

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

NOVEMBER 2014

Jewlian, age 15 is waiting...

Photo by: Opie Photography

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



Aubrey, age 18 is waiting...

Photo by: James Young Photography

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If you are interested in more information about any of the children featured in this publication, please contact The Adoption Exchange at 801-265-0444.

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National Adoption Month

November 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <p>There are so many ways to celebrate National Adoption Month. Use this calendar to help you and your family find a way to celebrate everyday!</p>						1 Have dinner with other families with adopted children.
2 Read an adoption story with your family.	3 Use social media to make others aware that it's National Adoption Month!	4 Celebrate your families heritage with a meal or tradition.	5 Learn a few new statistics about adoption and tell others.	6 Talk to a friend who may be considering adoption and tell them your experience.	7 Watch a movie that portrays adoption in a positive light. (Lilo & Stitch, Stuart Little, Tarzan)	8 Boondocks Adoption Celebration at the Kaysville and Draper locations!
9 Spend time with your family by having a picnic.	10 Learn the traditions of another culture as a way to accept all those that may be different than you!	11 Find a new hobby your family can enjoy doing together!	12 Share a picture of your adoptive family.	13 Join a play or parent group with other adoptive families. NACAC.org	14 Use social media to tell your story related to adoption.	15 Host a party to celebrate National Adoption Month!
16 Do your favorite family activity together to celebrate one another!	17 Tell someone new about your experience with adoption. Everyone has been touched in some way!	18 Create a scrapbook or some other collection of your adoption story memories.	19 Start learning a skill that could benefit those in need (i.e. sewing, cooking).	20 Read a book about post-adoption support. Tell someone about it.	21 Write a poem or create some other piece of art representing your adoption story.	22 National Adoption Day! Create a new family tradition to celebrate this day!
23 As a family, learn more about the history of your heritage.	24 Find a way to serve a sibling or parent.	25 Learn about the history of National Adoption Month.	26 Write thank you letters to those instrumental in your adoption story.	27 Give thanks for your family by helping those without. Volunteer or donate today!	28 Watch home videos to reminisce on your greatest family memories.	29 Write a letter to your parents telling them why you love them.
30 Donate your time to a shelter for homeless pets.	<p>www.adoptex.org The Adoption Exchange Providing expertise and support before, during and after the adoption process.</p>					



Feelings, Behaviors, and Relationships

(This article is based off the book "Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control.")

Visit our website at www.beyondconsequences.com)

By: Heather T. Forbes, LCSW
author of "Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control"
www.BeyondConsequences.com

Children need unconditional love and unconditional acceptance from their parents; we all know this and believe this. However, do we ever stop to consider how so many of the traditional parenting techniques accepted in our culture work contrary to this primal goal? Traditional parenting techniques that involve consequences, controlling directives, and punishment are fear-based and fear-driven. They have the ability to undermine the parent-child relationship and because they are tied into behavior, children easily interpret these actions to mean, "If I'm not good, I am not lovable." Thus, children often build a subconscious foundation that says that love and approval is based off of performance.

Parenting from a love-based paradigm means going beyond our children's behavior and beyond consequences to first see that negative behavior is a form of communication and that negative behavior is a response to stress. If we see the kicking and screaming child as one who is having difficulty regulating due to an overflow of feelings, we can learn to stay present with the child in order to help him modulate these feelings and thus, help him to build his emotional regulatory system. A child kicking and screaming or in a rage is a child who

has been "emotionally hijacked". Emotions are not logical or rational ; this hitting and kicking is the body's natural fear reaction gone awry.

