

UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

NOVEMBER 2018



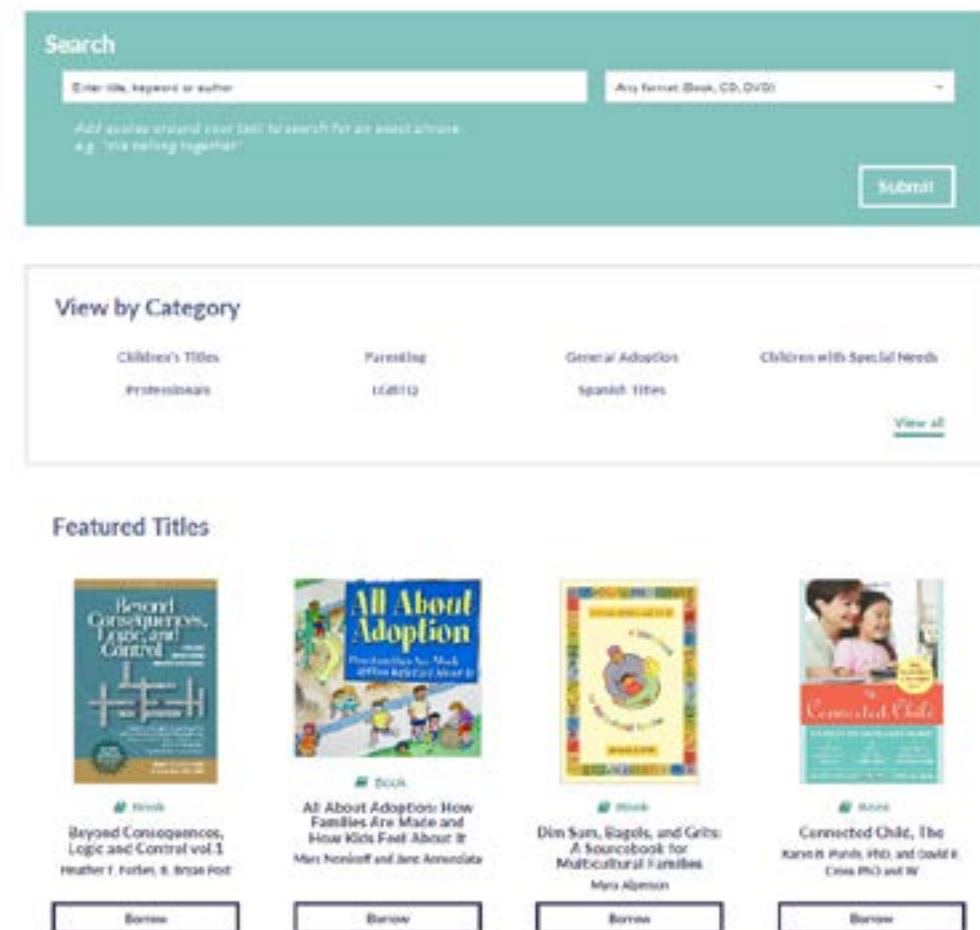


Austin, age 16
Photo by: Amber Schiavone, Amber Schiavone Photography



UTAH'S ADOPTION CONNECTION LENDING LIBRARY

WITH OVER 1,300 ADOPTION RELATED TITLES.



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On the Cover *Eliza, Camren & Draven*

Having fun is always on the 'to-do' list for Eliza, Camren, and Draven!

Meet the caring and gracious Eliza! This pleasant girl delights in being a big sister. Artistry is a skill that she is proud of, and she loves to partake in both visual and performing art styles. Whether singing, dancing, or drawing, she is keen to show others her talents. Reading comic books elevates her mood. An enjoyable day for Eliza would include swimming. This seventh grader does well in school.

Meet the sociable Camren! This fellow delights in making new friends wherever he goes. Being punctual is important to Camren. Grab your sports gear and start cheering; this sports lover is happiest when he can root for his team. Favoring football, Camren hopes to play on a team someday soon. A budding architect, he is always satisfied building with LEGOs. He also enjoys drawing and playing games. This sixth grader does well in school and aspires to attend college after graduating high school. Camren has also expressed an interest in serving a mission for his church.

Meet the polite Draven! This little guy delights in helping others and thrives on positive attention from adults. Draven's favorite activity is riding his Big Wheel around the neighborhood, and he also loves playing ball. Ducks captivate his attention, and he adores feeding them bread while on walks. This preschooler enjoys learning the great things that school has to offer.

These children would do best in a family with a mom and a dad, in which Draven can be the youngest child. We only accept inquiries on the entire sibling group, who will be placed together. Financial assistance may be available for adoption-related services.

