



UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

AUGUST 2013

Tyler, age 14 is waiting...

Photo by: Opie Photography



Kristen, age 16 is waiting...

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How We Think!

Judger

- What's wrong?
- Who's to blame?
- How can I prove I'm right?
- How can I protect my turf?
- How can I be in control?
- How could I lose?
- How could I get hurt?
- Why is that person so clueless and frustrating?
- Why bother?

Learner

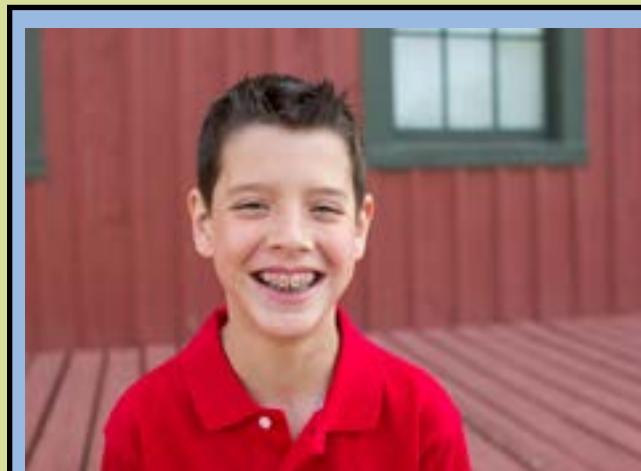
- What works?
- What am I responsible for?
- What are the facts?
- What's the big picture?
- What are my choices?
- What's useful about this?
- What can I learn?
- What is the other person feeling, needing and wanting?
- What's possible?

"We all ask both kinds of questions, and we have the power to choose which ones to ask in any moment!"

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Meet Kolby

Kolby is quite the creative kiddo with a passion for electronics and building toys. He loves to do just about anything; watching movies and playing video games are at the top of his list. He also enjoys being with animals and would love to have a pet. Most of all, Kolby wants a family to call his own. This preteen is attending the sixth grade and is always eager to go to school.

For more information about Kolby, contact The Adoption Exchange at 801-265-0444.



The Effects of Childhood Trauma on Education

By: Yasmina Sefiane

This workshop was presented at the National Foster Parent Association in Chicago which focused on four major objectives: (1) understanding how stress and trauma can impact the development of children, (2) understanding how trauma may change children's learning styles, (3) recognizing how one thinks about children who have been traumatized, and (4) gaining knowledge in order to help traumatized children at home and at school.

The workshop began by listening to a recording of an actual 911 call (Lisa 911). It was a situation where a six year old witnessed domestic violence between her mother and boyfriend and Lisa (the six year old) called 911. The tape revealed the entire conversation with the dispatcher as Lisa was describing and explaining what was happening in the house. The yelling and verbal altercations could be heard quite vividly. The fear, anger, and confusion could be felt as

we listened. After hearing the 911 call, the workshop participants reacted emotionally to what Lisa had experienced. Listening to the tape gave participants the opportunity to vicariously experience a traumatic event in the life of a six year old.

Using the Lisa 911 tape as a reference, the first part of the workshop focused on learning about what stress and trauma can do to a child's development. The participants learned about the stress response and how each person deals with it. Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives a demand that exceeds the personal and social resources they have to meet the demand (Everly & Lating, 2002). One can fight, take flight (run away), freeze and play dead or go to an imaginary place. In a normal stress response, the stressful stimulus is introduced the person's body reacts with the fight or flight re-

sponse. If fighting or fleeing removes the stress, the person then goes back to the calm state. Infants and small children don't have the ability to fight or flee and so they depend on their caregivers. When a young child's stress response systems are activated with an environment of supportive relationships with adults, these physiological effects are buffered by the caregivers and brought back to the calm state. The result is the development of healthy stress response systems.

Symptoms of stress fall into two main categories-hyper arousal and dissociation (Adapted from B. Perry. Child Trauma Academy, 2002). The stress response (hyper arousal or dissociation) that is most adaptive to that individual then becomes the trait and that person's automatic response to stress. Unfortunately, children who take on the hyper arousal state tend to get more attention than those whose trait is dissociation. The dissociated child needs just as much help as the hyper aroused child. This behavior occurs at home and in school.

