learned is telling my story to people. When I tell my story people are touched and inspired by what they have heard. I hope to keep growing and learning in my life and stand a little taller.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Smith is a 16-year-old junior at Provo High school, where his natural talent has merited a spot in the Honors Art program. A life filled with adversity has left him, at various times, with labels such as "Reactive Attachment Disorder", "PTSD", "Learning Disabled", "ADHD", and many others. But Alex is an example of triumph over difficulties, and today is a very happy, active, normal teenager, who takes every opportunity to share his life story, so as to lift and inspire others. He is bonded with and very much an integrated part of his family of almost 4 years, which includes his parents and 5 siblings, and he maintains contact with as many of his "extended" families as possible. Alex enjoys basketball and soccer, loves to learn, and hopes for a career in law enforcement. His most recent accomplishments include a job, a driver's license . . . and dating(!).



CHADD OF UTAH

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Disorders

is a non-profit National, State and Local organization working to provide education, advocacy and support for families dealing with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. **CHADD of Utah** strives to promote the National CHADD objectives of being the preeminent source of accurate, scientifically evidence-based information about AD/HD throughout the State of Utah. CHADD branches offer support groups in several areas of the state. **CHADD branches also offer a series of 7 rotating**

classes titled “Parent-to-Parent: Family Training on AD/HD” for anyone who wants to learn about AD/HD. There is a cost of \$40/couple for the entire series to cover the cost of the materials. Some scholarships will be available for those who need help covering the cost. CHADD membership is not required to attend support group meetings or the classes. However, **membership is encouraged for all parents of children with AD/HD, educators and health professionals.**

Membership benefits include: Information and Resource Guide, **Attention! Magazine**, CHADD of Utah affiliation, National Call Center, National Website with “members only” site and monthly chats, Legislative, Regulatory and Grassroots advocacy information.

For CURRENT information on local CHADD Branches Support Group meetings or Parent to Parent class locations, times and pre-registration details check, the CHADD of Utah website: www.chaddofutah.com or call CHADD of Utah at 801- 537-7878.

Coordinator for CHADD of Utah is Melanie Hatch -- hatch7@pacifier.com

Salt Lake Branch

Coordinator: Dauneen Abel

801-936-5784

Support Group meeting the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the 2nd floor classroom at Valley Mental Health Out Patient Services building, 1141 East 3900 South, Suite A170 Salt Lake City, Utah.

Parent to Parent: Family Training on AD/HD classes available at the same location Winter, Fall and Spring Pre-registration required

Check web site or phone line for information

Davis County Branch

Coordinator: Kathy Romney

801-295-5565

Parent to Parent: Family Training on AD/HD classes are held at 6:45 P.M. in the Personal Development Center of the Davis School District Kendall Building, 75 East 100 North, Farmington, UT. Pre-registration is required. Call Kathy for more details.

Weber/Box Elder Branch

Coordinator: Linda Tuttle

Contact Linda Clay at 985-6691 or check website for information about the Support Group and/or

Parent to Parent: Family Training on AD/HD class schedule and location

Utah Valley Branch

Please check CHADD of Utah website for updated information.

ADULT Support Group

Group Facilitator:

Tom Foster, LCSW

Every 3rd Thursday of the month from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Medical Building at 508 E. South Temple, Suite 201, Salt Lake City

Please call Paula Foster @ 328-8817 or email her at interfaceworks@aol.com to register so there will be enough room for all.

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CHADD of Utah (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders)

Edward C. Callister Foundation

INDUCEMENT: AN ADOPTION LANGUAGE

By: Maris Blechner

The following article is the outgrowth of a workshop presented at the 2004 NACAC Conference, and prior NACAC Conferences. It introduces part of the belief system of a cutting edge adoption agency in the metropolitan New York area, a concept that has helped adoptive families and helpers of families throughout the United States to see the actions of acting-out adopted children in a brand new and more positive way. The author, Maris Blechner, is the Executive Director of FAMILY FOCUS ADOPTION SERVICES, and states unequivocally that she is presenting material that is not original to her, but was developed by her creative, innovative, always-thinking, deeply-committed senior staff.