Allowing a child emotional space to safely dissipate this energy will then allow him to calm down. As we provide reassurance, unconditional love, and emotional presence for our children, the need to kick and scream will disappear. Many times our children kick and scream simply because they do not feel that they are being listened to nor do they feel as if they have been heard. Staying present and reassuring a child that you really are listening to him, can be enough to help them begin to regulate. The life lesson that kicking and screaming is inappropriate does indeed need to be reinforced. But, this life lesson can only happen once the child is fully regulated (when the child is calm) and his cognitive thinking is intact. This is also the time to present alternatives to kicking and screaming. This is a way of teaching our children instead of punishing them. The definition of discipline is to teach. The more we can stay focused on the relationship with our child and strengthening this relationship instead of controlling it through consequences, the more we will be helping our child learn to work through their stress appropriately. Below are four pointers to help you stay in a loving and emotionally open place for your children:

Just Be Happy!—But I'm not! Did anyone ever tell you, "Just think happy thoughts and it will be okay."? Did it really work? Probably not. Emotions do not simply disappear. If feelings are not released and acknowledged, they are stored and become part of our physical make-up. Research has convincingly shown that being able to express feelings like anger and grief can improve survival rates in cancer patients. With our children, feelings that become stored and "stuffed" become activators for negative behaviors.

ALL Feelings are Good Feelings - As parents, it is important for us to understand the necessity of emotional expression, both in teaching it to our children and in modeling it to our children. Blocked feelings can inhibit growth, learning, and the building of a trusting relationship between the parent and child. The first step to take is to recognize that ***ALL*** emotions are healthy. In our culture, feelings such as joy, peace, and courage are seen as good feelings, yet feelings such as sad, mad, and scared are seen as bad feelings. Let's rethink this to understand that it is not the feeling itself that creates negativity, it is the lack of expression of the feeling that creates negativity. And in children, this negativity is often expressed through poor behaviors.

Getting to the Core of the Behavior – When children are acting out and being defiant, we need to begin to understand that their behaviors are simply a communication of an emotional state that is driving these behaviors. If we simply address the behavior, we miss the opportunity to help children express and understand themselves from a deeper level. Start by modeling basic feeling words to your child. Keep it simple and teach the five basic feeling words: sad, mad, bad, scared, and happy. Even the youngest of children can learn to say, "I'm mad!" When the toddler is throwing his toys or the teenager is throwing his backpack across the room, encourage him at that moment to get to the core of the behavior through emotional expression. Remember...it really isn't about the toys or the backpack, and they really do know better than to do the negative behaviors.

Responding vs. Reacting – So the next time your child becomes defiant, talks back, or is simply “ugly” to you, work to be in a place not to react to the behavior, but respond to your child. Respond to your child in an open way—open to meeting him in his heart and helping him understand the overload of feelings that are driving the behaviors. He doesn’t need a consequence or another parental directive at that moment, he just needs you to be present with him. As your children learn to respond back to you through the parent-child relationship, they won’t have the need to communicate through negative behaviors anymore. You’ll both have more energy for each other, building a relationship that will last a lifetime.

About the Author:

Heather T. Forbes, LCSW



Heather Forbes, LCSW, is the co-founder of the Beyond Consequences Institute, LLC. Ms. Forbes has been training in the field of trauma and attachment with nationally recognized, first-generation attachment therapists since 1999. She has been active in the field of adoption with experience ranging from pre-adoption to post-adoption clinical work. Ms. Forbes is an internationally published author, with her most recent book titled, *Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control: A Love-based Approach for Helping Attachment-Challenged Children With Severe Behaviors*, endorsed by Sir

Richard Bowlby, son of John Bowlby. As a speaker, her passion for families is known throughout the nation. Ms. Forbes consults and coaches both nationally and internationally with families struggling with children with severe behaviors. Much of her experience and insight on understanding trauma, disruptive behaviors, and attachment related issues has come from her direct mothering experience of her two adopted children.

Estella, age 17 is waiting...

Estella isn't shy when it comes to sharing her sociable personality with those around her! She likes to be involved with other youth and spend time with family and friends. Estella has been described by those who know her as warm and equipped with a great sense of humor! Estella is always satisfied when she has time to play games, cards, or sports. She also enjoys bowling, biking and softball.

This great teen would benefit from a supportive family. She currently participates in counseling, which will need to continue after placement. If your family can provide Estella with a loving, committed, structured environment, we urge you to inquire. The caseworker desires a family who can support her continued contact with siblings, as well as a home where Estella can be the only child.

For Utah children, only homestudied families from all states are encouraged to inquire.