The second part of the workshop centered on how trauma may effect a child's learning. Trauma affects children socially, emotionally, physically and academically. When we as individuals encounter a high stress situation, the brain focuses all of its energy on the fight/flight/freeze response, which in part shuts out all other stimulus from the outside world and just deals with the threat. The frontal lobes consist of memory, language, problem solving, judgment and impulse control. And social behavior shuts down so that the brain can focus on the stress. So the inability to access the frontal lobes during stress can pose a problem in school for children with traumatic stress response. Research shows that there is a measurable decline in IQ as well as reading achievement in children who have experienced childhood trauma. Also, further research shows that the many skills that are needed to succeed in school and in life are affected by chronic trauma.

The most frequent difficulties following chronic trauma are affect dysregulation, attention/concentration, negative self image, impulse control, and aggression and risk taking. It is highly likely

that each child that has been exposed to chronic trauma may have more than one of these difficulties. So what does this look like at school? The behaviors can be externalizing (such as aggression & fighting), internalizing (such as inattentiveness and avoidance) and may include some somatic disorders (many trips to the nurse's office for headaches, stomachaches and vomiting). Unless teachers understand the nature of traumatic re-enactments, our children get labeled oppositional, antisocial, unmotivated, rebellious, etc. These perspectives lead to trying interventions that do not work for trauma exposed children such as bribes, threats, corporal punishment (physical restraints), humiliation, isolation (time out rooms), and control over bodily functions (may not use the bathroom until lunch). So it is imperative that we provide trauma sensitive interventions to address such behaviors.

Cairns and Stanway (Cairns & Stanway, 2004) from Great Britain, provide steps to helping children with chronic trauma that are effective. They are foster parents, special educators, and child welfare workers who have many years of experience working with trauma exposed children. The interventions are nine steps broken down into three parts. This approach is a phased in approach. It starts with a conviction that each child is unique and his/her experiences are different. Secondly, this approach is not a "fix" the child approach. Thirdly, the steps are progressive and are expected to be followed in order with the caveat that for children who regress, one may have to repeat steps. Note these interventions are different from what we have been taught. Children will move through the steps at their own pace, and for some it may be a short period, whereas for others it may be longer. The earlier in a child's life the trauma occurred, the recovery period may be longer.

The first phase is Connecting. Many of you have ways you connect with the child in your home and make them feel welcome. Connecting has three steps: (1) Safety First, (2) Engaging, and (3) Trusting. Safety is providing a safe environment away from the trauma. You may want to review the room, school, and home with all five senses and think about it from a child's perspective. Many traumatized children crave high stimulus activities, therefore, we must take charge and help them through this discomfort and help them adjust to low stimulus activities. Once you have con-

nected with the child, you want to engage with the child. We need to use language and words to describe the experiences so that these are locked into their memory. Thirdly, many children who have been traumatized have difficulty trusting adults. So be prepared for children not to trust you, and when they do be thrilled. Engage them in a discussion about trust.

The second phase is Processing, which also has three steps: (1) Managing Oneself, (2) Managing Feelings, and (3) Taking Responsibility. Managing oneself is taught in the formative years, but experiencing trauma during this time reduces or eliminates the ability to do this. So our job is to teach the child how to self-regulate and learn how to relax. Managing feelings is also taught during the formative years. Secure babies look to their caregivers for this, but if the child has experienced trauma during this time it is not learned. So we have to teach the children to make choices and have control over their space, time, and activities. Many of our children have had to be responsible at such young ages. Encourage the child to have the appropriate responsibility to their age. Stories and examples of people who have overcome adversity are helpful.