In a world where so many of us do so much talking, sometimes we forget that there are other ways to communicate. In the world of adoption, particularly, communication without words takes on special meaning. Psychologists have given us a concept of non-verbal communication that makes an incredible amount of sense in the context of adoption. It is called inducement. Whatever else inducement may be to the world at large, those of us who live with, or work with, adopted children need to understand that inducement is absolutely the language of the abandoned. We at FAMILY FOCUS are convinced that it is the most important conceptual tool that we as workers can give to our adoptive families. It is more important than knowing a child's history. It is more important than going to therapy. It is more important than any traditional tool for attempting to understand why children act the way they do.

What is inducement? At least as we have appropriated it from the psychologists - it is simply defined. With no words required, one person sets up a situation to make another person feel just what that first person feels. All of us do it to a greater or lesser extent. One classic and easily recognized example is that we come home from work after a terrible day - say nothing to anyone - but as a result of our actions everyone else in the house now feels as angry or upset as we do. It's a very common human experience and certainly not limited to abandoned children. However, it is perfected by the abandoned. No one is better than an abandoned child at setting up a situation to make someone special feel exactly what that child feels.

There is no question that the foster children whom we place for adoption are filled with negative feelings - the "baggage" that the field talks about so much. What is the common experience that all children placed for adoption share? Abandonment --- or, better stated, perceived abandonment. In truth, there are many birth parents who made plans for their children and perhaps even walked away purposefully to insure that their child would then have a better life. Yet, as we have learned from adoptees themselves, the sense of having been abandoned is central to the adopted child anyway.

What is abandonment? It is the most awful horrible experience that any human being can know. In fact, there are actually no words in our language to truly describe it. Then too, when are adopted children abandoned? Usually pre-verbally, at a very young age, which adds to the sense that there are no words to adequately describe their feelings.

We can, however, make a strong list of some of the emotions that feeling abandoned engenders. How does an abandoned person feel? Isolated, guilty, lost, filled with profound sorrow, enraged, worthless, hopeless, helpless, and the biggest of them all, crazy. This, too, we learned from adoptees. Unfortunately, it makes a great deal of sense - if one defines crazy as feeling that one's inner self is totally "out of sync" with the outside world. Think of a child moving to a new home: feeling sorrow when everyone else is happy; feeling anxious when everyone is saying "Don't worry;" feeling lost when everyone else is saying how lucky he or she is to be there.

Then add the intensity that is an integral part of inducement. A child who feels abandoned feels intensely alone; intensely angry; intensely sad; intensely mad; and intensely crazy. Intensity is one of the qualities

of all inducement. The other quality is that all of the feelings that a child shares in this non-verbal way are negative. Anyone working in the field with people who have adopted has surely heard adoptive parents complaining that they are feeling intense negative feelings as a result of what their children are doing. In fact, parents who call an agency, or a friend, or a therapist, often use the same words that describes an abandoned child's feelings: "I feel so hopeless." "I have never felt such rage before." "I just feel so sad." "This child is making me crazy." That is the solid proof that inducement is going on.

In short, the difference between general inducement, the non-verbal communication technique used by the rest of the world, and the inducement done by adopted children, is that the feelings that the children induce in their adoptive parents are specifically the horrible feelings of abandonment, carried deeply inside the children for long periods of time, until they feel safe enough to communicate them. Certainly the field has long recognized that foster children keep their deepest feelings buried deep inside. If they were to communicate them to their foster parents, in the non-verbal way that children most often communicate, it would be an explosion - and it would result in the children being removed from the foster home and probably institutionalized. We know that foster children have developed a thick skin, as part of their coping mechanisms for surviving in foster care, knowing that they don't have a permanent family of their own. Part of these foster care survival skills involve keeping those negative feelings deeply buried.

