



UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MAY 2018

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QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



Celeste, age 14
Photo by: Busath Photography

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MAY 2018 EDITION
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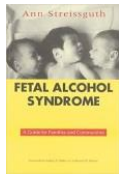
To submit articles or for a subscription, call (801) 265-0444 or toll free outside Salt Lake County call (866) 872-7212. This publication is funded by the State of Utah, Division of Child and Family Services. The Adoption Exchange prepares and prints the newsletter and the Division of Child and Family Services mails the publication. The mailing list is kept confidential. One can be removed from the mailing list by calling: (866) 872-7212 or 265-0444 within Salt Lake County.



UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION LENDING LIBRARY

**DID YOU ATTEND THE RECENT TRAINING ABOUT HOW FETAL EXPOSURE TO
ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AFFECT A CHILD?**

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION, BELOW ARE JUST A FEW OF THE TITLES THAT ARE
CURRENTLY IN THE LENDING LIBRARY.



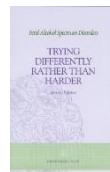
**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: A Guide for
Families and Communities -**
Ann Streissguth



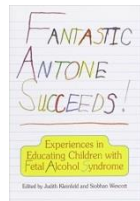
**The Best I Can Be, The: Living With
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Effects --**
Liz Kulp



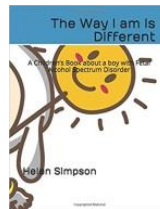
**Recognizing and Managing Children
with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal
Alcohol Effects: A Guidebook -**
Brenda McCreight



Trying Differently Rather Than Harder
Diane Malbin, M.S.W.



**Fantastic Antone Succeeds:
Experiences in Educating Children with
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome -**
Judith Kleinfeld & Siobhan Wescott



**The Way I Am is Different: A Children's
Book about a boy with Fetal Alcohol
Spectrum Disorder -**
Helen Simpson

www.utahadopt.org



On the Cover
Kolby, age 17

With his favorite building toys, Kolby could spend hours creating a masterpiece! While he is happy with nearly any activity, movies, electronics, and video games make his day. Kolby is a kind fellow who enjoys taking leadership roles and helping younger children. He is fond of animals and does well with them.

Now an eleventh grader, Kolby loves attending school and excels at completing assignments.

The caseworker prefers a family in which Kolby can be the only child. If you can provide him with the love, support and care that he so greatly deserves, we urge you to inquire. Kolby has siblings with whom he hopes to remain in contact following placement. Financial assistance may be available for adoption-related services.

For Utah children, only home-studied families from all states are encouraged to inquire.

Photo by: Amber Schiavone Photography

To view other children that participated in Heart Gallery 2018 visit the gallery online at www.utahadopt.org.

If you are interested in any of the children featured in this publication, please contact The Adoption Exchange at 801-265-0444 or visit www.utahadopt.org.

FOR THOSE WHO MISSED THE TRAINING ON FASD YOU MAY FIND WEBINARS OF EILEEN BISGORD HERE: <https://www.adoptex.org/online-learning-center>



BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

20 PRACTICAL AND POWERFUL STRATEGIES

By Karen Young

All children are capable of extraordinary things. There is no happiness gene, no success gene, and no 'doer of extraordinary things' gene. The potential for happiness and greatness lies in all of them, and will mean different things to different kids. We can't change that they will face challenges along the way. What we can do is give them the skills so these challenges are never able to break them. We can build their resilience. Resilience is being able to bounce back from stress, challenge, tragedy, trauma or adversity. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable, and more able to extend their reach into the world.

The great news is that resilience is something that can be nurtured in all children.

Resilience and the brain. Here's what you need to know.

During times of stress or adversity, the body goes through a number of changes designed to make us faster, stronger, more alert, more capable versions of ourselves. Our heart rate increases, blood pressure goes up, and adrenaline and cortisol (the stress hormone) surge through the body. In the short-term, this is brilliant, but the changes were only ever meant to be for the short-term. Here's what happens ...

The stress response is initiated by the amygdala, the part of the brain responsible for our instinctive, impulsive responses. From there, messages are sent to the brain to release

its chemical cocktail (including adrenaline and cortisol) to help the body deal with the stress. When the stress is ongoing, the physiological changes stay switched on. Over an extended period of time, they can weaken the immune system (which is why students often get sick during exams), the body and the brain.

Stress can also cause the prefrontal cortex at the front of the brain to temporarily shut down. The prefrontal cortex is the control tower of the brain. It is involved in attention, problem solving, impulse control, and regulating emotion. These are known as 'executive functions'. Sometimes not having too much involvement from the pre-frontal cortex can be a good thing - there are times we just need to get the job done without pausing to

reflect, plan or contemplate (such as crying out in pain to bring help fast, or powering through an all-nighter). Then there are the other times.

Resilience is related to the capacity to activate the prefrontal cortex and calm the amygdala. When this happens, the physiological changes that are activated by stress start to reverse, expanding the capacity to recovering from, adapt to, or find a solution to stress, challenge or adversity.

How does resilience affect behaviour?

Children will have different levels of resilience and different ways of responding to and recovering from stressful times. They will also have different ways of showing when the demands that are being put upon them outweigh their capacity to cope. They might become emotional, they might withdraw, or they might become defiant, angry or resentful. Of course, even the most resilient of warriors have days where it all gets too much, but low resilience will likely drive certain patterns of behaviour more often.

Can resilience be changed?

Yes. Yes. Yes. Absolutely resilience can be changed. Resilience is not for the genetically blessed and can be strengthened at any age. One of the most exciting findings in the last decade or so is that we can change the wiring of the brain through the experiences we expose it to. The right experiences can shape the individual, intrinsic characteristics of a child in a way that will build their resilience.

