

# UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

NOVEMBER 2017





# UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

QUARTERLY DCFS NEWSLETTER



Elise (11) and Nate (8) are waiting...  
Photo by: Linda Boyd, Photographic Artist

## In This Issue

- 
- |          |   |           |  |
|----------|---|-----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | <b>Utah's Adoption Connection Facebook Support Page</b><br>A spotlight on Utah's Adoption Connection Facebook Support Page.   | <b>10</b> | <b>November Events</b><br>A spotlight of the National Adoption Month November Celebration and United for Adoption Conference.                |
| <b>4</b> | <b>What Teachers Should Know About Adoption</b><br>By: Quality Improvement Center for Adoption & Guardianship<br>An article about talking to your children's teacher about adoption related issues. | <b>12</b> | <b>The Whole-Brained Child</b><br>By: The Montessori Notebook<br>An quick guide based upon teachings in the book, "The Whole-Brained Child." |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Family Support Center Respite Program</b><br>A spotlight on The Family Place, a respite resource in Northern Utah.   | <b>14</b> | <b>Holiday Survival Tips</b><br>By: Amanda Purvis<br>An article for adoptive families with tips on how to survive stressful holiday moments. |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Five Reasons your Teen Won't Talk to You</b><br>By: Shannon Perry<br>An article about how to talk with your teen.  | <b>15</b> | <b>Online Resources</b><br>A free webinar and online resource manual for parents.  |

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# UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

FACEBOOK.COM/UTAHSAADOPTIONCONNECTION



## FACEBOOK SUPPORT PAGE

PRE AND POST - ADOPTION RESOURCES

### LOCAL TRAININGS AND WEBINARS

WATCH FOR UPCOMING TRAININGS AND WEBINARS FOR PRE AND POST ADOPTIVE FAMILIES. FEATURED PARENT NIGHT OUT'S, FAMILY NIGHTS AND PARENT LUNCHES.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

NOVEMBER CELEBRATION, PUMPKIN PATCH DAYS, 5K RUNS, A DAY FOR WEDNESDAY'S CHILD AND SO MUCH MORE.

### SUPPORT ARTICLES

LINKS TO ONLINE ARTICLES TO SUPPORT PRE AND POST ADOPTIVE FAMILIES.

### WAITING CHILDREN

CURRENT WAITING CHILDREN PROFILES AND VIDEOS.

### QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

DIGITAL FORMAT OF THE QUARTERLY "UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION" NEWSLETTER.



FACEBOOK.COM/UTAHSAADOPTIONCONNECTION



Be sure to also check the online calendar at

[www.utahadopt.org](http://www.utahadopt.org)  
for all National Adoption Month activities.



### On the Cover

*Moses, age 20*

The active and busy Moses is always on the go! Full of ideas about what to do for fun, sports keep him on the go, and he likes to unwind with video games. Excited about learning new things, Moses also takes pleasure from reading.

This high school graduate has his sights set on a bright future.

Moses would do well in a home that does not have too many other children, as he relishes one-on-one interactions with the adults in his life. He 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 homestudied families from all states are encouraged to inquire.

Photo by: Deanne Parry, Parry Photography

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](http://www.utahadopt.org).



## ASK ABOUT ADOPTION

# WHAT TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

# ADOPTION



## WHY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR TEACHERS TO KNOW ABOUT ADOPTION

Adoption can be a wonderful outcome for children who are not able to live with their birth parents. However, when adopted children join their new family, they bring life experiences that might include maltreatment and/or trauma. As a result, during the time leading into adoption and after the adoption is finalized, these children might exhibit some unique behaviors in the classroom. Therefore, it is important for educators to understand the reasons underlying the behaviors versus solely focusing on the behaviors. Common emotions and issues among children who have been adopted include the following:

- grappling with issues related to identity, belonging, or attachment;
- managing complex and/or non-traditional relationships and roles with their birth family;
- experiencing loss and grief; and
- figuring out how to be in a family of a different culture or ethnic group.