For families outside of Utah, only those families who have a completed homestudy are encouraged to inquire.

Photo by: Ted York, Ted York Photography

To view other children that participated in Heart Gallery 2019 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.

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Kathy Searle, Editor
Lindsay Kaeding, Design Director

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How to Connect with Your Child Using Love languages

By: Jelena Parry – Happiness Co

Children express and experience love in different ways. For example, one of my daughters prefers physical touch, whereas the other needs words of affirmation. Each of these expressions of love represents a different “language”.

Learning the love languages of my girls has had a profound impact on my relationship and connection with them. It has also helped them feel unconditionally loved, accepted, heard, and understood.

Gary Chapman and Dr. Ross Campbell introduced the concept of love languages in the book *The Five Love Languages* and later in *The Five Love Languages of Children*. * They said some people love through physical touch, others through words of affirmation, acts of service, gifts, or quality time.

It's common to have different love languages within a family and it can be tricky to navigate. However, once

you do learn your child's love language, it can make all the difference in your relationship and their happiness.

What are the Love Languages?

1. Physical Touch

For children who have this as their primary love language, physical touch communicates love to them more deeply than giving them praise, buying a gift, or fixing a toy.

Without hugs, kisses, pats on the back, and other physical expressions of love, their love tanks will remain less than full.

Some ways to express love via physical touch include

- sitting near or beside a child (for example, if you're working on the Big Life Journal together, you can sit side by side or have your child sitting on your lap)

- for smaller kids, giving lots of kisses and hugs, being seated on a parent's lap
- for older kids, also adding a pat on the back, holding hands, a high-five, or an arm around their shoulder
- occasionally yelling “group hug” for your entire family, and for more fun, including your pets!
- playing games like Twister
- playing This Little Piggy, Pat-a-Cake, tag, piggyback rides, and airplane
- creating a “spa night” and do manicures, pedicures, and shoulder massages
- making up hand-shakes
- gently squeezing their hands to say “I love you!”
- snuggling close on the couch and reading together

2. Words of Affirmation

Words are powerful in communicating love. Words of affection and endearment, words of praise and encouragement, words that give positive guidance all say, “I care about you”. These words nurture a child's inner sense of worth and security.

Even though such words are quickly said, they are not easily or soon forgotten and a child reaps the benefits of affirming words for a lifetime. A child who tells you what they like and often seeks compliments feels loved through words of affirmation.

Refrain from using harsh critical words as they really affect a child whose primary love language is words of affirmation.

They feel special when you tell them you appreciate them by

- using encouraging words and phrases often
- saying “I love you” many times a day
- saying “I love to watch you...” (play, draw, sing, help, etc.)
- affirming both their efforts and achievements
- creating a name of affection for your child that is only used between the two of you
- when a child makes a mistake, acknowledging their good intentions, effort, determination.
- painting rocks with encouraging sayings

- writing little love notes and leaving them around the house or in their lunchbox

3. Quality Time

Quality time means focusing your attention on your child. It is the gift of being present and tells a child, “you are important and I like spending time with you”. The child feels loved because the parent or caregiver is choosing to spend time alone with them.

When you spend time with your child or children, you will best serve their needs by adapting to their physical and/or emotional level of development.

What you do with your child is less important than the actual time you spend together. When a child requests one-on-one time with a parent, whether it be through play, outdoor activities or just chatting, they are communicating their need to feel love. It is important to follow-up and focus on their needs.

Some ways to demonstrate quality time include

- allocating a special time for your child to just be there and listen to their stories and feelings
- being your child's Journal Buddy
- bringing your child along during errands
- looking at the stars together
- drawing or journaling together
- allowing them to help you around the house
- taking walks together and having conversations (call it “twalks” to make it fun)
- stopping what you are doing and making eye contact with your child when they tell you something
- finding silly things to laugh about together
- doing fun activities and playing games together

4. Gifts

The giving and receiving of gifts can be a powerful expression of love and, for some, can remain meaningful even later in their lives. The most thoughtful gifts can become true symbols of love.

A child who often gives you something small, like a toy wrapped in paper or flowers from the garden, tends to feel loved through gifts. These gifts can be given

together with any of the other love languages. However, there is a difference between a child who sees gifts as an extension of your love and the child who begs and whines for a toy every time you go shopping. A child, whose love language is receiving gifts, will be happy with the smallest token or even something handmade.