The last phase is Adapting. During this phase we learned three steps: (1) Developing Social Awareness, (2) Developing Reflectivity and (3) Developing Reciprocity. Many of our children have not been taught the appropriate behavior in social situations, so it is our job to teach them. We need to teach children how to think about what they have done, to assume responsibility, and to understand how their behavior

affects the people around them. We need to help them with self-esteem and provide them with role models. Lastly, we need to teach our children how to benefit from developing relationships that are mutually beneficial. Children who have been traumatized often have the loss of ability to experience joy, and so it is our responsibility to encourage a wide variety of experiences and the joy that comes from them.

It does take a village to raise a child, and it is in the best interest of the child that you think about whom you are going to share the information with and how you are going to share it. I want to end with a poem to show how we are connected. "Each of us must come to care about everyone else's children. We must recognize that the welfare of our children and grandchildren is intimately linked to the welfare of all other people's children. After all, when one of our children needs lifesaving surgery, someone else's child will perform it. If one of our children is threatened or harmed by violence, someone else's child will be responsible for the violent act. The good life for your own children can be secured only if a good life is also secured for all other people's children." (Lillian Katz-Erickson Institute). Therefore, it is in the child's best interest and ours to support and help them become productive citizens as they maneuver in this world.

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Yasmina Sefiane's Bio

Yasmina Sefiane has been an Educational Advisor for Northern Illinois University's Educational Access Project for DCFS over 13 years. As an advocate for the Educational Access Project for DCFS, her responsibility is to ensure the educational well being for children and youth in the care and custody of the child welfare system. To accomplish this task, she serves as a liaison between schools, parents, DCFS and other agencies.

Yasmina began her career as an elementary school teacher and "English as a Second Language Instructor." Through these experiences, she fostered a passion for serving youth and their families.

ADOPTION RESPIRE

take a break



Adoption Respite Care is more than merely having a babysitter. Adoption Respite Care offered through many of the states Family Support Centers provides a CPR certified, background checked, trained provider to come to your home so that you can get the break you need. For many of us parenting children who have suffered abuse and neglect, providing care for your children at times can be exhausting. Trying to continue to parent when there is nothing left is not modeling appropriate self care for our children. Many of us also believe that because our children have attachment issues it's best to not have other care givers introduced into their lives. This makes some sense, but our children need to have an emotionally and physically well parent to attach to, and when we are so worn down it makes everything more difficult. When you feel that you are at the end of your rope make a call to one of the Family Support Centers listed below and ask about their services. Some may not have in home services but you may be able to take your children to the center so that you can have a much needed break and get re-charged to be the best parent you can be. *Centers with asterisk do not provide in home services.

**SALT LAKE
TAYLORSVILLE OFFICE**
801-955-9110

**LOGAN
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**
435-752-8880

**OGDEN
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**
801-393-3113

PRICE*
**CARBON COUNTY
FAMILY SUPPORT**
435-636-3739

CEDAR CITY*
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER
435-586-0791

**ST. GEORGE
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**
435-674-5133

ROOSEVELT*
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER
435-722-2401

**OREM
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**
801-900-4582

How to Stay Sane – Well, Mostly Sane



The last thing you want to hear, as an adoptive parent, is another list of things you are "supposed" to do every day. As an adoptive mom myself, I can relate. My little dog was recently diagnosed with some eye ailment, which requires me to wrangle her onto the counter every morning and administer a dose of eye drops. This is not a problem for me. After all, most of my average day is spent making little critters do things they don't want to do, so I'm a pro. The problem is that now I have one more thing to remember. No. Wait. It's twice a day. Give the dog its eye drops twice a day. I did not need one more thing to remember to do.

So here I am, giving you something to add to your list. But what if I told you that this "thing" will make all of the other things more pleasant? What if I said that if you made this thing a habit, you would protect yourself against burnout, bring joy into your life, and make your whole household more peaceful?

For years I've read articles and heard the advice. "You need to take care of yourself first." You know the story when you're on an airplane you put the oxygen mask on first so that you can assist others. This advice can sound cliché or at worst, selfish: Do I really need "Me-Time" in order to give to others? Yes. You do. If your life is falling apart and nothing seems to be working out, getting on a routine of doing a few things to stay healthy can make a difference. If your kids are doing just peachy and everything in life is grand, you need to do these things. Down the road,

something is going to happen to throw everything off. You know it will. Life is like that. If you take care of things now, you'll be less likely to have a total melt-down when something happens. Think of it as building up your emotional and mental immune system. And when the, well, poop hits the fan, if you are in the habit of taking care of yourself, you'll be more likely to continue good habits even when it's tough.