Outside of the family network, teachers and other school personnel play the largest role in children's development. Because children spend a great deal of their daily lives in school settings, it is important for teachers to be aware of adoption and the behaviors that some children — both pre- and post-adoption — might exhibit in the classroom. Many teachers have found it extremely beneficial to develop a relationship with the adoptive parents and work with them to determine a classroom routine that works well for their child.



### DID YOU KNOW

- Children & youth are adopted at all ages; median age of children adopted through the public child welfare system is 5 years old.
- The U.S. has more than 1.5 million adoptees younger than 18 years.
- In 2014, 116,360 children were adopted in the U.S., of whom 75,337 were adopted by non-relatives.
- Adoption can occur in a variety of ways: 1) private domestic adoptions; 2) public adoptions (from foster care); 3) intercountry adoptions; and 4) stepparent or family member adoption that does not involve a private agency.
- In 2015, about 440,000 children received Title IV-E adoption subsidies, which means they were most likely adopted from the public child welfare system.

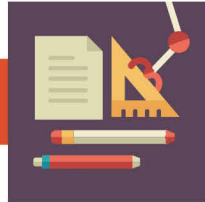
**INFORMATION** For more information about the QIC-AG visit [www.qic-ag.org](http://www.qic-ag.org)

QIC•AG



## CREATING AN ADOPTION SENSITIVE CLASSROOM

Teachers can help create a classroom that is sensitive to adoption by viewing assignments through the eyes of a child who has been adopted. Without intention, school assignments, classroom decorations, and even the selection of information to share about a country of heritage can potentially cause stress to a child who is adopted. The list below suggests some small changes teachers can make to ensure their classroom is inclusive for families formed through adoption:



### ASSIGNMENTS

- Be sensitive about developing assignments that require knowledge of birth history.
  - » Family trees can be a difficult, stressful activity for children who do not know the details of their birth history.
  - » Assignments that study a child's biological traits can be difficult if children do not know one or both of their birth parents.
  - » Assignments that require bringing in baby pictures can be difficult if the child does not have any pictures.



### HOLIDAYS

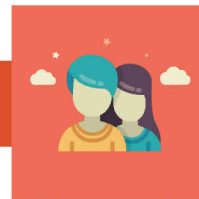
- Be aware that holidays can be difficult times for some children and try to tweak these celebrations to be inclusive of all children.
  - » Birthdays, Mother's Day, and Father's Day might bring up a wide range of emotions in children who are not living with their birth parents.
  - » Adopted children might celebrate an "adoption day" or "coming home" day that is just as important as a birthday.

- » Mother's or Father's Day celebrations can be changed to Parent Day celebrations



### LESSONS

- Recognize that, before being adopted, some children might have experienced one or more forms of trauma that will require some variation in the teaching process or accommodation in classroom routines.
  - » Be aware that isolating punishments such as time out or separation from the class might trigger a negative or unexpected response in some children.
  - » If a child exhibits a negative, unexpected response, remain calm and help to get the child regulated before discussing discipline or consequences for the behavior.
  - » Allow extra time for transitions between activities.
  - » Write out a schedule that enables the child to visually follow the schedule structure and organization.
  - » Inform the child when there is going to be a change in routine.



### ADOPTION STATUS

- Recognize that children might be sensitive about their adoption status.
  - » Maintain confidentiality: refrain from referring to a child's adoption within the classroom or in conversations with other school personnel unless the child has disclosed the information himself or herself.
  - » Intervene if classmates are making comments or asking questions about a child's family composition.
  - » Do not assume that a child of a particular nationality speaks the country's language or knows about the country's culture.



The Child Welfare Information Gateway includes a list of Adoption Resources for Teachers (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting/school/teachers/>), including information about possible assignments and additional ideas for creating a sensitive classroom. One “low-touch” suggestion for creating a sensitive classroom is to simply include adoption-sensitive books in your classroom and learning stations; some suggested titles are listed below. Additional ideas for adoption-sensitive books and movies are available on the Center for Adoption Support and Education (<http://adoptionsupport.org/education-resources/for-parents-families/free-resources-links/>) website.