Some ideas for tangible things as an expression of love include

- choosing small, inexpensive tokens, thoughtful gifts, or homemade presents. This will mean a lot to your child during ordinary days and more special occasions
- choosing gifts that fit the interests of your child
- making a collection of unique gift boxes and wrapping paper (choose their favorite colors) that can be used for even the simplest gifts
- gifting your child a song, either one you create or a special song that reminds you of them
- keeping a chart and some stickers to record achievements and rewarding your child with a gift
- creating a photo album or book about them and some special moments you've shared
- buying a new shirt that captures their personality
- making them a special treat or their favorite meal
- gathering hand-picked flowers or anything from nature that your child would find special
- framing a special photograph of the child doing something they love
- gifting a book you and your child can read together

5. Acts of Service

When your child asks you to fix a toy or would like to repair something of yours, sometimes it isn't about getting the task done but rather a need for extra love and attention.

If your child's primary love language is acts of service, you don't need to jump at every request. However, it is important to be sensitive to these special requests

and understand how your response will either fill your child's love bucket or empty it. Each request calls for a thoughtful loving response.

Acts of service can include

- for younger children, instead of telling them to go to bed, carrying them to bed and tucking them in
- making them a special treat or their favorite meal
- making them a drink and bringing it to them
- when running late for an appointment, helping your child quickly finish what they are doing so you can both be ready faster, rather than just telling them to hurry
- making a list of your child's favorite things to do with you and do one of these things periodically when they least expect it
- doing a chore they would normally do (e.g., cleaning the playroom, making their bed)
- brushing their hair
- organizing/cleaning their closet or drawers
- checking out library books you know they would like
- sitting down to do their homework together
- giving your child a surprise room makeover

Recap

The purpose of learning to speak your child's love language is for you to connect more deeply with your child. This can build their self-worth, which is key for lifelong self-love and confidence and applies to all ages and stages of development, too.

Building an understanding of your own love language and recognizing it may be different to not only that of your child but also your partner is a powerful tool for building beautiful strong family bonds and relationships based on unconditional love and understanding that will last a lifetime.

References:

Chapman. G, Campbell R, The 5 love languages of children, Chicago, Northfield Publishing, 2016

Gottman. G, Declair J, Raising an emotionally intelligent child, NY, Fireside, 1998

Grotbeg. E, A guide to promoting resilience in children:

How to **CONNECT** with your **CHILD** using the **LOVE LANGUAGES**

Learn what your child's primary love language is and use the following tips to make them feel special and loved.

#1 – PHYSICAL TOUCH

- sitting near or beside a child
- giving lots of kisses and hugs
- giving a pat on the back, holding hands, a high-five
- occasionally yelling, "Group hug!"
- playing games like Twister

- playing This Little Piggy, tag, piggyback rides
- creating a "spa night" and do manicures & pedicures
- making up hand-shakes
- gently squeezing their hands to say "I love you!"
- snuggling close on the couch and reading together



#2 – WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

- using encouraging words and phrases often
- saying "I love you" many times a day
- saying "I love to watch you..." (play, draw, sing, help)
- affirming both their efforts and achievements
- creating a name of affection for them

- when a child makes a mistake, acknowledging their good intentions, effort, determination, etc.
- painting rocks with encouraging sayings
- writing little love notes and leaving them around the house or in their lunchbox



#3 – QUALITY TIME

- being there and listening to their stories and feelings
- being your child's Journal Buddy while working on the Big Life Journal together
- bringing your child along during errands
- looking at the stars together
- drawing or journaling together

- allowing them to help you around the house
- taking walks together and having conversations
- stopping what you are doing and making eye contact
- finding silly things to laugh about together
- doing fun activities and playing games together



#4 – GIFTS

- choosing small, inexpensive tokens, or homemade presents
- choosing gifts that fit their interests
- making a collection of unique gift boxes and wrapping paper
- gifting your child a special song (create your own)
- keeping a chart and stickers to record their achievements

- creating a photo album or book about them
- buying a new shirt that captures their personality
- making them a special treat or their favorite meal
- gathering hand-picked flowers or anything from nature
- framing a special photograph of them
- gifting a book you and your child can read together.



#5 – ACTS OF SERVICE

- carrying them to bed and tucking them in
- making them a special treat or their favorite meal
- making them a drink and bringing it to them
- when running late for an appointment, helping your child quickly finish what they are doing
- making a list of your child's favorite things to do
- doing a chore they would normally do (e.g., cleaning the playroom, making their bed)

- brushing their hair
- organizing/cleaning their closet or drawers
- checking out library books you know they would like
- sitting down to do their homework together
- giving your child a surprise room makeover



What's the One Thing?

Stefanie Armstrong, MS, LIMHP

Take a moment to consider: What's one consistent relationship ritual you do with your child almost daily? As a busy mom, I got to thinking about how there seem to be days that pass where I haven't intentionally made a connection with each of my boys. Things just move so fast and I find myself being taken away by the tide of life. So.... I ask, what is your "one thing," your "relationship ritual."