Now for the how. Building resilience in children.

Building small humans into healthy, thriving big ones isn't about clearing adversity out of their way. Of course, if we could scoop them up and lift them over the things that would cause them to stumble, that would be a wonderful thing, but it wouldn't necessarily be doing them any favours. A little bit of stress is life-giving and helps them to develop the skills they need to flourish. Strengthening them towards healthy living is about nurturing within them the strategies to deal with that adversity. Here's how.

1. Resilience needs relationships, not uncompromising independence.

Research tells us that it's not rugged self-reliance, determination or inner strength that leads kids through adversity, but the reliable presence of at least one supportive relationship. In the context of a loving relationship

with a caring adult, children have the opportunity to develop vital coping skills. The presence of a responsive adult can also help to reverse the physiological changes that are activated by stress. This will ensure that the developing brain, body and immune system are protected from the damaging effects of these physiological changes. Anyone in the life of a child can make a difference – family, teachers, coaches – anyone.

2. Increase their exposure to people who care about them.

Social support is associated with higher positive emotions, a sense of personal control and predictability, self-esteem, motivation, optimism, a resilience. Kids won't always notice the people who are in their corner cheering them on, so when you can, let them know about the people in their fan club. Anything you can do to build their connection with the people who love them will strengthen them. 'I told Grandma how brave you were. She's so proud of you.'

3. Let them know that it's okay to ask for help.

Children will often have the idea that being brave is about dealing with things by themselves. Let them know that being brave and strong means knowing when to ask for help. If there is anything they can do themselves, guide them towards that but resist carrying them there.

4. Build their executive functioning.

Strengthening their executive functioning will strengthen the prefrontal cortex. This will help them manage their own behaviour and feelings, and increase their capacity to develop coping strategies. Some powerful ways to build their executive functioning are:

- establishing routines;
- modelling healthy social behaviour;
- creating and maintaining supportive reliable relationships around them;
- providing opportunities for their own social connections;
- creative play;
- board games (good for impulse control (taking turns), planning, working memory, and mental flexibility (the ability to shift thoughts to an alternative, better pattern of thought if the situation requires);
- games that involve memory (e.g. the shopping game – 'I went shopping and I bought a [puppy]'; the next person says, 'I went shopping and I bought a [puppy and a bike for my t-rex]'; next person ... 'I went shopping and I bought [a puppy, a bike for my t-rex and a hot air balloon] – the winner is the last one standing who doesn't forget something on the shopping list;

- exercise;
- giving them opportunities to think and act independently (if they disagree with you and tell you why you're wrong, there's a plus side – their executive functioning is flourishing!);
- providing opportunities for them to make their own decisions.

5. Encourage a regular mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness creates structural and functional changes in the brain that support a healthy response to stress. It strengthens the calming, rational prefrontal cortex and reduces activity in the instinctive, impulsive amygdala. It also strengthens the connections between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. When this connection is strong, the calming prefrontal cortex will have more of a hand in decisions and behaviour.

6. Exercise.

Exercise strengthens and reorganises the brain to make it more resilient to stress. One of the ways it does this is by increasing the neurochemicals that can calm the brain in times of stress. Anything that gets kids moving is stellar, but of course, if you can make it fun that pretty much grants you hero status. Here are some ideas, but get them thinking and they'll have plenty of their own:

- throw a frisbee;
- kick a ball;
- give a hula-hoop a spin;
- dance stars;
- walk the dog;
- superhero tag (the tagged one stands in the middle of a circle on the ground, a superhero saves them by using their superhero powers to fly with running feet through the circle);
- detective (in the park or backyard ... first one to find five things that are green; or five things starting with 's'; or seven things that could be used for dress-ups; or ten things that smell gorgeous – ready, set, go!).

7. Build feelings of competence and a sense of mastery.

Nurture that feeling in them – that one that reminds them they can do hard things. You'll be doing this every time you acknowledge their strengths, the brave things they do, their effort when they do something difficult; and when you encourage them to make their own decisions. When they have a sense of mastery, they are less likely to be reactive to future stress and more likely to handle future challenges. 'You're a superstar when it comes to trying hard things. You've got what it takes. Keep going. You'll get there.'

8. Nurture optimism.

Optimism has been found to be one of the key characteristics of resilient people. The brain can be rewired to be more optimistic through the experiences it is exposed to. If you have a small human who tends to look at the glass as being half empty, show them a different view. This doesn't mean invalidating how they feel. Acknowledge their view of the world, and introduce them to a different one. 'It's disappointing when it rains on a sports day isn't it. Let's make the most of this. What's something we can do on a rainy day that we probably wouldn't do if it was sunny?' The idea is to focus on what is left, rather than what has been lost.

9. Teach them how to reframe.

The ability to reframe challenges in ways that feel less threatening is linked to resilience. Reframing is such a valuable skill to have. In times of difficulty or disappointment, it will help them to focus on what they have, rather than what they've lost.

To build this skill, acknowledge their disappointment, then gently steer them away from looking at what the problem has cost them, towards the opportunities it might have brought them.

For example, if a rainy day has meant sport has been cancelled, 'I understand how disappointed you are about not playing today. I'd be disappointed too. What can we do because of the rain that we might not have been able to do otherwise?' (If they're really disappointed they might need your help.) 'You could snuggle up and read a book, watch a movie, play a game inside, walk in the rain, we could cook and throw a pretend party or have a fancy afternoon tea – with very fancy clothes of course, and jewels and fancy shoes and china plates and fancy glasses and maybe even ... a tablecloth – but no forks – we are not eating cake with forks, no way – that's just too far.' Let there be ridiculous ideas too.