- *We’re Different, We’re the Same* (Sesame Street) by Bobbi Jane Kates (ages 2-6)
- *How I Was Adopted* (Mulberry Books) by Joanna Cole (ages 4-8)
- *Lucy’s Family Tree* (Tilbury House) by Karen Halvorsen Schreck (ages 8-11)
- *How It Feels to Be Adopted* (Knopf) by Jill Krementz (ages 12 and older)
- *Three Little Words: A Memoir* (Atheneum) by Ashley Rhodes-Courter (juvenile)

In some instances, before joining their adoptive family, children might have experienced maltreatment. This maltreatment may have led to trauma that impacts the child’s behaviors. Parents can be a great resource for helping teachers understand their child’s needs and how small adaptations can be made throughout the day to help their child succeed in school. The list below highlights resources to help teachers manage classroom behavior of children who may be grappling with the after effects of traumatic experiences:

- Department of Education, Training and Employment. (2013). *Calmer classrooms: A guide to working with traumatized children*. Retrieved from <http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/healthy/pdfs/calmer-classrooms-guide.pdf>
- Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School. (n.d.). *Helping traumatized children learn*. Retrieved from <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/>
- MONARCH: Trauma-Informed Education. (n.d.). *The MONARCH room*. Retrieved from <http://www.monarchroom-traumainformededucation.com/the-monarch-room.html>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). *Child trauma toolkit for educators*. Retrieved from <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel/trauma-toolkit>



- National Education Association. (2016). *How trauma is changing children’s brains*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/XiMmPq>
- National Education Association. (2016). *Teaching children from poverty and trauma*. Retrieved from <http://nea.org/povertyhandbook>
- National Education Association. (n.d.). *Communities group on trauma-informed classrooms*. Retrieved from [mynea360.org](http://mynea360.org)
- State of Washington, Office of Public Instruction (2009). *The heart of teaching and learning: Compassion, resiliency, and academic success*. Retrieved from <http://k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/HeartofLearning.aspx>



# the Family place

Building Stronger Families



The Family Place, in Cache County, Utah, understands that children who have been adopted from the foster care system have often experienced a lot of trauma. This can result in adopted children having difficult behaviors. It can be hard for parents of these children to find suitable childcare because of the special considerations needed to interact effectively with these children. To help families in these unique situations, The Family Place established their Adoption Respite Program.

The Adoption Respite Program provides specialized trauma-sensitive childcare services to families who have adopted a child from the foster care system. Participating families receive 15 hours of free, in-home childcare to use at the parents' convenience on an annual basis. Trauma-sensitive childcare is provided for all the children in the family under age 18, including biological, foster, and adopted children. The families in the program can also receive childcare at our Logan, Utah, facility during our adoption respite hours on Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Heather\* an elementary-aged girl had experienced many hardships. She and her siblings were in foster placement with a family who were enrolled in The Family Place's Adoption Respite Program. Heather struggled to connect with adults and was aggressive. She didn't know how to be empathetic. Her foster parents were afraid to leave her with their older children or with a babysitter because her behavior was so extreme. The Family Place has been able to care for Heather in our Adoption Respite Program. Not only has this allowed Heather's parents and her other siblings to have a little down-time and to reconnect with each other, but The Family Place staff has also been able to work with Heather to address the trauma she experienced and her behavioral problems. Staff members specifically worked with Heather to help her develop skills to self-regulate and manage her emotions. Her foster parents report that the change in Heather is night and day. She is now able to connect with others and has been able to develop a deep attachment with her foster parents.