Rituals in relationships are such a vital piece for connection. Think for a minute about one of your important adult relationships. Now think for a moment about a ritual you have with this other person(s). Take a minute to consider how this ritual holds you together in a positive healthy way. These rituals could be simple, like a facial expression that only you and the loved one know about and see, a special nickname you call this person, a favorite food you share or a funny story you share. Consider how these connect you on a very personal level.

For babies born into secure, safe environments, rituals are naturally created in the very first year of life. Calm, consistent, predictable, rituals like rocking before bed, a specific song the baby hears daily, a bath after breakfast and so on. Routines and rituals are a vital part of an infant's and toddler's life creating a sense of safety and predictability.

Now consider a child with attachment trauma. Some of the rituals they learned in their early lives were damaging and hurtful. But they were, after all, rituals...predictable. The traumatized child, as a baby, may have experienced chaos, inconsistent, unpredictable rituals. What is learned is repeated, leading the wounded child to attempt to redo these unhealthy relationship rituals. Babies and toddlers who have not experienced consistent routines and rituals early in life desperately need them, even though they are older now. The young brain acclimates to the experience, safe or unsafe. It cannot escape so it acclimates; adapts to its environment to survive. Your child may be trying to recreate the unhealthy rituals learned within the earliest attachment relationships — with you. So what does this lead to? Your child continues to try out these unhealthy rituals... and they don't work!

Your traumatized child must learn new, healthy relationship rituals. These rituals should take place even if there has been a 2-hour meltdown over socks! Not just occasionally, but consistently and intentionally.

Here are some ideas:

1. Give 'em a wink, a handshake, or both: Whether it's a wink or a special look or a secret handshake, create some kind of facial expression/non-verbal expression that only you and your child share.
2. Yo! You da bomb.com: Ok so teens hate it, and secretly love it, when we adults use their slang in funny ways. With your teen or preteen have a funny "cool" thing you say to them...not around their friends of course!
3. Take it to the streets: Taking a 5 or 10 minute walk or ride around the block goes a long way. Teens, especially, will talk more when you're on the move.
4. Find common ground: Find something, food or a fun drink, or even a special T.V. show that you both like and attempt to share this time together—if not weekly, at least a couple times a month.
5. Note it: Send a text or a special emoji each day that only you and your teen share.
6. You pick: Allow your child to choose dinner once or twice a month. Put it on the calendar and let your child choose what's on the menu.
7. Till we meet again: Create a parting ritual (see #1) and do it every time you part.
8. Reunited: Create a reunion ritual (see #1) and do it each time you reconnect.

This is not an extensive list, but the overall goal is to create an intentional, consistent, creative ritual that fits for you and your child. These can be family rituals and individual rituals. Keeping them simple, quick and doable is the goal because it's about the relationship and changing deeply rooted patterns of unhealthy relationship rituals to lifelong healthy relationship rituals.

So, what's your ONE thing? Take some time to create a few—it will pay off in the long run.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



Questions for self-reflection to deepen our mindfulness and assess the present.

- 1 AM I HUNGRY OR THIRSTY?**
If we are hungry or thirsty, we can't function well and our relationships will bear the brunt of our behavior.
Try: eating a snack, resting, drinking a glass of water.
- 2 HAVE I CONNECTED WITH MY CHILD TODAY?**
Humans require connection in order to survive. Just like our children, we can feel a loss or rupture in our relationship if we do not connect with each other.
Try: talking with your child, listening, playing or reading together.
- 3 HOW IS MY INTERNAL STATE IMPACTING MY BEHAVIOR?**
Our distant and recent past, the present, and the future all influence our behavior. Being aware of its power over our internal bodies can help us not project our inner worries onto our interactions with others.
Try: assessing your body, chasing the why, addressing each worry on its own.
- 4 IS MY CHILD'S INTERNAL STATE INFLUENCING THEIR BEHAVIOR?**
Just like adults, a child's history, present, and future can cause stress and anxiety. It is our job to help our children to name their fears and to calm their bodies.
Try: prepare for transitions or big events, talking about their fears, preparing for big events, find coping skills that help lessen anxiety.
- 5 ARE MY EXPECTATIONS REALISTIC FOR THIS MOMENT?**
Because our internal state dictates our present, children may not be able to do something they did easily before. In these cases, it's important to lower the bar and help our children achieve success.
Try: helping your child, asking what they need, consider the current environment, their history, the near future.
- 6 IS MY EYE CONTACT WARM?**
When we are not calm, our eyes may not tell our children that they are loved and precious. If we cannot communicate warmth and safety, with our eyes, to our children, we cannot require them to give us eye contact.
Try: deep breaths, healthy touch, changes in vocal tone, playfulness.
- 7 AM I TREATING MY CHILD THE WAY I WANT TO BE TREATED?**
Often times as the adult, we ask for respect and require compliance, without considering that the way we are talking or how we are treating our children is not respectful of them.
Try: reversing roles, asking how your child feels when _____, finding new strategies and solutions.
- 8 ARE WE CALM?**
If I am upset or overwhelmed, I cannot expect my child to calm. If I sense looming chaos, it is my job to help avoid and navigate it proactively.
Try: deep breaths, taking a walk, massage, quiet time, (see other side).
- 9 WHY?**
Most importantly, we need to "chase the why" behind everything we do. If we notice our reactions are disproportionate to behaviors or environments, it is up to us to find out what is pushing our buttons and why. Once we have identified the issue, we can work on healing and resolving past hurts.
Try: journaling, counseling, talking to a friend, meditation or prayer, reading a book on the subject, asking for help.