What makes a child finally open up and start to communicate those horrible deeply-buried feelings? We believe that it is the sense of being safe, and having a forever family, that comes with a good adop-

LANGUAGE WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND

tive placement. If that is so, then a child's communication of deeply buried feelings is absolutely a good thing. Communication is certainly good, and part of healthy family life. It is proof that an adoption is a success, that a child has accepted that his or her adoptive parents are "real" parents --- because it is to one's real parents that a child will want to communicate and finally start to get rid of that lifetime of negative feelings. Yet, how does that success often look? Very bad. How does it feel? Very bad. How does the outside world see a child who is acting out (which is the way that children communicate)? As an out of control child; as a child who doesn't want to live there any more; as a family in bad shape.

What is FAMILY FOCUS saying? If communication is good - and if a child communicates by acting out - then what looks bad, and feels bad, is really good..... what looks like a failing adoption is really a strong and successful adoption. (Child Protective Services workers must take note here. They are called in when children are acting out, and they too could misperceive these special dynamics of a solid adoption as a family in dysfunction or distress.)

What then is the purpose of the inducement? Is it only for the children to communicate how they feel to their parents? No. That is a part - but, like all unconsciously motivated behavior, it has more than one purpose. Its biggest purpose is a child's cry for help to the parents. The children induce these terribly painful feelings inside the adults - (although it is perhaps only actually some small fraction of what the children feel) - and then they sit back (unconsciously) and watch what the parents do with what are now THEIR feelings. If the adult can't handle such terrible feelings without rejecting the child, or doing something else negative, then what chance does the child have to handle those same feelings?

At those critical moments in a placement, when a child has opened up and begun to heal by communicating some horrible feelings (without even being aware of what is happening) and letting a parent feel them, what is the worst thing that a parent

can do? Blame the child. A parent holding a child accountable for his or her behavior makes that child feel safe. Blaming the child for how the parent feels even has a kernel of truth to it. The child is doing the acting out that he or she does purposefully. It is deliberate - although most times, but not always, unconsciously. However, looking at what psychology teaches us, nobody but the individual is responsible for his or her feelings, and what is done with them. The parent who understands that there is good communication going on will then practically deal with the acting out behavior, and respect the inducement for its tremendous value.

If, as sometimes happen, the adoptive parent, or the worker, or the therapist, or the school, or Child Protective Services, use the acting out on the part of the children, the inducement-motivated behavior on the part of the children, to decide that the adoption is a failure, then they are doing exactly the wrong thing at exactly the wrong time. Not only are they feeding the confusion and feeling of craziness already within a child, but they are breaking up a solid family.

There are two points that must be emphasized in helping to understand inducement. First of all, in order for a child to act out sufficiently to communicate negative feelings to adoptive parents, that child may have to do some pretty terrible things. Children are masters at understanding how to push buttons. One family may react terribly to a child hurting a family pet. Another family may react equally terribly to a child eating leftovers out of the refrigerator without leaving any for anyone else. The children have a strong unconscious sense of how to engender those feelings. Second of all, and more surprising to the field, inducement is a dynamic that enters an adoptive family even if that family was a child's foster family for a dozen years. It is only when a child believes that he or she is finally going to be adopted, and will finally have a real family, that the inducement begins. Most children just in foster care won't communicate those feelings, and most foster families are not trained, or warned, that becoming your child's adoptive parent changes the entire dynamic in the foster home.

FAMILY FOCUS has placed hundreds of older children and teens who have absolutely believed that their adoptive parents are going to be there for them forever. The natural next step would be for those children who finally feel safe to start to open up and communicate those feelings. There has absolutely been inducement in many of those families - and sometimes terrible acting out because of the child's need to induce his or her negative feelings in the adoptive parent. However, our families are forewarned. They are trained to understand that inducement is a good thing that feels bad, an intensity that is almost shocking sometimes in its depth. Those families have lots of negative behavior to try to cope with, and no easy time. The issue for those of them who understand and believe in the concept of inducement, though, is never disruption. They hold on and do what parents have to do.