This will let them push past the obvious and come up with something that is beautifully unique. It will also encourage them to question any limits or ideas about how things 'should' be done. 'Maybe we could have a picnic in the rain, or a beach party. Maybe we could paint ourselves with mud, or wash the dog in the rain, or make a bubble bath out there and wash ourselves!' Are there ways they can turn this into interesting ideas.

10. Model resiliency.

Imitation is such a powerful way to learn. The small humans in your life will want to be just like you, and they'll be watching everything. Without pitching it above what they can cope with, let them see how you deal with

disappointment. Bringing them into your emotional world at appropriate times will help them to see that sadness, stuckness, disappointment are all very normal human experiences. When experiences are normalised, there will be a safety and security that will open the way for them to explore what those experiences mean for them, and experiment with ways to respond. 'I'm disappointed that I didn't get the job, but that's because it was important to me. It's nice to have things that are important to you, even if they don't end the way you want them to. I did my very best in the interview and I know I'll be okay. That one wasn't the job for me, but I know there is going to be one that is perfect. I just have to keep trying and be patient.

11. Facing fear – but with support.

Facing fear is so empowering (within the limits of self-preservation of course – staying alive is also empowering) but to do this, they need the right support – as we all do. Kids can be fairly black and white about things so when they are faced with something difficult, the choices can seem like only two – face it head on or avoid it at all costs. But there is a third option, and that is to move gradually towards it, while feeling supported and with a certain amount of control.

12. Encourage them to take safe, considered risks.

Let them know that the courage they show in doing something brave and difficult is more important than the outcome. Age-appropriate freedom lets them learn where their edges are, encourages them to think about their decisions, and teaches them that they can cope with the things that go wrong. When they take risks they start to open up to the world and realise their capacity to shape it. There's magic in that for them and for us. 'I love how brave you are. When you try harder and harder things, they might not always work out, but it means you're getting stronger, smarter, braver and you'll be closer to getting it next time.'

13. Don't rush to their rescue.

It is in the precious space between falling and standing back up again that they learn how to find their feet. Of course, sometimes scooping them up and giving them a steady place to be is exactly what they need to find the strength to move forward. The main thing is not to do it every time. Exposure to stressors and challenges that they can manage during childhood will help to ensure that they are more able to deal with stress during adulthood. There is evidence that these early experiences cause positive changes in the prefrontal cortex (the 'calm down, you've got this' part of the brain), that will protect against the negative effects of future stress.

Think of it like immunisation – a little bit of the pathogen, whether it's a virus or something stressful, helps to build up resistance or protect against the more severe version.

14. Meet them where they are.

Resilience isn't about never falling down. It's about getting back up again, and there's no hurry for this to happen. All of us experience emotional pain, setback, grief and sadness sometimes. Feelings always have a good reason for being there, even if they can feel a little pushy at times. The key for kids is to learn to respect those feelings (even the bad ones), but not let them take charge and steer towards trouble. Sadness and grief, for example, can make us want to withdraw for a little while. It is during the withdrawal that information is reflected upon, assimilated and processed so that balance can be found again. If this is rushed, even if it is in the name of resilience, it can stay as a gentle rumble and show up through behaviour, sometimes at wildly unexpected times.

15. Nurture a growth mindset. We can change, and so can other people.

Research has found that children who have a growth mindset – the belief that people have the potential to change – are more likely to show resilience when things get tough. Compared to kids who believe that bullies will always be bullies and victims will always be victims, kids who believe that people can change report less stress and anxiety, better feelings about themselves in response to social exclusion, and better physical health. See here for the step by step on how to nurture a growth mindset.

16. Let them know that you trust their capacity to cope.

Fear of failure isn't so much about the loss but about the fear that they (or you) won't be able to cope with the loss. What you think matters – it really does. You're the one they will look to as a gauge for how they're going. If you believe they have it in them to cope with the stumbles along the way, they will believe this too. This isn't always easy. We will often feel every bump, bruise, fall or fail. It can be heartbreaking when they struggle or miss out on something they want, not because of what it means for us, but because of what we know it means for them. But – they'll be okay. However long it takes, they'll be okay. When you decide, they'll decide.

17. Build their problem-solving toolbox.

Self-talk is such an important part of problem-solving. Your words are powerful because they are the foundation on which they build their own self-talk. Rather than solving their problems for them, start to give them the language to solve their own. Some ideas:

- What would [someone who they see as capable] do?
- What has worked before?
- Say as many ideas as you can in two minutes, even the silly ones? Lay them on me. Go.
- How can we break this big problem into little pieces?

So say, for example, the problem is, 'What if I miss you or get scared when I'm at Grandmas?' Validate them first, then start giving them the problem-solving language without handing them solution, 'You might miss me. I'll miss you too. It's really normal to miss people you love, even if you're with people you love being with. What do you think might help if that happens?' or, 'What would [Superman/ Dad/ big sister who is practicing to rule the universe] do?' or 'What sort of things do you do here at home that help you to feel cozy or safe?' I know you always have great ideas.'

18. Make time for creativity and play.

Problem-solving is a creative process. Anything that strengthens their problem-solving

skills will nurture their resilience. Children are naturally curious, inquisitive and creative. Give them the space and the time to play and get creative, and they'll do the rest.

19. Shhh. Let them talk.

Try to resist solving their problems for them. (Oh but so tempting, I know!) Instead, be the sounding board as they take themselves to wherever they need to be. As they talk, their mind is processing and strengthening. The sparks that are flying up there could shine a light bright enough to read by. Guide them, but wherever you can, let them talk and try to come up with their own solutions. You are the safest place in the world for them to experiment and try new things. Problem-solving is a wonderful skill to have, and their time talking to you, and coming up with ideas, will build it beautifully. Give them the opportunity to explore and wander around their own great potential.