TIPS FOR A CALM AND CONNECTED HOME



When our homes fall into chaos and disorder, it can feel impossible to find our way out. Here is a simple sheet to remind yourself of things to try when the day to day feels overwhelming.

- 1 PROTEIN SNACKS**
A protein snack every 2 hours stabilizes blood sugar, regulates brain activity, and encourages food security.
Try: lunch meat, cheese, nut butter, hummus, protein bars, mixed nuts. 
- 2 WATER**
Dehydration can limit our brains to as little as 50% capacity. Children who are stressed, playing/tweaking or hot need more water.
Try: a urine chart in the bathroom to encourage "clear" pee, children choosing and decorating their own reusable water bottles, role modeling. 
- 3 REST**
Exhaustion can cause dysregulation. Napping or quiet time can help slow down the body and brain as a "reset."
Try: reading, guided meditations, playing outside, cuddling. 
- 4 CONNECT**
Behavior is the language of unmet need. Often times, we just do not know what our children are trying to tell us. It is important we understand their reality.
Try: hearing what our children have to say with no judgement or insertion of our feelings or perspectives, play the way your child wants you to play and follow their lead. 
- 5 CHANGE OF SCENERY**
Movement and a new environment force the brain to reorganize and regulate within the new space.
Try: changing rooms, going outside, getting out of the car. 
- 6 PROPRIOCEPTION: Sensory Input to Calm**
Proprioceptive input is incredibly regulating and helps calm dysregulated brains and bodies, the benefits can last up to 4 hours. Deep muscle massage releases oxytocin (which makes us feel calm, connected, and happy) and the benefits impact both the giver and the receiver.
Try: lollipops, bubblegum, bear hugs, hand or back massages, push ups. 
- 7 VESTIBULAR: Sensory Input to Calm or Alert**
30 minutes of vestibular activity can regulate the body for 6 hours. Turning upside down requires the brain to reintegrate and regulate.
Try: (calming) slow/rhythmic movement, rocking, turning upside down, (alerting) spinning, jumping, swinging, rolling, running, bike riding. 
- 8 TACTILE: Sensory Input to Connect**
Touch is a connecting experience. Touch promotes a dual relationship and communication between participants. Touch helps to integrate both sides of the brain, and allows information to travel faster.
Try: massages, high fives, hugs, room with diverse sensory experiences, play in bean or rice buckets. 
- 9 FULL BODY MOVEMENT**
Bilateral movement encourages brain and sensory integration and regulation. Use caution as needed due to some children's adversity to water, swimming is an activity that engages every one of our senses. It can calm and reorganize a stressed brain.
Try: running, walking, bike riding, swimming. 

Dissociation and PTSD: What Parents Should Know



A group of nursing, psychology, and psychiatry researchers conducted a study on the dissociative subtype of PTSD using the NCTSN Core Data Set. This brief summarizes key findings from the study for parents and caregivers of children who have experienced traumatic events. The detailed report is published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*.

Choi, K. R., Seng, J. S., Briggs-King, E. C., Munro-Kramer, M. L., Graham-Bermann, S. A., Lee, R., & Ford, J. D. (2017). The Dissociative Subtype of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Among Adolescents: Co-Occurring PTSD, Depersonalization/Derealization, and Other Dissociation Symptoms. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2017.09.425

What is the issue?