Whether receiving care at our center or in a family's home, all staff members providing the Adoption Respite Program have completed a minimum of 40 hours of training on child-development, handling difficult behaviors, and working with children who have experienced trauma. They are also CPR and first-aid certified, have a food handler's permit, and have a cleared Background Criminal Investigation. The Family Place staff is especially equipped with tools, training, and experience to work with children who have difficult behaviors.

**For more information about The Family Place's Adoption Respite Program, or to enroll in the program, contact Alex Essig at The Family Place, 435-752-8880.**

Families who are not enrolled in our Adoption Respite Program can still receive childcare for one morning and one evening each month during our adoption respite hours as long as the family has a current foster placement.

The goal of The Adoption Respite Program is to give parents time away from demands and give adopted children specialized care so that ultimately the entire family can be strengthened.

\*name changed

**TO FIND AND CONTACT A FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER IN YOUR AREA GO TO:  
[WWW.UTAHADOPT.ORG/RESOURCES](http://WWW.UTAHADOPT.ORG/RESOURCES)**



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# Five Reasons Your Teen Won't Talk to You.

By: Shannon Perry

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As I travel the country speaking at conferences for parents and teens, I have the opportunity to receive invaluable feedback. While teens are more concerned about friendships and dating, the most commonly asked question by parents is, "Why won't my teen talk to me?"

I believe I was given some insight to that question while writing my latest book for teens entitled "Stand." For six weeks, ten teens ages 12-18 met with me in my home to give input on various topics for the book. Regardless of age, the teens in our study group had a lot to say about talking with their parents. Some of the "stoppers" to teens communicating might surprise you, but knowing how to navigate around them is key.

The following are the five major reasons that were shared, as well as ways to avoid these pitfalls:

## 1. Teens resent being "talked down to" by their parents.

All of us want to be treated with love and respect, and our teens are certainly no exception. While parents are the "head of the home," problems arise when teens sense entitlement by parents to communicate with them in a condescending or disrespectful way.

When we model respect and kindness to our teens, not only do we show teens we love them, we build their esteem, reminding them they are worthy of respect in other areas of their lives.

What if the shoe is on the other foot, however, and your teen is disrespectful to you? When our teens are disrespectful, we must remain the adult. After all, they can bring out the monster in us when they push our buttons. In these moments, model how you would like to see your teen respond. Treating teens with respect

does not mean you must agree with them. When disagreements arise, and disrespect from your teen becomes an issue, keep the following in mind:

a. Choose your battles. Ask yourself what your deal breakers are and stick with them. If your teen forgets to take out the trash and it was a simple mistake, treat it as such. Look at the motive behind the behavior. Sometimes, teens just forget.

b. Set limits. During a moment when things are calm, talk with your teen about the things that you are and are not willing to accept, then STICK WITH YOUR LIMITS. One of the biggest mistakes parents make is not following through on their word. Make your "yes" count as much as your "no." When you say something, mean it.

c. Know your own triggers and take a time out if needed. When your teen triggers you to explode, know how to respond. If you feel yourself becoming angry or tense, let your teen know you will address the situation when you are calm, then walk out of the room. This not only gives you a breather, it gives your teen the opportunity to think through what has happened. When you are calm, revisit the situation, make your point concise, then listen to what your teen has to say as long as they speak respectfully. If they continue to be disrespectful, let them know you will be happy to listen at a later time when respect can be shown. If you visit the situation again and the disrespect continues, repeat the suggestion above as often as needed. Teens are smart. Eventually, they will catch on.

d. Don't be afraid to reinforce consequences. Make the consequence fit the crime. If your teen yells, "I hate you," understand that your neighbor probably heard the same accusation from their teen earlier that day. You are not alone! Don't let your teen manipulate you with words. Unless you want your teen living with you when they are 30, don't be afraid to lovingly, but consistently, be the

parent. If a consequence is needed, make it a "teaching consequence." For example, your teen refuses to stop playing video games when you call them to dinner, the consequence is that they don't play video games the next night. If the same problem repeats the following night, they lose the opportunity to play video games for two nights. I know one parent who went as far as to remove the door from the hinges on their teen's room because he claimed he had a right to privacy and continued to be disrespectful to his parents. Drastic? Only if you have tried other things that have failed.