25 Ways To Ask Your Kids "So How Was School Today?"

(Without asking "So How
Was School Today?")

Simple Simon and Company

This year Simon is in 4th grade and Grace is in 1st grade and I find myself asking them every day after school, "So how was school today?".

And everyday I get an answer like "fine" or "good" which doesn't tell me a whole lot.

AND I WANT TO KNOW A WHOLE LOT!!!!

Or at least get a full sentence. So the other night I sat down and made a list of more engaging questions to ask about school. They aren't perfect...but I do get at least complete sentences...and some have lead to interesting conversations...and hilarious answers...and a few insights into how my kids think and feel about their time at school.

25 Ways to Ask Your Kids How Was School

1. What was the best thing that happened at school today? (What was the worst thing that happened at school today?)
2. Tell me something that made you laugh today.
3. If you could choose, who would you like to sit by in class? (Who would you NOT want to sit by in class? Why?)

4. Where is the coolest place at the school?
5. Tell me a weird word that you heard today. (Or something weird that someone said.)
6. If I called your teacher tonight, what would she tell me about you?
7. How did you help somebody today?
8. How did somebody help you today?
9. Tell me one thing that you learned today.
10. When were you the happiest today?
11. When were you bored today?
12. If an alien spaceship came to your class and beamed up someone, who would you want them to take?
13. Who would you like to play with at recess that you've never played with before?
14. Tell me something good that happened today.
15. What word did your teacher say most today?
16. What do you think you should do/learn more of at school?
17. What do you think you should do/learn less of at school?
18. Who in your class do you think you could be nicer to?
19. Where do you play the most at recess?
20. Who is the funniest person in your class? Why is he/she so funny?
21. What was your favorite part of lunch?
22. If you got to be the teacher tomorrow, what would you do?
23. Is there anyone in your class that needs a time out?
24. If you could switch seats with anyone in the class who would you trade with? Why?
25. Tell me about three different times you used your pencil today at school.

So far...my favorite answers have come from questions 12, 15, and 21.

I actually love questions like the "alien" one (#12). They give kids a non-threatening way to say who they would rather not have in their class, and open the door for you to have a discussion to ask why, potentially uncovering issues you didn't know about before.

And the answers we get are sometimes really surprising. When I asked question #3, I discovered that one of my children didn't want to sit by a best friend in class anymore — not out of a desire to be mean or bully, but in the hope they'd get the chance to work with other people.

Sometimes we just need to figure out the right kinds of questions to ask our children....some questions may work better for some kids than others. That's how it is with my own children. But I want to know what is going on in their lives and how I can help them. So....I will continue to ask...and ask...and ask.

And, as my kids get older I know that I am going to have to work harder and harder to stay engaged with them...but I know its going to be worth the work.

Schools that Separate th

By; David Bornstein

First appeared in The New York Times (November 13, 2013), Reprinted with Permission

Recently, I reported on the damaging effects that prolonged stress can have on young children who lack adequate protection from adults. Over the past 15 years, researchers have learned that highly stressful — and potentially traumatic — childhood experiences are more prevalent than previously understood. Now scientists are shedding light on the mechanisms by which they change the brain and body. These insights have far-reaching implications for schools, where it's still standard practice to punish children for misbehavior that they often do not know how to control. This is comparable to punishing a child for having a seizure; it adds to the suffering and makes matters worse.

What good are the best teachers or schools if the most vulnerable kids feel so unsafe that they are unavailable to learn? Thankfully, some places are getting smarter. "The hot spots in education are Massachusetts and Washington State," explains Jane Stevens, a health and science journalist who edits ACES Too High, an excellent website containing a wealth of information about "adverse childhood experiences" (ACEs) and the effects of stress and trauma on children. "Educators understand that the behavior of children who act out is not willful or defiant, but is in fact a normal response to toxic stress. And the way to help children is to create an environment in which they feel safe and can build resilience."