20. Try, 'how', not 'why'.

When things go wrong – as they will – asking kids 'why' will often end in 'don't know'.

Who knows why any of us do silly things or make decisions that aren't great ones. The only certainty is that we all do them. Rather than, 'why did you paint your sister's face?' which might lead to the perfectly reasonable explanation of, 'to make it yellow', encourage problem-solving and reflection by asking how they can put it right. 'She's yellow but it's not okay for her to stay yellow. How can you fix this?'

And above all else ...

Let them know they are loved unconditionally.

(But you already knew that.)

This will give them a solid foundation to come back to when the world starts to feel wobbly. Eventually, they will learn that they can give that solid foundation to themselves. A big part of resilience is building their belief in themselves. It's the best thing they'll ever believe in.



Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

<https://www.fasdoutreach.ca>

POPFASD is a British Columbia Ministry of Education provincial resource program whose mandate is to increase educators' capacity to meet the educational needs of students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) through FASD-informed practice that benefits all students.

Our website provides educational resources, such as: eLearning Videos; Print Resources; Conferences & Events; FASD News; downloadable resources; and a listing of our POPFASD District Partners.

POPDASD can be a great resource for parents to share with those that are educating their children who are affected by FASD.

One program that families in Utah are showing particular interest in is The Math Interactive Learning Experience (MILE) Program by Claire D. Coles, Elles Taddeo, Julie A. Kable, Emory School of Medicine, Emory University. Dr. Carmen Rasmussen provides information about the MILE Program and its effect on improving the math skills in young children with FASD. The focus of the program is placed on the core deficits that underlie math difficulties, aspects of functioning that include working memory, inhibition, strategy use, reasoning, etc. You can view a video explaining more about the program at: goo.gl/Fh8AzZ

We are looking for parents of educators that would be willing to be trained in the model and then be able to provide tutoring to students.

If you are interested in becoming trained or having your child become a student in this program please contact The Adoption Exchange at ks@adoptex.org.

PREPARING YOUR BLACK CHILD FOR A WHITE WORLD

By Dr. Bryan Keith Hotchkins

My name is Dr. Bryan Keith Hotchkins. I was born on February 18, 1971. I found out I was adopted around the age of seven, which completely shaped how I viewed the world and my place in it. As I approached adolescence, I began to question what I did to my birth mother that would make her place me for adoption, which I interpreted as a purposeful effort to separate us, to make certain she and I would experience truncated lives, miles and uncertainty between us. I wondered what led to her decision.

Moving into my teenage years, I contemplated about how my personality, values circumstances and evolution would have been different under the influence of unmet siblings, grandparents and fictive kin members. I wondered whether my cousins knew I existed.

Prior to heading to Southern Methodist University to begin undergraduate pursuits, I had an opportunity to meet her. She came to my parents' home where we chatted like long lost friends about her career, world travels and celebrity friendships. Eventually, the anger surfaced and our conversations shifted from wanting clarifications to expecting explanations that justified her act of selflessness. Reflections have created places of solace that allow for healing and prevent being overwhelmed by youthful reminiscing about a time pasted where I felt completely vulnerable and emotionally exposed. Further introspection about my adoption awakening moments have and do guide my decision making processes pertaining to how I move in society, construct myself Black, male, Christian, and heterosexual. I arrived at these realizations without my birth mother present.

My parents positively poured into my being, gently built my confidence, sculpted my understanding of what it meant to be a member of a thriving Black community and guided me toward adulthood despite not knowing all the answers to the question "how do we raise a Black child who God has blessed us with, our adopted son?" Their parental practices were not always perfect, but they persisted as good people who expected great things. God, family—nuclear, extended, community—

and humanity, in that order, is who I was raised to serve, assist and uplift.

Each of my three parents played a role in raising a child, their child, to positively contribute to society.

Parents do not know what they do not know.

Parents default to what they know about how they were raised.

In 2007, my wife and I relocated to Salt Lake City, Utah in pursuit of undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees in Sociology and Educational Leadership and Policy from the University of Utah. The intersections of White and Mormon culture brought about unique challenges that taught us how to navigate racism and locate supportive spaces of cultural congruence, holistic enclaves of sorts where our authentic selves would be welcomed, encouraged and protected.

Being new to Utah meant developing purposeful opportunities to spend numerous hours engaged in cultural activities like celebrating the holidays of Juneteenth and Kwanzaa. We attended Calvary Baptist Church to expand our reach into the Black spiritual community. We found community in our historically sorority and fraternity, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. to immerse our children in Black intelligence. We moved to West Jordan in pursuit of locating diverse schools, neighborhoods and friendship circles. Eventually, we found ourselves educating teachers of our children about African American contributions to America, beyond those of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Oprah Winfrey to discuss the Black Panthers, Marcus Garvey and Fannie Lou Hamer. Numerous times we found ourselves vetting the friends of our children, which led to educating White parents about the difference between diversity and inclusion by informing perspectives about why the empowerment of people of color is essential to their unencumbered participation in society while being successful.

We discussed topics like White privilege, White fragility, systemic racism, anti-Blackness, and the importance of Black children knowing they belong, while feeling appreciated. Play dates with White families often served as waking moments to bridge a lack of understanding, albeit not always successful, but definitely represented opportunities to exchange ideas.

Parenting in extremely unfamiliar circumstances requires introspection, planning, foresight and an unwavering willingness to persist despite making mistakes.