## 2. Teens get defensive when we falsely accuse them of having an attitude.

The teens in our study group sent a resounding "ugh" when I asked if they had been accused of having an attitude with their parents. What I heard was surprising. While they readily admitted to eye rolls and sneers, teens were very disappointed that their silence is often misinterpreted by parents as "attitude."

At times, our teens are silent because they DON'T want to say the wrong thing or be accused of being disrespectful. Perhaps your teen is really trying to process what is being said. The look on their face may not show it, so if disrespect is a problem in this area, address this concern, but be careful not to misinterpret silence.

If silence is a concern during your discussion, ask your teen to repeat what they hear you saying. Make sure they address the concern, question, or comment that is being discussed. If the silence continues, tell them that you can see that they need to process what is being said and let them know when you plan to meet back with them to revisit the issue at hand. This takes the "heat" out of the discussion, and lets your teen know that you respect their silence as well as appreciate what they have to say.

### 3. Teens feel betrayed when we violate their trust by revealing their secrets or personal information to others.

One great concern our group of teens addressed is the importance of privacy. One way teens feel most secure is when they know they can trust their parents with information that is shared in confidence. As parents, we may not “intend” to violate our teen’s trust, but we often do it in unintentional ways that damage our relationship. For example, we are talking with a friend on the phone and say, “yes, my son said he feels the same way about that coach.” While this is just an expression of agreement while talking with a friend, our teen feels violated when we share information that is only theirs to share. When you feel the need to share something your teen has told you, ask yourself these questions:

- *Why am I sharing it?*
- *Is it necessary that I share it?*
- *Is this my information to share?*

Teen information may seem trivial to us as adults, but it is important to them. Remarks made in passing such as, “I don’t like that girl” is their information to share unless the information causes danger to your teen or another.

Sharing information is one way teens exert their independence. When our teen trusts us with anything confidential, it’s a gift... and we must treat it as one that may only be opened in their presence unless otherwise requested.

### 4. Teens need help when dealing with drama.

As a parent you may be thinking, “My teen is creating the drama!” That’s where we as parents grab our “authority” tool belt and go to work. We cannot join the drama but we can certainly use the right set of skills to end it. When we’re tired, aggravated, or frustrated, we usually do one of two things: 1. Allow our teens to continue the drama because we just don’t have the strength to combat it or 2. We explode and ground them until they’re 40 because we’re “sick of everything!” Neither reaction is helpful to us or to our teens.

If you find yourself dealing with teen drama, the following are some things that will help you keep your sanity in check. Remember, just because there is drama in your home doesn’t mean you have to attend the performance.

- a. Don’t buy the ticket! When teen drama begins, we bow out and refuse to react in an equally dramatic way. If your teen yells, “I hate you,” remember that tomorrow they will most likely tell you that you’re the greatest parent on the planet! Keep yourself out of the emotion and keep a level head so that the performance ends as quickly as it begins.
- b. Don’t challenge or belittle your teen during their performance. There is SOMETHING that is happening, in their world anyway, that causes drama. Listen to what is being said, and attempt to draw out the true reason behind the drama. For example, your teen daughter yells, “I cannot wear yellow to school. I hate yellow! Why was this color ever made?” Ask her if something about yellow is frightening to her. As absurd as her behavior seems, your question will be just as absurd to her, but in order to get to the meaning behind the feeling, these questions must be asked. You may find out, for example, that a group of girls at school said they will exclude her from the group if she wears yellow. Instead of lecturing her to find another group of friends at that moment, do some reflective listening. For example, “It sounds like you are very concerned about what those girls will think if you wear yellow.” You have let her know that you are not judging her feelings and you are on her side.
- c. Disengage. Teen drama is often equivalent to the fits they threw in the grocery store when they were little. If they know their “fit” will get them what they want, they will continue their behavior, assuming that if it works with mom and dad, it will work in society. In order to grow responsible, healthy teens, we must give them tools to know how to handle difficulties when dramatic situations arise. Teaching healthy coping skills to our teens is key so that frustration, anger and disappointment throughout life are met with confidence and courage.