So, what exactly should you be doing? Several things have been proven to increase your wellbeing and relieve stress, which, in turn, helps those around you to do the same. If you pick up a book on meditation or snoop the outcomes of mindfulness, you'll see that the research is overwhelming as to its benefits. Raised in a mid-western religious home, I had trouble wrapping my belief system around something that sounds "new-age." But I realized that no matter what my religious beliefs, (or lack of them), these two practices can find a healthy place in my routine and actually fit quite well into the other things I believe. Check it out for yourself. Some other obvious things that we should be doing involve taking care of our bodies/physical self. Important. Maintaining our relationships and friendships is mandatory. And lastly, doing something that we love adds needed joy to our lives—a hobby, an

outing, even a movie night can keep us in balance. Find your creative outlet—journal, act, sing, paint, garden, dance, or join a soccer team. Fun is good.

When one of our kids is going through a rough spot, we know what to ask. Is she getting enough rest? Is she having a growth spurt and needing more food? A different therapist? Sensory intervention? Better routine? Is something about her daily life stressing her out? But do we take the time to ask those same questions when we ourselves are going through a rough spot? If we know the things that help our kids, shouldn't we give ourselves the same respect?

This is what it looks like when you do it wrong—your schedule is so tight that you don't have time to think. You wake up in the morning dreading the day to come. You grab some coffee and a cold slice of pizza on your way out the door. During the day, your mind is captured by worry, thinking of what might happen. You forget an appointment, get stuck in traffic, and steam starts to build. When the kids come home from school, they start to argue with each other. You lose it, yelling, and send them to their rooms to do their homework. You feel guilty because you haven't been exercising, so you eat a donut to help yourself feel better. You avoid your friends. You stay up late. You're tired, but you have no motivation to do anything but park

yourself in front of the computer and play games. When crisis hits (your significant other decides to call it quits, your child starts peeing on the floor, you are diagnosed with high blood pressure) you fall apart. You feel you have no option but to have your kids move in with your sister, take the dog to the pound, drink yourself silly and end up in jail. (Okay, let's hope it doesn't get quite that bad.)

This is what it looks like when you do it right—every morning before the day starts, you spend ten minutes practicing mindfulness or meditation. You eat a nutritious breakfast. You schedule your day to include some things that you love. You sign up to take that stained glass class you've always wanted to try and make sure you have someone in place to watch your kids. You make sure you have time to enjoy it by working on the project for an hour after the kids go off to school. You call a friend twice a week and schedule a coffee date twice a month. It's on the calendar. The first Monday of every month you have a long-standing appointment to get a massage. You go for a bike ride with your kids every afternoon as soon as they come home from school—just a short one—20 minutes before homework. You change it up sometimes by



jumping on the trampoline together or going for a walk to talk about the day. It's connection time, sensory time, exercise, processing the school day and regulation all wrapped up in one. After the kids go to bed, you indulge in a favorite TV show, Facebook, a glass of wine with your sweetie, a craft or a phone call. You go to bed early to make sure you're sleeping enough. When a crisis hits (your father gets cancer, your kid is being bullied, your income takes a hit, your car dies), you are mentally and emotionally healthy enough to keep your wits about you, think clearly, make a plan. You may have bad days, bouts of crying after the kids are asleep, but gradually, things

start to get better. You remember to give the dog its eye drops. You stay out of jail.

These simple little habits are hard to implement in a busy schedule. I know that. So start small, and do one. Every day. Then add another. It will have huge payoffs for your family, your friends and yourself. It can make the difference between rushing through your days under stress, tired, frazzled and short-tempered and truly enjoying the life you have. It's worth it.