- Dissociation is a coping mechanism children sometimes use during frightening or overwhelming experiences. It is a psychological survival tool children use when they feel helpless, afraid, or unable to escape a dangerous situation. When children dissociate, they mentally block off thoughts, feelings, or memories about the traumatic experience. They may feel as if in a dream or somewhere else in the room watching what is happening.
- Dissociation can help children cope with traumatic experiences in the moment, but sometimes dissociation can begin to happen in non-traumatic situations. When children frequently dissociate—not fully present in their everyday lives—their development might be negatively affected. Children learn and grow best when they can be their whole, integrated selves, rather than having cut off or lost touch with parts of themselves.
- It can be challenging to detect dissociation in children because it is happening in the child's mind. It is not always evident to others that a child is dissociating; the child may appear to be daydreaming or spacing out. Often, child health professionals will look for signs of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children who have experienced trauma. New research has shown that there is a specific type of PTSD called the PTSD dissociative subtype that includes dissociation symptoms, but it has been mainly studied with adults. The goal of this research project was to study the PTSD dissociative subtype with teenagers.

What are the findings?

- The dissociative subtype of PTSD is slightly different for teenagers than it is for adults. Dissociation symptoms that teenagers tend to experience more than adults are daydreaming, forgetting things, and blocking out thoughts.
- Teenagers with the dissociative subtype of PTSD tend to have more trauma experiences as well as more severe PTSD and problems with behavior.
- Some teenagers with trauma exposure and problems with PTSD have dissociative amnesia—that is, problems with memory and forgetting things. Dissociative amnesia could be related to remembering a trauma experience.

WHAT TO DO

What can you do?

1

Learn more about trauma and dissociation in children.

The NCTSN and the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation provide helpful information about trauma and dissociation for parents and caregivers to get started:

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers>
<http://www.isst-d.org/default.asp?contentID=100>

2

Pay attention to when and where your child seems to be dissociating.

It may be helpful to identify if anything seems to trigger dissociation and discuss this with your child's doctor or therapist. The parent-report Child Dissociative Checklist (CDC) can be used by parents or caregivers to document pathological dissociation in children ages 6-12 years. Parents and caregivers can also document these common signs of dissociation:

- Amnesia for important or traumatic events known to have occurred,
- Frequent dazed or trance-like states,
- Perplexing forgetfulness (e.g., the child knows facts or skills one day and not the next),
- Rapid, profound age regression,
- Difficulties deriving cause-and-effect consequences from life experiences,
- Lying or denying responsibility for misbehavior despite obvious evidence to the contrary,
- Repeatedly referring to self in third person,
- Unexplained injuries/recurrent self-injurious behavior,
- Vivid imaginary companionship that controls the child's behavior (i.e., passive influence experiences), and
- Auditory and visual hallucinations.

3

Talk about your child's trauma and dissociation problems with his or her doctor or therapist.

They can make additional recommendations for managing trauma and dissociation and help you find treatment. The NCTSN also provides resources to help you find the right treatment for your child:

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers>



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The Core Data Set was developed as a central part of the mission and vision of National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), which seeks to raise the standard of care for children who have experienced trauma. The NCTSN Core Data Set was the first collection of behavioral health data to include a set of forms and assessment measures designed to systematically capture important demographics, trauma exposure, client functioning, service use, and treatment information for youth and families affected by trauma. The Core Data Set includes information from 78 NCTSN sites that received referrals for 14,890 children who experienced trauma between the years of 2004 and 2010.

This fact sheet was developed (in part) with the assistance of grants from the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed therein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the CMHS, SAMHSA, or the HHS. The authors of these publications acknowledge the sites within the NCTSN that have contributed data to the Core Data Set, as well as the children and families who have contributed to our growing understanding of child traumatic stress.

The Adoption Exchange

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH ADOPTION CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2018
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Boondocks
FOOD & FUN

525 SOUTH DESERET DRIVE • KAYSVILLE
75 SOUTH FORK DRIVE • DRAPER

\$5.00 PER PERSON
EACH PERSON WILL RECEIVE 2 ATTRACTION PASSES +
\$5 WORTH OF TOKENS.
CHILI WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM 11:00-1:00

Wendy's

REGISTER ONLINE
[HTTPS://ADOPTION2018.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://adoption2018.eventbrite.com)

PRE-REGISTRATION IS MANDATORY AND MUST BE COMPLETED BY WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31ST

DCFS,

Thank you for letting us go to Boondocks for National Adoption Day. I had lots of fun. I really liked their chilie. And I loved the doughnuts they were yummy. I played a lot of ~~games~~ games. They were enjoyable. I am glad that I am not the only one adopted. I had fun driving in those kid cars at Boondocks. I only got 5 tickets but I didn't let that ruin my day. I still wanted to have fun. So I did have fun. I hope I can go back next year. I also met this girl named Lauren at Boondocks. And she was adopted too!