### 5. Teens hate when parents fight!

Study after study reveals that strife in the home between parents creates anxiety in teens. It may also cause physical problems. When teens live in an environment of strife, poor performance at school may result if they are unable to sleep due to arguing at night. They also, resent being put in the middle of parent’s arguments. When your teens feel trapped in the chaos of arguing, they will most likely run to a place that is peaceful. Going to a friend’s house, leaving the home for a movie, or removing themselves from the environment of an argument is not only common, it’s healthy. Since most of us as parents want our kids home as much as possible, we must strive to demonstrate how to resolve conflict in a healthy way. Fighting is one thing, disagreeing with respect is altogether something different.

Remind your teen that just as you and your spouse disagree, they will find themselves in disagreements in relationships. Use any disagreement your teen might observe as a teachable moment, reminding them that when they are involved in a disagreement, remain calm. Help them understand that all conflicts may not be resolved to their liking. “Win some, lose some” certainly applies when it comes to disagreements with others. Some battles are not worth fighting. Teach your teen how and when to gracefully “agree to disagree.” Remind them that it is not always about being right. It is about living life with integrity, despite having a difference of opinion. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” because building relationships should be of higher importance than the need to be “right.” Parents need to learn how to avoid the pitfalls that keep them from communicating effectively with their teenagers. As parents, we have the ability to create a positive, healthy environment of trust and mutual respect. The teenage years can be challenging, but they can also be the most rewarding.

Shannon Perry is a conference speaker, author, recording artist, TV and Radio show host whose new book is entitled *Stand: Staying Balanced with Answers for Real Teen Life*. Prior to going into full-time ministry, Shannon taught for over 14 years in the public school system and holds a Master’s degree in Education and Counseling and is a Certified Instructor for Crisis Counseling and Parenting Classes. Her TV show, “Grace in High Heels” airs weekly into over 74 million households.





The Adoption Exchange

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH  
**ADOPTION**  
**CELEBRATION**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2017

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**Boondocks**<sup>®</sup>  
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75 SOUTH FORK DRIVE • DRAPER

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EACH PERSON WILL RECEIVE 2 ATTRACTION PASSES &  
\$5 WORTH OF TOKENS.  
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PRE-REGISTRATION IS MANDATORY AND MUST BE COMPLETED BY WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST

dear, Dcfs

Thank you for letting  
us go to Boondocks  
it was very fun. I  
liked going on the  
gocarts it look like  
a driving test.  
I also like going  
on the boats. I  
saw a lot of  
people. Minich  
going was the best

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NOVEMBER 17, 2017  
SLC, UTAH

Adoption Professionals 9-5 pm  
Adoptive Parents, Birth Parents, Adoptees 5-9 pm

[www.UnitedforAdoption.org](http://www.UnitedforAdoption.org)



# The Whole-Brain Child

A QUICK GUIDE FOR BUSY PARENTS

LEFT BRAIN = LOGICAL PART  
RIGHT BRAIN = EMOTIONAL PART

UPSTAIRS BRAIN = SOPHISTICATED, ANALYTICAL  
DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN = PRIMITIVE, REACTIVE

By: The Montessori Notebook, reprinted with permission

You know those books. You hear about them for years but you just don't get around to reading them. Then once you read it, you are kicking yourself, "why didn't I read this sooner?!"

This is exactly what happened when I finished reading "The Whole-Brain Child" by Dr. Daniel Siegel and Dr Tina Payne Bryson.

I actually won a copy of this book from Kate Berger of The Expat Kids Club years ago and I am so happy to finally read the contents. The scientific parts are easy to digest, provide a scientific base to parent from, and the 12 strategies outlined in the book definitely complement the Montessori approach.