Written by Carol Oestzner, Family Contact, NM Fiesta Project, can be reached at carol@nmfiesta.com

Don't Forget to Tune In
A Day for
Wednesday's Child
August 14, 2013
KSL Channel 5



COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

Voice for Adoption (VFA) receives many requests from students and adoptive parents who are looking for resources for college scholarships and other financial aid resources. This list provides information about potential financial aid opportunities. Please note that the eligibility criterion varies. Some of the resources below pertain to adopted youth while others are targeted toward youth who emancipated from foster care.

1. **Fostering Adoption to Further Student Achievement Act (Public Law 110-84):** This law made it possible for teens in foster care to be adopted without losing access to college financial aid. Under this law, youth who are adopted from foster care at any point after their 13th birthday will not have to include their parents' income in the calculation for determining their need for federal financial aid. The law revised the definition of "independent student" and the definition now extends to youth who were in foster care on or after their 13th birthday, even if they have subsequently been adopted (refer to question #52 on the FAFSA form. See the resource below on how to access FAFSA.). To learn more, visit: http://voice-for-adoption.org/sites/default/files/FAFSA%20factsheet_updated2010.pdf
2. **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** Federal Student Aid, a part of the U.S. Department of Education, is the largest provider of student financial aid in the nation. At the office of Federal Student Aid, employees help make college education possible for every dedicated mind by providing more than \$150 billion in federal grants, loans, and work-study funds each year to more than 15 million students paying for college or career school. Federal Student Aid is responsible for managing the student financial assistance programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. These programs provide grants, loans, and work-study funds to students attending college or career school. To complete a FAFSA application visit: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>
3. **Chafee Education Training Vouchers (ETV) - Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (Public Law 110-351):** This law extended eligibility for Education Training Vouchers (ETV) to youth who exit foster care to kinship guardianship at age 16 or older (these funds are also available to youth who are adopted at age 16 or older). ETV is an annual federal grant provided to states to provide funds to former foster youth who are enrolled in college, university and vocational training programs. Students may receive up to \$5,000 each year based on cost of attendance and available funds. To learn more about ETV requirements and state information, visit: <https://www.statevoucher.org/index.shtml>

4. **Fostering a Future Scholarship (specific to adopted youth from foster care):** Children's Action Network in partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption sponsors a national scholarship program designed to provide youth who were adopted from foster care at or after age 13 with financial assistance for post-secondary education and vocational programs. To review eligibility and application details visit: <http://www.childrensactionnetwork.org/scholarship.htm>
5. **UMPS CARE Charities All-Star Scholarship for Adopted Youth:** UMPS CARE Charities partnered with The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA) and Slate XP to offer the UMPS CARE Charities All-Star Scholarship. The UMPS CARE Charities All-Star Scholarship is for children adopted from foster care, in order to help provide a college education to students who otherwise might not be able to afford one. UMPS CARE Charities is a 501(c)(3) non-profit established by Major League Baseball (MLB). All-Star Scholarships are open to children adopted from U.S. foster care at the age of 12 years or older to provide increased opportunities for advanced education. Scholarship funding will provide for \$5,000 scholarships for a two-year institution –OR– \$10,000 scholarships for a four-year institution. To access the application visit: <http://umpscare.com/AllStarScholarship.html>
6. **Foster Care to Success:** The Foster Care to Success administers a variety of scholarships and grants to help former foster youth and adopted youth achieve a meaningful post-secondary education. Foster Care to Success also operates internship and mentoring programs; in addition to providing student care packages for young people who are eligible. Visit: <http://www.fc2success.org/> or email: scholarships@fc2success.org
7. **States with College Tuition Waivers for Former Foster Youth:** The National Resource Center for Youth Development lists specific in-state college tuition waivers that pertain to former foster youth. Click the following link and search on the right hand side of the web page for "states with tuition waivers" for varying state eligibility and requirements. Visit: <http://www.nrcyd.ou.edu/state-pages/search>
8. **General Scholarship Search Engines:** Search for scholarships through a variety of websites, just make sure they are free to use. Create a free account with search engines such as Fastweb or Scholarships.com to find grants based on individual criteria and characteristics. The "scholarship matches" will point you to opportunities that you may qualify for through a database of millions of scholarships. Visit: <http://www.fastweb.com/> or <http://www.scholarships.com/>



Special Note - Understanding Loans: Loans are not free money and are required to be paid back in full, sometimes with interest. There are typically two types of loans offered to students, subsidized and unsubsidized. Subsidized loans do not accrue interest while you are in school or during future deferment periods. While unsubsidized loans begin accruing interest from the time the loan is disbursed to the school. Students should never accept loans just because they are offered. Before agreeing to accept a loan students should discuss the need to take out loans with a representative at a school's financial aid office or some other knowledgeable parent or supportive adult.