We do not know what we do not know. We default to what we know about how our parents told us the world works.

Upon graduating from the University of Utah, Nedra and I reflected upon our family struggles and sympathized with the trepidation experienced by others who were less successful in creating safe spaces for their Black children, most of which centered around transracial adoption. As the parent of Black children who are growing up in a world of indifference, we wanted to inform transracial adoptive parents of Black children about how to raise them as culturally confident, racially aware individuals who have a high self-esteem and can navigate both White and Black spaces. Hence, our transracial adoption educational program for parents who are raising Black children, the Community V(i)llage (www.thinkpositionality.org), was created in 2015.

Since then, Nedra and I have had the privilege of helping approximately over 40 families develop actions plans for guiding their Black children from birth to adolescence through adulthood and beyond. Based on the nearly 17 focus groups we conducted with participants, our collective knowledge as parents raising Black children in Utah, and my recently published manuscript about how Black youth navigate a predominantly White school in Salt Lake City (Teacher's College Record, 2016), we offer the following four doable suggestions for increasing the likelihood

your Black children will grow up emotionally healthy, culturally grounded, and able to straddle two worlds—one White, the other Black.

First—Questioning Oneself:

Ask reflective questions about how you were raised to view Black people. Specifically, “what was I told about Black people that is informed my perceptions about them and to what extent was it racist?”, “what do I not know about Black culture that my children must learn?” or “what will be my distinct role in educating my children about what it means to be Black and why is being the parent of a Black child important?” This practice allows for a glimpse in the mirror to determine your personal and cultural blind spots versus areas of knowledge. Listen to your inner voice. Consider how you select those within your extended family and social circles, specifically, which persons contribute to your being able to have difficult discussions about race, parenting and building a sense of community outside of your home. Additionally, what is your family process for arriving at solutions when your Black children experience racial trauma and what is your family process for collectively doing so? Further, begin to observe how you are treated with your Black children in public, then contextualize about the location, who was present and what was done to capture your attention. Often times, strangers and even those we love can make insensitive comments that are harmful to your children. Finally, begin to discuss personal versus family needs of yourself juxtaposed to Black children. Do the need of your Black children or their parents come first? How is that actualized? The answers to the aforementioned questions mark the beginning of contemplating about how to raise your parental awareness moving forward.

Second—Elevating One’s Family Unit:

Determine family trajectories pertaining to how each of you will be purposeful in elevating the knowledge of those who reside in your home, extended family, workplaces and school settings. Strategize about what is required to bring those ways to fruition. Does your family need to visit the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (<https://nmaahc.si.edu>) as an exploratory trip? Do you plan to attend the local Juneteenth Festival (<http://www.njclc.com/njclchistory.html>) this upcoming summer? What is the local Black history in your

city, state or region and how do you share it with nuclear family members? In order to create a working, fluid knowledge of about Black culture, history and people your family must set project-based timelines of learning (e.g. bi-weekly, monthly or annually) that engage participants in an active process that is hands-on. In order to better understand the overarching climate in which being Black occurs, you must consider and be able to identify historic, systemic and individual empowerments and impediments that interact with your children and yourself. For instance, which teachers and administrators in your child’s school are most knowledgeable about local Black culture, history or events? What are your family rules of engagement for approaching these individuals to further increase your access to information that will be of benefit to your children and yourself? The answers to the aforementioned questions determine the pace by which your family learns about the relevancy of Blackness within American and global circles.

Three—Social Justice Pursuits:

Devise doable projects around defining what Social Justice means historically and within modern times to your family members and oppressed people at large. Which member of the Black intelligentsia, like Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates (<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/10/colin-kaepnick/541845/>), informs the societal issues you and your family prioritize as important, relevant and worth addressing? How does your family frame the Black Lives Matter movement (<https://blacklivesmatter.com>) from a children-centered versus parental perspective? If your child wants to kneel at school, during the national anthem or pledge allegiance, how will you and your family support this form of activism? Further, who takes the lead in making these determinations and are those decisions based on parent or child needs? Be mindful that there should be clear family expectations established about leading and following in the exploration process of applying social justice within and outside of your home. Know your role!

Four—Introspective Practices:

As it pertains to nuclear/extended families, what are the cultural traditions you will develop that center what it means to be Black, juxtaposed to White normative expectations about how Black people should present themselves, like Kwanzaa

(<http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>)? What past traditions did you engage in as a child that were harmful or celebratory? How will your family replicate traditions that were holistically healthy while discarding those that were harmful? Creating family traditions requires that parents are adept in being insightful about the intersection of Whiteness and Blackness in ways that allow for both to be celebrated by Black children. Do you have cultural artifacts that provide examples about how Black people have contributed to the world? If so, are these cultural artifacts prominently positioned within your home and office? Does your family have direct accessibility to historic sites that highlight Black historic relevance like those relating to the Buffalo Soldiers or Martin Luther King, Jr. (<https://www.travelks.com/listing/buffalo-soldier-monument/13307/>)? Finally, what does cultural exposure to Black people look like in your home, amongst your friend groups, within K-12 school environments, throughout your locale and work site? The answers to these questions allows transracial adoptive parents of Black children to have foresight when devising informed, new ways of thinking about parenting transracially.

Once we know better, we purposefully do better.

Although we understand transracial adoptive parents of Black children are invested, they are still responsible for educating and raising culturally competent individuals. Additionally, we have learned from Community V(i)llage participants that merely loving your child is not enough. Therefore, it is essential that as parents do the following: a) work to raise our levels of awareness; b) shed notions of being colorblind and see our children as racially different; c) provide the necessary exposure to Black culture through books, events, movies, Podcast, mentors and historic artifacts; and d) be proactive in the process because after all it is about our children, not ourselves.