The question is often asked about what adoptive parents are "supposed" to do during the inducement stage. There is no magic answer. Knowing that inducement is happening, and that it is healthy communication, takes a great deal of weight off of parents - and stops them from worrying that their adoption is failing. Beyond that, they have to act like all parents, dealing with their children's negative behaviors as any other parents would, having appropriate consequences, and rewarding positive behavior. The responsibility of parents is always to model appropriate responses to both a child's negative behavior and their own negative feelings. The same holds true for the negative feelings that are induced by the child, and recognized by the parents as such. Parent show children how to deal with anger, for example, or sorrow, or disappointment, by talking about the feelings, and talking about what they are doing about them. It is part of a the lifelong parenting "job." The same is true with negative feelings that effect other children in the house. Parents deal with these as they would deal with all sibling issues.

FAMILY FOCUS presents workshops and talks about inducement out of a strong belief that the more families and workers understand it, and sees it as a healthy adoption dynamic, the more the adoption field, like the children, will thrive.



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(801) 323-9900
(877) 230-6264 www.namiut.org

NAMI is dedicated to the eradication of mental illnesses and to the improvement of the quality of life of all whose lives are affected by these diseases.

NAMI is a nonprofit, grassroots, self-help, support and advocacy organization of consumers, families, and friends of people with severe mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic and other severe anxiety disorders, autism and pervasive developmental disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and other severe and persistent mental illnesses that affect the brain.

Founded in 1979 as the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, NAMI today works to achieve equitable services and treatment for more than 15 million Americans living with severe mental illnesses and their families. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers participate in more than one thousand local affiliates and fifty state organizations to provide education and support, combat stigma, support increased funding for research, and advocate for adequate health insurance, housing, rehabilitation, and jobs for people with mental illnesses and their families.

Local affiliates and state organizations identify and work on issues most important to their community and state. Individual membership and the extraordinary work of hundreds of thousands of volunteer leaders is the lifeblood of NAMI's local affiliates and state organizations. The national office, under the direction of an elected Board of Directors, provides strategic direction to the entire organization, support to NAMI's state and affiliate members, governs the NAMI corporation, and engages in advocacy, education and leadership development nationally.