If you've not read the book yet, these are my two favourite takeaways:

When your child has flipped their lid, the "upstairs" part of the brain, is not available. The upstairs part of the brain is where we can make decisions, show empathy, have self control etc. Therefore, we need to wait until the child calms down or help them calm down, before we start trying to rationalise with them.

Similarly, when your child is upset, we should first connect right brain to right brain. Yes, with empathy. Then, once they are more receptive, we are able to redirect with the left brain. Redirect does not mean to distract. It means to involve the child in making amends and finding solutions together.

I hope you find the summary useful and definitely recommend reading the book, too. You will find many practical strategies to support your child and the integration of their brain, all the parts of themselves, and even with others.

The Whole - Brain Child is available for check-out from  
**Utah's Adoption Connection Lending Library.**

Visit [www.utahadopt.org](http://www.utahadopt.org)

## CONNECT AND RE-DIRECT

When your child is upset:  
1. **CONNECT FIRST**  
**RIGHT BRAIN TO RIGHT BRAIN**  
eg, loving touch, empathy, validate their feelings, listen, reflect  
2. **REDIRECT WITH LEFT BRAIN**  
When they are more receptive, involve child in making amends

## ENGAGE, DON'T ENRAGE

In high stress situations:  
**APPEAL TO THE UPSTAIRS BRAIN**  
Keep them thinking and listening rather than just reacting

## REWIND AND REMEMBER

After a difficult event  
**USE THE REMOTE OF THE MIND TO PAUSE, REWIND AND FAST-FORWARD**  
to help them process what happened

## FEELINGS COME AND GO

**LET THE CLOUDS OF EMOTION ROLL BY**  
Help children understand that negative feelings are temporary

## EXERCISE MINDSIGHT

**GIVE TOOLS + STRATEGIES TO CALM THEMSELVES**  
eg, taking calm breaths, visualising a calm place

## CONNECT THROUGH CONFLICT

**USE CONFLICT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH KIDS**

## NAME IT TO TAME IT

**USE LEFT-BRAIN STORY TELLING**  
to help them understand what is upsetting them + feel more in control

## USE IT OR LOSE IT

**EXERCISE THE UPSTAIRS BRAIN**  
eg, give choices, practice solving problems with them, practice controlling emotions, build self-understanding, consider other's feelings

## MOVE IT OR LOSE IT

When kids are reactive  
**ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES**  
to shift their emotional state and reconnect with their upstairs brain

## REMEMBER TO REMEMBER

**GIVE KIDS PRACTICE AT REMEMBERING**  
to help integrate implicit and explicit memories  
e.g. important and valuable moments of their lives

## SIFT

Teach kids to explore  
**SENSATIONS IMAGES FEELINGS THOUGHTS**  
inside them to help them understand and change their experience

## ENJOY EACH OTHER

**FAMILY FUN + ENJOYABLE RITUALS**  
creates positive memories





# Holiday Survival Tips

By Amanda Purvis

If you are parenting children, you know that the holidays tend to be one of the most amazing times of the year, and one of the most difficult times of the year, all at once: the sugar, the cold, the lack of normalcy, the relatives, the travel. It's all wonderful and terrible, sometimes in the same breath. Here are some great survival tips to make it through the holidays with both caregivers and children feeling celebrated and cherished.

**Remember that what fires together wires together.** Often when working with parents who are parenting kids from trauma, they explain what they think they alone have experienced – the phenomenon that their child creates, the child that “sabotages” the good days. Have you gone through this? Has your child has been so excited about their birthday, or another special day, only to completely “ruin” the day with non-stop temper tantrums and meltdowns?

**Remember that stress hormones are the same; whether it is “good” stress or “bad” stress, the body releases the same hormones.** As a result, the brain does what it normally does when those are released (picture child in a puddle in the middle of all their presents, spent with excitatory neurotransmitters and the bliss of it all- but it looks like disrespect and manipulation). So if your child is acting more like the day they got in trouble at school, and it's Christmas morning, remember that most often they are not trying to sabotage the day, but that they just don't know what else to do with their brains and bodies.