I wish you the best, but expect that you work towards achieving the aforementioned because as transracial adoptive parents of Black children the responsibility is your, which sometimes means being uncomfortable in order for your children to thrive.



Dr. Bryan K. Hotchkins is one of the rising intellectual voices in the nation on the subject of informing transracial adoption parental decisions about helping Black adoptees navigate cultural indifference. Having struggled to manage his own path as an adoptee,

Dr. Hotchkins shares not only his personal story, but also his research about Black youth identity development within the context of K-12 schools, college campuses, and transracial family environments. While he primarily informs transracial adoptive White parents of Black children about how to successfully have informed RACE TALK with loved ones, he also has counsel for teachers, religious leaders, and relatives of transracial adoption families who want to better understand how to empower Black adoptees to become culturally aware, self-confident teens who fully understand how to holistically embrace what it means to be Black while learning how to thrive in diverse environments.

The **COLORSBIND** box is an exciting, monthly, affirming subscription gift for transracial adoptive parents who are raising their Black children while wanting to learn about Black culture, people, history, knowledge, food preparation and how to respond to racism. We realize you don't know what you don't know so the **COLORSBIND** box provides 4-5 monthly contents (e.g. affirming t-shirts/art, a family activity manual or relevant book about Black culture) that teach the value of what it means to be a Black child growing up differently and strategies for devising a parental action plan to help guide them. Based on your answers to our TRA survey, each **COLORSBIND** box is designed to match your personal curiosities about racial difference, constructions of parental self-image, holistic child rearing desires and aspirations to seek Black cultural knowledge. Basically, each **COLORSBIND** box is made exactly for you to inform your strategies for raising confident, racially educated Black children who possess high self-esteem. Pre-orders begin in late February of 2018.

If you would like to receive information about how to order your very own **COLORSBIND** box please do so at www.colorsbindbox.com

How to Help Your Child Recognize & Understand Frustration

Brooke Brogle, Alyson Jiron & Jill Giacomini

Frustration is a common emotion in young children and typically occurs as a child begins to discover the many things he would like to do, but simply cannot do yet. Frustration is a natural and healthy emotion and can provide a positive learning experience for a child. The feelings of frustration that occur when your child has difficulty communicating his needs or tying his shoes are his cue that he needs to try to do something in a different way or that what he is doing is not working. You can teach your child how to deal with frustration in a way that is useful for him. Most important, you must respond to frustration when it first arises before it changes into anger or becomes the dreaded temper tantrum. Two skills children must learn in order to deal with frustration are: 1) how to ask for help, and 2) know when to take a break!



Try This at Home

- Notice and label when you, your child or others are frustrated. Explain that everyone, including adults, feel frustration. You might say:
 - » About yourself: "I am frustrated. I have tried three times to fix the vacuum and it is just not working! I am going to take a break. I will come back and try when I am feeling calmer."
 - » About your child: "You are so frustrated! I see that you have been trying to build that tower and it keeps falling down! Let's have a snack and then try again together."
 - » About others: "That little boy looks frustrated. He can't climb up the ladder on his own. I wonder if he needs some help?"
- Teach your child appropriate ways to respond to frustration. You might say to your child, "You can ask Daddy. Say, 'Help please!'"
- Knowing when to take a break is a skill that can be taught to your child. You can say, "I see you are frustrated. Let's take a break. First, let's do five jumping jacks and get some water. Then we can come back and try again!"
- Puppets and toys are great tools for role playing situations that your child may be struggling with, such as trying to accomplish a task. "Wow, this train can't get up the hill. He has tried four times and keeps rolling back down. He looks like he wants to cry. I wonder what he can do?"



Practice at School

School is an opportunity for children to explore new concepts and try new skills. As a child attempts to become more independent, she often feels frustrated when she is not able to complete a task by herself. A teacher can help a child identify when she is feeling frustrated and prompt her to ask for help, try a new solution or take a break. "You have been working so hard to fit that piece in the puzzle. You sound frustrated. Would you like some help?" As the child learns new skills to manage frustrating feelings, she will become more confident in her abilities and eager to attempt new activities.



The Bottom Line

Childhood is full of frustrating moments. As young children explore their world they are faced with many challenges. There are numerous things they simply can't reach, can't buckle, and can't climb on their own. From the child's point of view, parents and other adults are always saying "No" to the activities and objects he wants. It is important to help your child learn how to deal with this common experience. As a parent, you have the opportunity to help your child learn how to recognize, understand and find solutions to his frustrations. Each time your child is able to work through a frustration, he is adding a very important skill he needs to be happy and successful in the world. Children who learn these skills are less likely to exhibit challenging behavior and are better able to navigate life's ups and downs with confidence.



www.challengingbehavior.org

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OVERVIEW

PEER CONNECTIONS® - DISCOVERY

Program Description: Peer Connections® - Discovery is a pre-employment transition program for students with social communication disorders. This program provides an opportunity for students ages 14 to 21 years to explore a variety of experiences that will guide future higher education and employment goals. The project includes community experiences and life skills coaching to give the student experience that will prepare them for the future. Program staff also meet monthly with the student and family for support and training. The purpose of the program is to help students define their skills, interests, and optimal conditions for work and develop skills to become more employable and find success as they transition into adulthood.

As part of this program students participate in the Peer Connections® program for 3 hours of volunteer job training a week for 9 weeks. The Peer Connections® program provides real world experience in an employment setting with the support of peers and staff to learn to overcome obstacles they may face in a work environment. Students actively participate in goal-setting and feedback sessions throughout the program to encourage more independent self-evaluation skills.