The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

NAMI Utah Affiliates and Support Group Information

Box Elder	Carol Redelings ceredelings@yahoo.com	(435) 723-6378	Call for information
Cache Valley	Wendy Simmons Nami_cache@hotmail.com	(435) 753-0851	1st Tuesday @ 7pm/Education meeting 8pm North Logan Library, 475 E 2500 N No. Logan, UT 84341
Cedar City	Rosie Fletcher swe-po.rfletcher@email.state.ut.us	(435) 867-7631 (H) (435) 867-7654 (W)	2nd Tuesday @ 7pm 2111 N Main St. #6 Cedar City, UT 84720
Davis County	Teri Stock cstock4@aol.com	(801) 299-0384	3rd Tuesday @ 7pm Davis Behavioral Health Center, 291 S 200 W Farmington, UT 84025
Delta	Linda Lundberg Lindalundberg@utah.gov	(435) 864-5583	Last Wednesday @ 7pm Alternative Learning Center Delta, UT 84624
Green River	Joni Pace jonipace@hotmail.com	(435) 564-8221	Every Thursday @ 6pm Community Center, 160 S Broadway Green River, UT 84525
Kanab	Terra Sue Robinson	(435) 644-8326	Call for information
Moab	Dixie Dalton Ufpddalton@hotmail.com	(435) 259-7348 435) 260-2111 (Cell)	"Seek Haven" Moab, UT 84532
Ogden/Weber	Pat & Eric Erickson patnboyce@relia.net Vanessa Daniels vanessautah@hotmail.com	(801) 479-8095 (801) 627-8130	1st & 3rd Thursday @ 7pm So Ogden Sr. Citizens Cntr., 580 39th St. Ogden, UT 84403
Price	Teresa Neilson teresan22@hotmail.com Amy Nicholson Z4yr@sisna.com	(435) 687-2251 (435) 759-2267 (Cell) (435) 637-4927 (435) 650-6986 (Cell)	Call for information
Richfield	Elaine King Pkek2@altazip.com	(435) 896-5186	2nd Thursday @ 6pm EMS Building, 950 N 55 W Richfield, UT
Salt Lake City	Sal Ventura ventura@xmission.com	(801) 537-6377 (W) staff only (801) 363-4595 (Fax) (801) 243-6105 (Cell) staff only	2nd & 4th Wednesday @ 7pm Alliance House, 1724 S Main St. SLC, UT 84115
Salt Lake City (Spanish)	Kelly Feller kellyfeller@aol.com	(801) 809-1049 (Cell)	Call for information
Central Valley	Ardis Jacobson jacard@grangermedical.com	(801) 685-7343	1st Wednesday @ 7pm Calvin Smith Library, 810 E 3300 S SLC, UT 84107
East Millcreek	Karen & Al Nugent ktnugent007@yahoo.com	(801) 277-0065	4th Tuesday @ 6:30pm Valley Mental Health, 5965 S 900 E SLC, UT 84107
South Valley	Harvey & Lois Hirschi alohahirschi@msn.com	(801) 571-9159	1st Thursday @ 7pm Sandy Sr. Citizens Cntr. 9310 S 1300 E Sandy, UT 94094
Southwest Valley	Brenda Munk brendamunk@msn.com	(801) 280-6451	2nd Thursday 7-9pm Waxies, 2538 S 3850 W SLC, UT
St. George	Ruth Pace ruthpace@redrock.net	(435) 688-9458	1st Tuesday @ 7pm Southwest Cntr., 354 E 600 S, #202 St. George, UT 84770
Sanpete County	Kathy Brown nami4kat@yahoo.com	(435) 462-4490	2nd Wednesday @ 6pm Call for more information
Summit County	Sherry Walsh dwalsh@walshphotography.com	(435) 649-0023	1st Wednesday @ 6pm 1753 Sidewinder Park City, UT 84060
Tooele	Terry North maintain@xmission.com	(435) 843-5008 (H) (801) 913-9165 (Cell)	2nd & 4th Thursday @ 6:30pm Tooele City Building
Utah County	Grover Jenson groverjenson@hotmail.com	(801) 225-3855	2nd & 4th Tuesday @ 7pm Utah St. Hospital, Heninger, 1300 E Center St

A Tale of

The following is a story of how two little girls from v
who they are and b

Written by Jennilyn (age 10) and Loresha Kartchner (age 10)

Loresha

My name is Loresha Kartchner. I came into foster care when I was seven years old. When I got taken away I felt very sad and mad. I kept thinking "Why do they care? It is my life!" but I never said it out loud. When I was little I never understood, but when I got older I got it. When I missed my birth mom I got angry. I would scream and yell. After a while I got it. No one wanted to be around me plus it really hurt their feelings because how hard they tried to make me feel a part of their family.

Jennilyn

Hi . My name is Jennilyn. I am ten years old. When I was almost six we started doing foster care. I was the youngest of nine kids till we started adoption. I liked doing foster care because I got to meet new people. One thing that I didn't like is some of the time I would fight with the foster kids and they would get into my things.

Loresha

I was in four foster homes. In my last foster home I found out that I was going to be adopted. My caseworker had told me I was going to be adopted. I had no idea what she was talking about. Then I found out. I wasn't going back to my mom! They were going to put me with some strangers. They were going to split me and my sisters up. I wanted to punch them and yell, but I didn't know who it was. When I was with my foster parents I ran away. My foster parents did not know where I was until I came back. My foster mom said if I ran away again my caseworker would take me away. Now I was mad about two things. I cried and cried that night. It felt weird laying in a bed when I was so mad, so I got out of bed and pleaded with my foster mom to let me sleep outside. She finally gave in. I had no intention of going inside! I went inside and saw my foster mom laying on the couch waiting for me to come inside.