This is not a small issue in education. A great many students come to school with emotional and behavioral difficulties that pose serious barriers to their learning. In a study of 2,100 elementary students in 10 schools in Spokane, Wash., for example, researchers from Washington State University found that more than 20 percent had two or more ACEs (experiences that include having been homeless, witnessing domestic violence or having a parent who uses drugs or is incarcerated). Compared with children with no known stresses, these kids are two to four times more likely to have problems with attendance, behavior, academics and health. As the number of ACEs increase, the students fare considerably worse on all counts.

"When kids have undergone a lot of adversity, it changes how they respond to people and challenges in their environment, including very simple things that we might not think about — like how many transitions you ask them to do before lunch," explains Chris Blodgett, a clinical psychologist who directs the CLEAR Trauma Center at Washington State University. "For traumatized people, changes are encoded largely as danger."

When a child violates rules or expectations, the standard response is to try to reason with the child or use punishment, he added. "What the science tells us about how stressed brains react to change, loss or threat is that children will often violate rules because they feel profoundly out of control. It's a survival reaction and it may actually be intended to control the situation."

What good are the best teachers or schools if the most vulnerable kids feel so unsafe that they are unavailable to learn? How far can education reforms take us when schools can't manage the behavior problems of many early graders or preschoolers — as indicated by the crisis of school suspensions and preschool expulsions? (Suspension rates have risen dramatically since the 1970s, particularly among minority children.)

Blodgett and his colleagues have been helping educators in 20 schools across Washington to make use of the emerging research on trauma. One of their partners is the Whitman Elementary School in Spokane. "We serve a high impact population with lots of needs," explained Beverly Lund, the school's principal. "We started dabbling with the idea of learning about trauma, and the more we got into it, the more we realized we had to significantly change the way we're relating to kids."

To do it well meant making sure that everyone in the school community — teachers, cafeteria workers, playground monitors, office staff, even bus drivers — understood the effects of trauma on children, Lund said. It meant helping teachers move away from reflexive discipline and toward responses that help kids learn how to calm themselves.

"This week we had a little guy in second grade who had a horrible tantrum," recalled Lund, who has been a principal for 25 years. "He hit his teacher, took a swing at me and threw my stuffed animals all around my office. I said: 'Wow, you look like you're really upset. Would you like that stuffed animal?' 'No!' But he pulled the animals around himself and took a nap."

Lund was familiar with the child's family circumstances and the likely causes of his behavior. "In the past, I would have called the parent," she said. "But it can be more traumatizing for kids to be picked up from school." And it's important for kids to learn that they can pull themselves together and get back to learning. "These kid's best hope is to get a good education, so we want them in the classroom, and we want them to trust us."

Blodgett is now conducting an impact study of the CLEAR Center's work with schools which will be made public in the spring. Participating schools report significant decreases in office referrals and suspensions, and teachers report increases in both their morale and sense of efficacy dealing with vulnerable kids.

Across the country, in Brockton, Mass., just south of Boston, the process and experience have been similar. Six years ago at the Angelo Elementary School, the principal Ryan Powers and the assistant principal Elizabeth Barry connected with

The Child from the Trauma

the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (T.L.P.I.), a collaboration of Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School, to learn how they could improve their interactions with students. They encouraged teachers to read T.L.P.I.'s book "Helping Traumatized Children Learn," which has been downloaded 50,000 times. (The follow-up book, "Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools," is being released this week.)

Powers began by organizing a Saturday workshop so the school staff could learn about childhood trauma. One of the presenters was Edward G. Jacobs, from the Plymouth County district attorney's office. "There was a jaw dropping moment when Ed overlaid the map of the Brockton School District with maps of gun violence and drug offenses," recalled Powers. "Everyone realized, 'Wow, this is what our kids are seeing,' and the staff asked, 'What can we do?'"

They formed a team, dove into the research, assessed their current responses, and began implementing changes in line with the recommendations. "We created choices in the classroom for kids if they felt their emotions were starting to get the best of them," Powers said. "They could put on headphones, listen to some classical music, sit on a bean bag chair, take a break, go for a walk." Teachers started paying more attention to the way they spoke to children. They began the day by greeting every child — by name or a handshake or a touch on the shoulder. They made the first morning session to be about community building. They made efforts to reduce the number of transitions and communicate clearly, so changes would be predictable.