**Embrace family of origin traditions.** Ask the children in your care what traditions or food they need to have included to make it feel like the holidays. If you have contact with biological family, ask them what traditions they'd like to have you carry on; it may be a recipe for grandma's mac and cheese, a particular song they sing, etc. When our son moved in with us, we quickly realized he had always seen Santa Claus expressed as a black man. So we caught on, and we now have many black Santas and travel to a certain mall in our state that always has a black Santa Claus come.

**Create new traditions together.** The first holiday we spent with our teenagers we decided we needed new traditions as a new family! So, we created a few new traditions together. We picked out the breakfast menu together, and they stayed up late and helped us “Claus.” We also each wrote a tradition down that we'd like to start, and then picked two out of a hat. We had a blast bonding over these new ideas and thinking outside of the box!

**Communicate expectations.** You might not realize how many expectations everyone involved in celebrating holidays might hold. If your kids are three or older, have a conversation about how they imagine each holiday will look. The first Christmas we had as foster parents, I didn't realize how many expectations I had about how Christmas morning should look, until it was too late. Christmas morning had always looked the same in my house growing up, and therefore, in the family my husband and I had created. The kids were allowed to open stockings early, and then wait until after breakfast with the entire family, when the grandparents show up, before they opened any presents under the tree. At this time, one individual would open up a gift, thank the giver, and then pick out a present for the next person to open. We never had many presents, so we extended this gift opening for as long as possible.

I remember waking up that first Christmas morning, to the giggles and sounds of kids playing out in the living room, as I groggily walked into the room, I looked around shocked. I must have gasped, and my husband quickly appeared. He gently just walked me back to bed. As I had walked into the living room, I had discovered that our five-year-old foster son had woken up and proceeded to open ALL of the presents under the tree, before any of us had even made our way out to the living room. I was devastated, and my reaction could have devastated him. My husband quickly mediated the situation, by re-wrapping things that weren't the child's presents, and having me go shower to give me some time to gather myself! So make sure you all communicate what you expect the day to look like!

**Drink lots of water.** Okay, this one is sort of a joke, as it is my catch-all for everything at my house, but it is also totally serious! There is so much sugar around during the holidays. And stress. And germs! The more water we ALL drink, the better our bodies can do at detoxifying out the bad stuff. So whether it's that lovely gentleman sitting across the aisle from you on the flight to grandma's house for Thanksgiving who keeps coughing on you, or that extra fudge sitting on the receptionist's desk at work, everyone's systems are overloaded this time of year. Give yours a chance. Give your kids a chance, and drink lots of water! Water is known to detoxify and help keep neurotransmitter levels balanced, which is imperative for good behavior!

Just remember that this time of year is a time when we celebrate our families. Enjoy quality time with our friends and children, and soak up what it means to be present over perfect.



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### Salt Lake Region:

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### Western Region:

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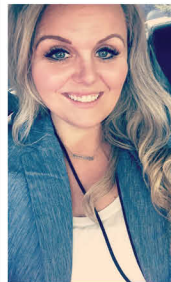
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### HONORING EXCELLENCE *Kate Anderson*



Kate Anderson is a caseworker in the Salt Lake Region. You can always count on Kate to go above and beyond her call of duty. She has a strong desire and commitment to find permanency for the children on her caseload and works tirelessly every day to ensure that happens.

She is a team player and is eager to seek out expertise and advice from other team members. During the most difficult cases, Kate stays professional and goes the extra mile to help the team always remember the bigger picture. She

isn't afraid to have the hard conversations and does so with confidence and kindness. She has a great positive attitude and always brings humor to a case.

She works hard to make sure the clients on her caseload have the tools they need to be successful. It is very obvious she has a passion for this work and the children on her caseload.

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