Through participation in Peer Connections® - Discovery, students will focus on the following essential employment skills:

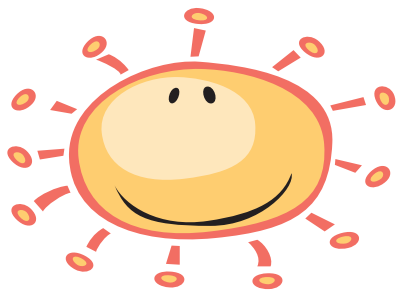
- Interviewing and self-reflection
- Following a work schedule and completing work on time
- Accepting instructions and receiving feedback from a supervisor
- Communicating needs directly and clearly and asking for help when needed
- Developing coping strategies to manage stress, frustration and anxiety in the work place
- Establishing appropriate boundaries with regards to personal space, information and workplace behaviors and conversations
- Problem-solving independently and as a team to meet workplace expectations

Overview of Peer Connections® - Discovery activities:

- The in-depth Discovery process helps the student explore their own skills, interests and optimal conditions for work.
- Students participate in the 9-week Peer Connections® program
- Students participate in weekly life skills coaching sessions with program staff and monthly team coaching sessions with program staff and other family members.

For information and referral:

Contact Crystal Emery: crystale@esgw.org, (801) 376-6012



10 SUPER-FUN TO MAKE YOUR SUMMER

1 Room revamp



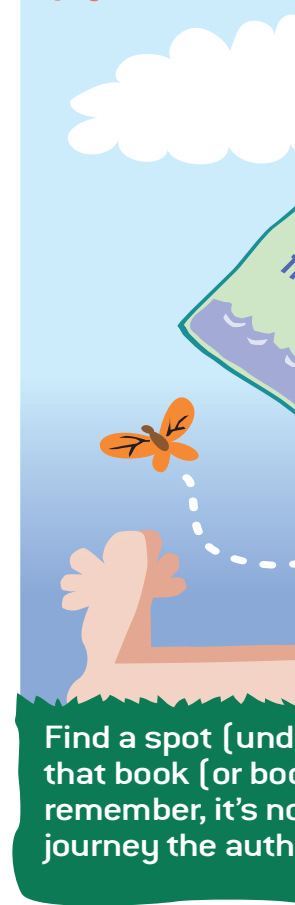
Redesign, rearrange, repaint, or redecorate your room. Make it into a space that makes you happy. A little change goes a long way.

2 It's A Wash!

Offer to wash someone's car for a small fee. Or do it for free; you may be surprised at the reward you receive.



3 Chill



Find a spot (under a tree) to read that book (or book of your choice). Remember, it's not just the journey the author...



6 Water+Dirt=Art

There's nothing better than mud for all kinds of art projects. Find a good spot, stir up the soil with a garden spade (or large fork), add water, and let your imagination do the rest. Add dry grass or straw as a binder, and let your mess-terpiece dry in the sun for a couple of days. BTW, you *will* get dirty. :-)

7 Solar System from the Store

Pick up a solar system at the store:

- Mercury (green pea)
- Venus (walnut in shell)
- Earth (pearl onion)
- Mars (cherry tomato)
- Jupiter (10-inch head of lettuce)
- Saturn (8-inch cabbage)
- Uranus (grapefruit)
- Neptune (large orange)

What kind of dinner can you make from your solar system? (If you want to include Pluto, pick up a peppercorn.)



8 Be Kn

There are hundreds of knots. Spend some of this summer learning them. They can come in very handy. Search wikipedia for "list of knots."

BOWLINE >

FUN WAYS

LAST A LITTLE LONGER



4. Out and Read



...er a tree, or even in the tub), and read
...oks) you've always wanted to. And
...ot a race. Take your time and enjoy the
...or is taking you on.

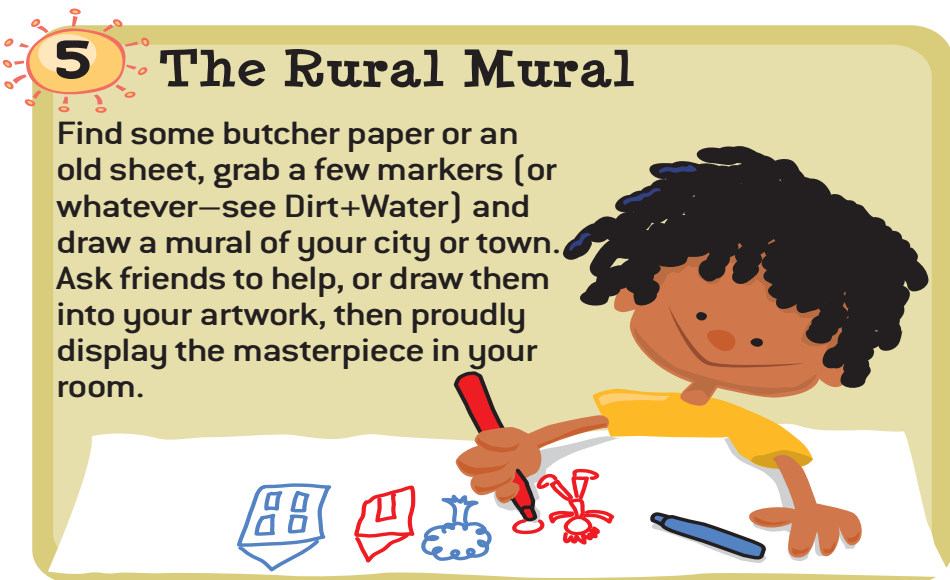
4 Camp Out!