NATIONAL INTERNSHIPS TARGETED SPECIFICALLY FOR YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN IN FOSTER CARE

- FosterClub All-Star Internship Program:** FosterClub, the national network for youth in foster care. The All-Star Internship program was launched in 2004 and successfully incorporated current and former foster youth as facilitators and leaders of teen conference activities. The All-Stars get training on how to turn their experiences in foster care into expertise, in order to positively influence peers in foster care, professionals and policy makers, on a variety of topics pertaining to child welfare. Selected individuals will spend a portion of their summer living in Oregon and traveling to various locations across the country to train and inspire others. This is a competitive internship program. Interns receive a weekly stipend and housing during their assignment. To learn more about eligibility criteria and the annual application deadline visit: <http://www.fosterclub.com/allstars/article/all-star-application-details>
- CCAI's Foster Youth Internship (FYI) Program:** The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's (CCAI) Foster Youth Internship (FYI) is a unique internship program that gives those who have spent time in the foster care system a chance for their voice to be heard on Capitol Hill. Selected interns spend two months in Washington, D.C. interning for a Member of Congress. Interns also spend time researching a topic of their choice to develop improved policy in a given child welfare related area. The recommendations are combined into a joint internship-class report that is presented to policymakers at the conclusion of the internship program. Past participants have gotten their recommendations incorporated into federal bills. This is a competitive internship program. Interns receive a weekly stipend and housing during their assignment. To learn more about eligibility criteria and the annual application deadline visit: <http://www.ccaainstitute.org/fyiapply.html>

VFA does not specifically endorse any of the resources on this list. These resources were current at the time of publication on March 29, 2013. To access the resources above copy the links and paste them into an internet browser.

voiceforadoption@gmail.com | 202-210-8118 | www.voice-for-adoption.org
1220 L. St. NW, #100-344 Washington, D.C. 20005

Adoptive Family Profile

Date: _____

We need your help! Make a difference in the lives of adoptive families and children who wait! Complete this form to let us know how you would like to participate!

Our family is interested in helping to increase community awareness of adoption and promoting the development of adoption related resources to benefit adoptive families and children who wait for adoptive families. Please contact us when you have a need for an adoptive family to help get the word out about adoption.

Name	Spouse/Partner Name		Adopted Privately		Adopted Through Child Welfare		Adopted Through Adoption Exchange Efforts - Y or N IF yes describe
	City/State/Zip	Phone (w)	Y or N	Y or N	Y or N	Y or N	

We are willing to help in the following ways (Please check all that apply):

Share our adoption story	Be interviewed for TV/Radio	Be interviewed by Newspaper/Magazine
Write an article	Make a speech	Volunteer
Help thank donors	Advocate with legislative groups	Share family photograph for fundraising purposes
Receive gifts from donors	Attend donor sponsored parties	Participate in fund-raising events

RETURN TO:

Please return to: The Adoption Exchange, 975 E Woodoak Lane, Suite 220, SIC UT 84117



LYING

Why & What To Do About It

Charley Joyce, LICSW
www.charleyjoyce.com

If you have never told a lie, please quit reading this article now! If you are still reading, chances are you are like most people and have periodically told “little white lies”. Most of us view being honest as a goal to shoot for, but we have probably been guilty of spinning the truth or omitting certain parts of the whole story. However, it seems that some youth, especially youth that have suffered from maltreatment, take lying to an extreme. So what are some of the purposes of lying for youth that have been maltreated and what can we do about it?