Love Ashlynn Jones.

(printed with permission)

continued from page 13

Stefanie Armstrong, MS, LIMHP specializes in treating trauma resolution and attachment problems in children and adolescents. Before she co-founded The Attachment and Trauma Center of Nebraska, she spent 10 years working in the public school system as a school counselor. She is EMDR certified and is an EMDR consultant. Ms. Armstrong is part of the team that created the EMDR and Family Therapy Integrative Protocol for the treatment of attachment trauma in children. She is co-author of the treatment manual Integrative Team Treatment for Attachment Trauma in Children: Family Therapy and EMDR and the accompanying parenting manual, Integrative Parenting: Strategies for Raising Children Affected by Attachment Trauma. She has presented her expertise nationally to numerous parent and professional groups. Ms. Armstrong is a trainer for the Attachment and Trauma Center Institute, training clinicians in the Family Therapy and EMDR Integrative Team Treatment and training parents in the Integrative Parenting Approach. Ms. Armstrong has been invited to present at numerous professional conferences and workshops around the country and has also trained public school personnel in the area of trauma and attachment.



The Language of Trauma

By: Heather T. Forbes, LCSW

When reviewing records of many of the children with whom I work, I am forever perplexed at one particular notation I continually see written by therapists and counselors. Under the list of negative traits of the child, it is often written, "Child exhibits attention-seeking behaviors."

I strongly believe that children seek attention because they NEED attention. Nature has designed children to be completely dependent on their parents at the moment they are born. A baby crying is the signaling to the parent the baby has a need—a need that the baby cannot satisfy on his own. The baby is indeed exhibiting attention-seeking behaviors.

The natural flow of the developmental journey of a child is to gradually release this need for attention, moving from a state of dependence to a state of balanced independence. The time period for this is about 18 years. We are the only animals in the animal kingdom that have our children under our care for this length of time. Expecting our children to not need our attention or to view it as a negative behavioral issue during these 18 years goes against our biology.

When children do not know how to verbally express their needs (which is predominantly the case during early childhood), they "speak" through their behaviors. In other words, behavior is a form of communication.

When a parent can stop, pause, and "listen" to the behavior of a child, it can become quite obvious what the child is saying. Looking at the behavior from an objective perspective also unveils the logic behind the child's behavior. Here is a list of ten behaviors along with an interpretation of each behavior to demonstrate this:

- 1. Slamming Doors.** When a child begins slamming doors, it is an indication that he does not feel like he is being heard. By slamming a door, he is making loud noises, hence forcing the parent to "hear" him. He is essentially saying, "I need to have a voice and I need you to listen to me now!"
- 2. Cursing.** Most children know that they should not curse. They use profanity to jar the parent's nervous system into listening. It is a way to get a parent to respond to the child, even if the response is negative.
- 3. Shutting Down.** A child who shuts down, refuses eye contact, walks away, or gives the parent the silent treatment is a child who is overwhelmed. We have traditionally labeled a child like this as defiant. This is a child who is saying, "Life is too big to handle. I'm shutting down my world in order to survive."
- 4. Hitting Sibling.** Sibling rivalry is more about the relationship between the child and parent than it is between two siblings. If a child is not feeling secure in his relationship with his parent(s), he will perceive the

sibling as a threat to this relationship with the parent(s). Reacting against the sibling is the basic game of "King of the Hill" in order to win the attention of the parents. The child may receive negative attention from the parent ("Billy, stop picking on your brother!") but to a child, especially a child with a trauma history, any form of attention, whether positive or negative, is love.

5. Challenging Authority. A child who challenges authority is a child who has lost his trust in authority figures. Look back into the child's history and you will likely see a child who was abused, neglected, or abandoned by someone who was supposed to care for and nurture the child. A child who fights having someone else in charge, is a child saying, "I can't trust anyone. It is too much of a risk."

6. Saying, "I hate you!" Such hurtful words directed towards a parent from a child are simply a window into the child's heart. The child is projecting his self-hatred and self-rejection back onto the parent. What he is communicating is, "I hate myself!" It is easier to hurt someone else than it is to feel the internal hurt within one's own heart.

7. Arguing About Everything. A child who argues about everything and anything is keeping the parent looped in a conversation in order to keep the parent attuned to him. He feels that if the parent were to stop

talking with him, he would cease to exist. Arguing is his way of staying connected. It is a negative form of attachment.

8. Laziness. Describing a child impacted by trauma as being "lazy" is a gross misinterpretation of the child. Profound laziness is typically a sign of a child who experienced helplessness early in his childhood; it is a learned behavior.