Jennilyn

Right before my eighth birthday a caseworker told my mom that there were three little girls that were looking for a home. One night those three little girls came over. One of them was one, one was six, and one was seven just like me. I thought that she looked funny cause she had dark, dark skin. While they were over we played lots of games and had fun.

Loresha

Our foster parents started taking us to all of these houses. Everyone kept giving us stuff, so by the end of the week it was like Christmas to us. But that didn't make us pick them. We chose the Kartchner house because it was big. They didn't give us stuff and I fell in love with the dog named Jazz. After we went home we remembered their house as the candy bar house because we had played a candy bar game. It was very fun.

Jennilyn

A couple of days later we were told that we were going to be one of the families that might adopt them. I screamed and shouted "Hurray!" The day that we were going to know for sure was coming up. Me and my brother ran home and my mom said that it was changed to next week. That whole next week we waited and waited for the day to come. Finally it came and we were chosen!

Loresha

We were in California because we had gone on vacation to Disneyland. Our foster parents told us that they had chosen who was going to be our parents. Before she told us she asked "Who do you guys want to go to?" "The candy bar house!" we said. "Good" said our foster parents because that is who they chose. I couldn't keep my mind off of it. It was so exciting.



Two Sisters

Two girls from very different backgrounds are learning to love each other for the first time, bonding as forever sisters.

Jennilyn

At first we just had a couple of sleepovers. Then they moved in. One good thing that happened when they moved in was I had a new playmate. A bad thing was Loresha would get in my bed at every night because she was afraid. Another bad thing was that she would swipe my candy when I fell asleep. Another good thing was there were more girls than boys in the house!

Loresha

What was good about being in the Kartchner house is we went a lot of places we hadn't ever been before. The bad things were I was kind of scared being in a strangers house. Since I was so nervous I got hives. When I was at school I had to call my mom to come and get me some stuff to put on it. When I moved in I shared a room with Jenni. I liked sharing a room with her because she would let me borrow her clothes and when I was scared at night I would climb in her bed to sleep. What I didn't like is I would get in trouble for doing that and some of the stuff I did made Jenni angry, but that didn't make me hate her.

A year past and my birth mom had another baby. She too was taken away and put into foster care. We found out she was our birth sister and that we were going to adopt her. This made me think more how my birth mom was throwing away more kids. It made me mad and sad at the same time. I began to be very bad in school. I started taking things, being mean to my teacher and hanging out with the wrong friends. I kept getting into trouble just because I was mad. Finally I noticed that I was losing stuff. I thought real hard. Then I started being really good. My parents didn't know what was going on until I told them. Then I got over it and thought "At least my baby sister is going to be with us." I said to myself one day. So I started being good.

Jennilyn

As the years have gone by we have gotten in fights, but we have always made up and played again. Bad things have happened and good things but we always try to make things turn out right. We are sisters and that is how it is going to be forever.

Sometimes Loresha says that she hates this family and wants to run away. I have cried and told her that I really try to be a good sister and I feel really bad when she says that. She says that she feels bad after that happens and tries to apologize. And when she says that she loves it here and is having fun, I feel good and tell her that I am glad that she likes it here!

Loresha

Through all of this I have learned what a family is. A family is a group of people maybe one, maybe more but the thing is in a family, to be a family you have to love. To be a true family you have to love them and they have to love you. And guess what! I have two families that love me and I love right back. Best of all I have a very pretty, nice and friendly sister named Jennilyn.