"This is about changing the whole school environment," explained Susan Cole, a former special education teacher who directs the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative. "You can have a great trauma-sensitive classroom, but if the child goes into the hall or cafeteria and gets yelled at, he can get retriggered. It's about creating a common context that keeps kids feeling safe."

It's also about helping teachers to understand the learning obstacles faced by children who have experienced severe stress. "When you come from a home that is very disorganized, sequence and cause and effect can be thrown off," explained Cole. "This affects language development, memory and concentration. When teachers recognize this, it comes as a relief. Finally the scientists are explaining what they've seen firsthand! But it's also a tender moment. The question is: 'What do I do?'" One big thing is to help children become aware of their bodies, said Emily Cooley, a special-education teacher who works with Powers at his new position as principal of the Mary E. Baker Elementary School in Brockton. "One of my students has three pictures on his desk: a mail box, a snack and a bean bag chair. If this boy is not feeling in his body that he can be in class, he knows he can pick up one of the pictures and go get my mail in the office, get a crunchy snack, or take a break in the bean bag

chair." (Bean bag chairs and bubbles seem to be particularly helpful to young kids.)

"It's not to avoid tasks," she added. "It's so he can calm himself and be here physically and mentally — so we can work on the academics. Little things like this can really have a big impact on children."

Elizabeth Barry, who is now the executive director of K-8 learning and teaching for the Brockton school district, says the changes have significantly improved learning time and school climate. At the Baker school, after two years, office referrals are down 75 percent from the baseline. "That's the number that I find most meaningful," she said. "When teachers are less inclined to send a child to the office, it speaks to their capacity and commitment to support all children socially, emotionally, behaviorally and academically."

These ideas are beginning to take hold, but practice still lags well behind knowledge. The Massachusetts state legislature is now reviewing a bill that would require all schools in the state to create "safe and supportive" environments drawing on trauma research. In other parts of the country, there are notable bright spots. The Crittenton Children's Center, based in Kansas City, Mo, has shown impressive results with its Head Start — Trauma Smart program, which is expanding in Missouri and Kansas. In Philadelphia, the Institute for Safe Families has launched a citywide task force to focus on responses to trauma in pediatric settings. Jane Stevens has tracked interesting developments in San Diego and Tarpon Springs, Fla., and other places. I'll be revisiting this story (and reporting on the Head Start example above, which is particularly compelling) — so please send in any recommendations you have for follow up.

Making sure that schools and other social services are sensitized in these ways is not just about assisting those children who have endured extreme stress. It's not just about helping them get through school, either. It's about taking care of everyone. Just as we send a powerful message about our values when we make accommodations for people with disabilities, schools send powerful messages by the way they treat children whose behavior falls outside the normal bounds. They can mete out punishment in ways that reinforce judgments and hierarchies and perpetuate crises — or respond by deepening the understanding about others and building supportive communities.

This isn't soft-headed thinking; it's the only approach that makes any sense.



**Stress tied to change in children's gene expression
related to emotion regulation, physical health**

Children who have been abused or neglected early in life are at risk for developing both emotional and physical health problems. In a new study, scientists have found that maltreatment affects the way genes are activated, which has implications for children's long-term development. Previous studies focused on how a particular child's individual characteristics and genetics interacted with that child's experiences in an effort to understand how health problems emerge. In the new study, researchers were able to measure the degree to which genes were turned "on" or "off" through a biochemical process called methylation. This new technique reveals the ways that nurture changes nature—that is, how our social experiences can change the underlying biology of our genes.

The study, from researchers at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, appears in the journal *Child Development*. Nearly 1 million children in the United States are neglected or abused every year.

The researchers found an association between the kind of parenting children had and a particular gene (called the glucocorticoid receptor gene) that's responsible for crucial aspects of social functioning and health. Not all genes are active at all times. DNA methylation is one of several biochemical mechanisms that cells use to control whether genes are turned on or off. The researchers examined DNA methylation in the blood of 56 children ages 11 to 14. Half of the children had been physically abused.