9. Pushing Every Boundary. Many children have such intense behaviors that the adults around them in the past demonstrated a lack of ability to handle them or an unwillingness to stick with them. When parents find their child pushing every boundary, every rule, and every limit, the child is asking, "Can you really handle me?" and "You say you're my parent, but I need to know you're not going to give up on me so I will test you to make sure you really are committed before I put any trust into you!"

10. Becoming Unglued During Transitions. Trauma happens by surprise and when it happens, there is typically a major change in the child's life. It is transitional trauma. The aftermath of such traumatic experiences is that the child becomes fearful of EVERY transition, whether large or small. A child's belief around transitions becomes, "Something bad is going to happen. Guaranteed." Past traumatic experiences create the black and white thinking that "All change equals pain." When a parent sees a child's negative behaviors intensifying during a transitional time, the parent needs to remember that the child is saying, "I'm so scared that my entire world is going to fall apart in a flash just like it did in the past!"

Children's behaviors are perfectly logical. The issue is that we've been looking at the behavior from our logic, not the child's logic. Before judging the behavior as either "right" or "wrong," look at it first from a literal perspective and ask yourself, "What is he/she trying to communicate with this behavior?" When you understand the communication behind the behavior, it will give you the

solution you need to find a loving, nurturing, and relationship based solution to the behavior.

By meeting the child's underlying need that is activating the behavior, it opens the opportunity for you to help your child correct his behavior through teaching moments. Teaching children how to communicate their needs is the key. For an adopted child who has been impacted by trauma, it takes a tremendous amount of courage to come to a parent and say something simple like, "Mom, I need a hug." or "Dad, I don't feel like you're listening to me." Their traumatic histories of rejection and abandonment have left a blueprint that says not only will their needs not be met but they might be rejected for voicing their needs. Turning this blueprint around and helping them to rewire their brains to know that asking for their needs is exactly what you want them to be able to do.

Neuroscience tells us that the brain is ever changing and neuro-plasticity tells us that the brain has the ability to continually formulate new connections. In the past, it was believed that once we were hard-wired one way, we simply had to accept what we were given. However, brain scan imaging shows us that we are actually creating new connections all the time and this is even more true for children during their developmental years. Taking the time to "listen" to your child's behavior and then teaching your child how to ask for their needs will help them to be better equipped neurologically to have a more positive long-term future.

However, when parenting a child with challenging behaviors on a day-to-day basis, taking the time in every interaction to first listen to the behaviors takes a tremendous amount of time and emotional energy. Life happens and it is easy to lose sight of the idea that behavior is the language of a child. Negative behaviors are tiring and parenting adopted children who have been impacted by trauma makes this even more intense! Thus, it is imperative for parents to take care

of themselves first. Their needs are equally important: you can't give something you haven't received yourself. When parents can keep their cup filled, they will have enough space inside of them to keep looking beyond the behaviors and listening to the behaviors instead of reacting to the behaviors.

The parent/child relationship is a dyad - a two-part system. So parents, remember that your behavioral response also signals a communication to your child. Thus, it is imperative for you to stay mindful and attuned. Give enough attention to yourself as to stay in a place of love so you are always speaking the language of truth, love, and acceptance to your child in return.

To find out more about the Beyond Consequences parenting approach or to purchase a copy of one of this author's books, please visit www.beyondconsequences.com Heather T. Forbes, LCSW, is the owner of the Beyond Consequences Institute and author of numerous books on the topic of working with children impacted by trauma. Coming from a family of educators, Forbes has a passion for helping children in the classroom. Trauma robs children of their curiosity and her passion is to help these students return back to their innate love for learning. She consults and lectures extensively with both general and special education schools around the nation. Her signature style is to bridge the gap between academic research and "when the rubber hits the road" classroom situations, giving teachers and school personnel the understanding and tools they need for even the most challenging of students. Forbes has worked in schools with trauma-impacted students and knows first hand how challenging it can be on a day-in and day-out basis with these students. Additionally, much of her insight on understanding trauma, disruptive behaviors, and developmental delays, also comes from her own experience of raising two internationally adopted children and mentoring a severely trauma-impacted young adult.



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Beverly Johnstone has been working for the Division of Child and Family Services in different capacities since September 2000. In her current position as a Clinical Permanency Specialist on the Adoption team in Utah County, she has helped many children achieve permanency with their forever families.

Beverly has matched children with families and and helped provide support for the parents and children through the transition into the home and finalization of the adoption. She helps teach the TBRI parenting class to help the families implement interventions in their parenting of children from hard places.

Beverly also is a strong support to the permanency workers in the region and is highly involved in case planning and advocating for the needs and permanency of children.

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