Whether outside or in the living room, with a tent or a blanket; find a space, set up camp, and invite some friends (animal or otherwise) and have fun!



5 The Rural Mural

Find some butcher paper or an old sheet, grab a few markers (or whatever—see Dirt+Water) and draw a mural of your city or town. Ask friends to help, or draw them into your artwork, then proudly display the masterpiece in your room.



6. Knotty!

...s of kinds
...me time
...ing a few.



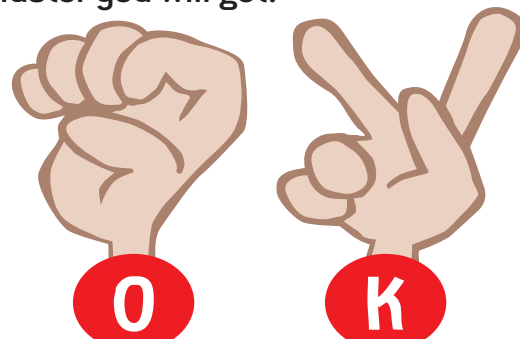
9 Be Big About It!

Find a bright flashlight, prop it up with a stick (or have a friend help), and step between it and a large building or house. Watch yourself grow many feet in a few seconds.



10 It Fingers

Learn ASL sign language (at least the 26 characters of the alphabet) and have a conversation with a friend. The more you practice, the faster you will get.





REDEFINING PERFECT

'When we announced our decision to adopt older children out of birth order, people said we were throwing a wrench in our "perfect" family. But what makes a family perfect, anyway?'

by Ashlee Andrews, reprinted with permission from Adoptive Families Magazine

Would adopting older children internationally out of birth order make out family less "perfect"?

After our second child was born people would look at us, two parents and a healthy daughter and son, and comment that we now had the "million dollar family." That statement bothered me, even though I knew it was said with good intentions. If we'd had a second daughter, would we be only the \$500,000 family? What if one of our children had been born with a disability?

Over the past few years I have begun to realize that families aren't supposed to look perfect. Do you know a family that has never faced illness, hardship, loss of a job, or some other big trial? I doubt it. Do you know a family who has only healthy children who have never required surgery, hospitalization, a visit to a specialist, routine medication, physical or speech therapy, or some other supportive care? Probably not.

When we were in the process of adopting 10-year-old Majorine and two-year-old Ty from Uganda, we heard from all quarters that we were making our lives more difficult than they had to be. What would we do about school for an older adopted child who was just learning English? How would we care for a little boy who might have major medical

concerns? How would we bond with children who did not even know us? We were told that we were being unfair to our two biological children, Holly and Brett. Basically, we heard that we were making our previously "perfect family" imperfect.

Why would we do this? Because families aren't supposed to be perfect. And that is what holds us together and why we love each other, even when we seem unlovable to others. We love each other for our quirks, our weaknesses, our disabilities, and our crankiness. We love each other during our illnesses, and despite our challenges, just as we love each other for our victories and for our talents, accomplishments, and strengths.

We have friends who have adopted children with special needs — Down syndrome, HIV, and almost everything else that a child can be born with or acquire. Yes, these friends knew what they were getting into, and they chose to do it. They did not see it as damaging or burdening their family. Rather, they saw an opportunity to give a home to a precious child, a child who would bring joy to their family. Today I watched a video of an adorable girl with Down syndrome, recently adopted from China, putting on a ballet recital for her siblings. She spun, twirled, and leaped gracefully as her younger brother and sisters watched in admiration. They clapped furiously at the

end. You can't tell me that this little girl made her family less perfect in any way. Not at all.

When Majo had been home with us for about six months, she was asked to write an essay about whom she would choose to spend a day with if she could spend it with any person, living or dead, fictional or non-fictional. Our sweet girl, who had recently turned 11, wrote that she would spend the day with her little brother, two-year-old Brett. Our four-year-old daughter, Holly, has said many times that the happiest day of her life was when Majo joined our family. Last night during a thunderstorm the girls huddled together to comfort each other, then slept together all night long. And when Ty, our youngest, is cranky or throwing a fit, no one can comfort him quite like Holly.

Did we damage our biological kids when we adopted our other two children? Have we been unfair to them? Somehow I don't think so. Did we ruin a good thing? Hardly. We may not be a "million dollar family" any more but, hey, nobody's perfect.

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and additional resources.

utah department of
human services
Child and Family Services



Contact Your Post Adoption Specialist

Northern Region:

Jeanna O'Connor	801-395-5973
Anna Whisler	435-213-6641
Aubrey Meyers	801-776-7352

Salt Lake Region:

Adoption Helpline	801-300-8135
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Western Region:

Jeannie Warner (A-L)	801-787-8814
Megan Hess (M-Z)	801-921-3820

Southwest Region:

Richfield/Cedar City	Paul Arnold	435-236-9337
St. George/Cedar City	Krystal Jones	435-767-8774

Eastern Region:

Price/Castledale	Greg Daniels	435-636-2367
Vernal/Roosevelt	Fred Butterfield	435-630-1711
Moab/Blanding	Lyra Woods	435-259-3720



HONORING EXCELLENCE *Shandra Powell*



Shandra Powell is passionate about finding forever homes for the children she serves in the Southwest Region.

As an adoptive parent herself she understands the joy that can come though adding to your family this way. She and her husband have been married 25 wonderful years and have five children and 15 grandchildren.

She loves spending time with her family and is always willing to jump up and lead the kids in the next great adventure.

She has been working hard to complete her 2nd masters degree and will finish her CSW this spring. She also loves to work in her garden and create keepsake quilts for those she loves.

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