They found that compared to the children who hadn't been maltreated, the maltreated children had increased methylation on several sites of the glucocorticoid receptor gene, also known as NR3C1, echoing the findings of earlier studies of rodents. In this study, the effect occurred on the section of the gene that's critical for nerve growth factor, which is an important part of healthy brain development.

There were no differences in the genes that the children were born with, the study found; instead, the differences were seen in the extent to which the genes had been turned on or off. "This link between early life stress and changes in genes may uncover how early childhood experiences get under the skin and confer lifelong risk," notes Seth D. Pollak, professor of psychology and pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, who directed the study.

Previous studies have shown that children who have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect are more likely to develop mood, anxiety, and aggressive disorders, as well as to have problems regulating their emotions. These problems, in turn, can disrupt relationships and affect school performance. Maltreated children are also at risk for chronic health problems such as cardiac disease and cancer. The current study helps explain why these childhood experiences can affect health years later.

The gene identified by the researchers affects the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis in rodents. Disruptions of this system in the brain would make it difficult for people to regulate their emotional behavior and stress levels. Circulating through the body in the blood, this gene affects the immune system, leaving individuals less able to fight off germs and more vulnerable to illnesses.

"Our finding that children who were physically maltreated display a specific change to the glucocorticoid receptor gene could explain why abused children have more emotional difficulties as they age," according to Pollak. "They may have fewer glucocorticoid receptors in their brains, which would impair the brain's stress-response system and result in problems regulating stress."

The findings have implications for designing more effective interventions for children, especially since studies of animals indicate that the effects of poor parenting on gene methylation may be reversible if caregiving improves. The study also adds to what we know about how child maltreatment relates to changes in the body and mind, findings that were summarized recently in an SRCD Social Policy Report by Sara R. Jaffee and Cindy W. Christian.

Explore further: Early life stress can leave lasting impacts on the brain

Journal reference: *Child Development*

Provided by Society for Research in Child Development



Celebrating National Adoption

Mariah's Story:

After a visit with her adoptive family, the song 'Temporary Home' by Carrie Underwood came on the radio in the car. As the song played in the background Mariah looked at her adoption recruiter and said, "This is what my life has been like, this describes how the last almost 16 years of my life has been. Temporary, hopeless and feeling like no one wanted me. But you know that song 'God Bless the Broken Road' by Rascal Flatts?"

**Now that I have my adoptive family, that's how I feel, like I'm in the place
I belong and am loved.**

It's been a really hard road getting here but I'm so grateful that I've been led to my family and call them mine." Now, 17 years old, Mariah is loved and so happy to be making new memories with her family.

Levi and Orion's Story:

Levi and Orion are brothers who came into care two years ago. Levi is now age nine and his brother, Orion is twelve. They are each other's best friend. Everyone who knew these boys saw how much they needed to be together, and finally a family was found that would meet the needs of both boys. Orion states,

"I have a whole life ahead of me, and there's goig to be different opportunities, and I'm going to learn to do more things."

Now, in their new home, both boys are doing just that. Levi has just celebrated his birthday with his first real party. Orion loves being with his brother and is so thankful that they could stay together.

Adoption Awareness Month



Then



& Now



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US POSTAGE
P A I D
SLC UTAH
PERMIT 3280

7414 South State Street
Midvale, UT 84047

In honor of National Adoption Month, Heart Gallery Displays will be available at Boondocks Fun Center.

Visit us online at www.utdcfsadopt.org

CALL YOUR POST-ADOPTION SPECIALIST

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Jeanna O'Connor 801-395-5973
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Salt Lake Region:

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Vernal/Roosevelt Fred Butterfield 435-722-6445
Moab/Blanding Charlie Bayles 435-678-1458

UPCOMING EVENTS:

ADOPTION WALK
October 18th • Liberty Park

NOVEMBER CELEBRATION
November 8th • Boondock's locations
(Draper and Kaysville) • 10:00 – 2:00

**UAC SPRING ADOPTION
CONFERENCE**
March 25th & 26th 2015 • South Towne
Expo Center