Sometimes it is hard to be an adopted sister, but I am glad I have a sister I can play school with students, roller blade, punch each other in the arm when we get mad so we remember to be nice, (Jenni and Loresha made a pact that if one was not being nice the other would affectionately punch them in the arm and smile to remind them to be nice) and best of all a sister to put my arms around. I am glad that Jenni is my sister

Jennilyn

Sometimes it is hard to have an adopted sister but I am glad I have a sister to play house, tag, paper dolls, games, dress ups, sports and school with. I am glad that Loresha is my sister.

adoption Respite Care gives parents a break

“What is adoption respite?” is the most asked question when parents first hear of the services provided by Family Support Center of Midvale. Adoption respite is a service we provide to adoptive parents who have a child that has been adopted through DCFS or another state agency. This respite can reduce child care demands on the parents for a short time. Our adoption respite providers come to the home and allow the parent to go on a much needed break of 2 to 5 hours. The providers take care of all the children in the home (not just the adopted ones) for up to five hours at a time. If in-home care isn't possible, the Family Support Center has a Date Night on the 2nd Saturday or the 4th Friday of each month at our Center in Midvale and Sugarhouse.

The other question often heard is, “You provide respite care?!!” Many parents hadn't known of the temporary help we provide. They are excited to learn someone is there to help. Child care is demanding, and many parents seldom get a chance to take a long-needed break, to go to appointments, or to visit with friends.

After the first call, our Adoption Respite Providers visit the home for an assessment of needs and review the services they pro-



vide. Once they meet the children and the parents, a match is made to select the best provider for the family's needs and scheduling can begin. The Adoption Respite Providers are flexible and are available during the day or in the evening, week days or on weekends. We have tried to make this service as financially reasonable as is possible for everyone.

Adoption Respite Care is more than merely providing a babysitter. All providers are trained in child development and crisis care. They are CPR certified, have successfully completed a criminal background check, and have extensive experience in crisis nursery interactions. Each provider has training in behavior disabilities and other childhood disorders. Providers carefully plan activities geared for the children's ages and they even bring toys and games!

The respite break not only helps the parents, but even the children need and enjoy respite care. It gives the children a change in their daily routines, allows them to build new relationships, and move toward independence. Children look forward to the respite care as much

as the parent looks forward to the break.

New families moving to the area are grateful for the Adoption Respite Care the Family Support Center provides. Many don't have anyone to turn to for emergency care, and having someone they can trust with their children is vital during the moving adjustment period.

For more information or to schedule a provider to come to your home for an assessment, call Family Support Center, 801-255-6881. Ask for an Adoption Respite Provider. For children over 10 years of age, call the Youth Service Center, 801-269-7500. Adoption Respite Care allows parents to be refreshed to enhance the healthy family system.

Adoption respite care services also available at:

Family Support Center of Ogden: 801-393-3113
Family Support and Treatment Center in Orem: 801-229-1181

KIRSTEN IS WAITING...



Kirsten, age 14, is a teenager who loves to be with her friends and is very socially active. She loves to be outdoors and dreams of having a family of her own.

Kirsten is a typical 14 year old girl in terms of her likes and tastes. She can be very sweet, getting gifts for others and writing them cards.

She is reluctant to form attachments, as she know most of the relationships in her life are temporary. She has a good relationship with her current foster parents after the result of much effort. Kirsten also has a sister she must keep in contact with.

This is an adoptive/foster placement. Kirsten prefers to be an only child, but has usually been in homes with a lot of children.

To inquire about Kirsten or for any questions, contact The Adoption Exchange at 1-866-872-7212

Poems by our Young Readers

Adopted siblings, Tino age 11 and Angelica age 10 each wrote a poem as part of a 4-H project. Both poems earned blue ribbons in the Cache County Fair, and Anjelica's poem went on to win a blue ribbon in the Utah State Fair.

Family

By Angelica

I am a dog because I am energetic.
I like to rest. And, your face, I like to lick.

I don't obey all the time
Even when I make a rhyme.

I don't like ugly frogs. I like leaves,
But I don't like thieves.