The following purposes of lying for youth that have been maltreated are drawn from my own, and others, practice experiences and literature research on the topic of maltreatment.

Children lie out of a sense of fear. Many youth that have been abused, live their lives in fear of how adults might react to them. They are experts at “reading” situations and trying to predict if they might upset adults or others that could potentially harm them. They often develop a protective defense system that may over react to you, as a foster parent. This predictive defense is especially activated when the foster youth sees you as angry, frustrated or when they “predict” you might become upset. Behaviorists refer to this as punishment-avoidance. Often, foster parents don’t realize the child is reacting in this manner, they just conclude the child is lying, seemingly without reason.

How to support change with a youth that lies out of fear: As with all placements, it is important to learn as much as possible about the youth before you begin fostering. If you learn the child has a history of maltreatment and lies out of fear, be patient as this will not change quickly. Become aware of your voice tone and physical presence. Attempt to model using your personal characteristics in a manner that models safety and problem solving. Attempt to teach the child that negotiation, compromise and listening all precede accusing.

Children lie because it has become a pattern of behavior. Some people refer to lying that has become a pattern of behavior as pathological lying. In these types of situations, lying has often been modeled by adults so the child learns lying as a way to meet their needs in multiple situations. In simple terms, lying has been presented to the child as normal. And since lying has been presented as normal, and has worked for the child, it will not change easily. Usually foster parents will pick-up if lying is a pattern. It’s baffling to foster parents because it seems that the child will lie about things where there is no reason to lie.

How to support change with a youth that has a pattern of lying: If a youth has lying as a pattern of behavior, it is important to see this as a treatment issue for the child in the home. A model for responding to this type of lying can be a consistent combination of teaching honesty, allowing for a change from a dishonest response to an honest response, applying consequences when necessary and using “statements of fact”. To illustrate this through an example, let’s assume “Johnny” has told you an obvious lie. You might want to state “Johnny, I don’t think that’s true, because this is what I know about the situation, why don’t you try again?” A follow-up statement could be: “You know we don’t consequence for telling the truth.” Remember the boundary for this type of approach is that the lying won’t be consequence if the truth is told, but the behavior behind the lie may need to be consequence based on the severity of the behavior. If the child continues to tell an obvious lie, restate your “statement of fact” and ignore their efforts to convince you to believe their lie.

Lying as a way to feel important. Children will often lie as a way to make themselves feel important. This often takes the form of exaggerating accomplishments and/or experiences. In a paradoxical way, there is a purpose to this type of lying that is positive. It often is a way for the youth to try and receive attention from the foster parent and to be recognized as important and worthwhile. Additionally, a twist on this type of lying is that a youth may lie over seemingly insignificant issues in order to “save face”. Unfortunately they have not learned, nor internalized, that we all make mistakes and they will not be harshly judged as a result. This type of lying is often present in youth that experience low self esteem.

How to support change with a youth that lies as a way to feel important. Often this type of lying will lessen, or extinguish, with increased maturity and confidence. If the child you are caring for displays this type of lying, try and eliminate their need to do so. Place significant attention on building their self esteem, in a consistent, targeted way. Make it a point to recognize the youth’s real accomplishments with interest. Talk with them about how mistakes and successes are the mixture of life. Amplify their strengths.

Lying as a way to exploit others. Hopefully you will not see this type of lying often and we should be careful about over diagnosing this type of lying. Lying to exploit has as its purpose victimizing others that are vulnerable for personal gain. A central theme is having power over others and controlling them through the threat of intimidation and/or harm. Some of the causes of this type of lying include a history with caregivers that were abusive, exploitative, unreliable and unresponsive. It is generally seen in combination with other anti-social behaviors.

How to respond, and to attempt to create change, with a youth that lies to exploit. Generally the response to exploitative lying should be very direct, clear and focusing on holding the youth responsible for the lying. If the lying includes activity that is illegal, legal consequences should be applied. If you are fostering a youth with this type of lying, it is important that you work closely with other helping professionals in order to avoid being drawn into manipulative maneuvering.



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*Watch for more
information to come!*