I like being a dog because I like to bark,
And I like going to the park.

I am not dumb
Because I want a chum.

I am really strong;
Even though I'm right or wrong.

I don't belong
Because I run along.

I wish I had a family my whole life long.

They would sing me a song
And I would sing along.

If adopted, I would belong.

I tell you this story today.

Three Thoughts That I See

By T.C.

1. If I couldn't see,
I would be a sweet-pea.
Well, I like being a sweet-pea...
and being able to see.
2. I like to use my pocket knife.
I like to walk with the wildlife,
And see into my future life;
But that could be larger than life!
3. I see a spit wad.
I hear my feet plod.
I smell a hot-rod.
I feel a fishing rod.
I taste a pea pod.

Thank you God!



NEW ADOPTION CLUSTER GROUP

I would like to invite all adoptive families in the Salt Lake and Tooele area to join our new adoption support group (adoption cluster). We are a new group for adoptive parents only. As an adoptive parent myself I am very excited with the response and turnout that we had at our first meeting. We have several families representing a variety of situations from families that have adopted because of infertility to those that have raised their biological children and have chosen to give a better life to another generation. All of us seemed to agree that adoption is one of the hardest endeavors and yet a very rewarding experience. We are looking forward to future training, discussions and socials to help each other do our very best at parenting our children. The last Tuesday in January we will be meeting with the Tooele cluster. A narcotics officer will speak to us on drug abuse and what we need to look for as parents. On February 16, 2005 from 7:00-9:00 PM (We will most likely be meeting in Magna) we will have the DCFS Post Adoption Team come and explain how their services work from subsidies to summer camps. Then we will be given the opportunity to ask questions. If you would like to meet other adoptive families, would like to know more about our group, or would like to receive Email updates feel free to call Debbie Kartchner 435-843-8610, cwkartchner@msn.com.

ADOPTION AUDIO TAPES AND CD'S

If you are in need of a great adoption audio tape/CD information resource, this one is worth looking into. Since 1985, von Ende Communications (VEC) has established an international reputation of high quality production and service. They are now in their 19th year of producing adoption information on audio tapes and CDs. VEC has audio recorded national, regional and local adoption conferences. They have compiled an extensive adoption audio resource library offering thousands of workshops that cover every adoption subject matter on audio tape or CD. Their products are inexpensive and guaranteed and they provide many special offers and discounts. You can visit them at their websites www.adoptiontapes.com or www.adoptioncds.com, email them at vonende@info-link.net, or call them at (320) 589-1092. Their mailing address is 48220 290th St., Morris, MN 56267.

To check out tapes available from von Ende Communications, go to The Adoption Exchange website, www.utdcfsadopt.org, to the Lending Library.

UAC CONFERENCE

Make sure you mark your calendars for the 2005 UAC Conference, "Perspectives on Adoption," to be held April 14th and 15th at the Airport Hilton in Salt Lake City. There will be more information coming in our next edition. If you have any questions or would like to make sure you are on the mailing list for the conference, please contact Kathy Searle at 801-265-0444 or ks@adoptex.org



Utah!

Where ideas connect
Utah State Division of
Child and Family Services

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CALL YOUR POST-ADOPTION SPECIALIST

Northern Region:

Aubrey Myers (801) 629-5816

Salt Lake Region:

Vickie Steffey (801) 264-7500

Western Region:

Louise Brown (801) 374-7005

Southwest Region:

John Worthington (435) 867-2760

Eastern Region:

Blanding /Moab	Steve Shafer (435) 678-1491
Price/Castledale	Greg Daniels (435) 636-2360
Vernal/Roosevelt	Fred Butterfield (435) 722-6550

If you have an upcoming graduating senior that you would like spotlighted in our next newsletter, please send picture, short message and graduating school to
The Adoption Exchange
302 W. 5400 S. Suite 208,
Murray, UT 84107
or email to
lindsay@adoptex.org.