

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Post-Adoption Support Services for Fresno County



Hello REACH Families!

We hope families have settled into school routines and have remained in good health as the Fall season is upon us. As the world around us continues to change and we continue to combat this lingering virus, the REACH program has stayed committed to supporting adoptive families by providing a variety of different learning opportunities!

This past August, the REACH program launched its first round of their Adoption Preparation Training series. This FREE and virtual 10-series training module was designed to strengthen families built through foster care, kinship care, and adoption. The topics and modules were crafted by adoption specialists to provide knowledge, practical tools, and resources to help support the complex journey of permanency and adoption. It is not required that participants attend all modules and they are encouraged to only attend sessions that are most relevant to their learning and needs. Please see page 5 of the newsletter to join us for the remainder of the training series!

In addition, REACH continues to provide parents with adoption education and opportunities to connect with others on a similar journey through parent groups. Our parent support groups and REACH parent cafés occur monthly via Zoom, until further notice. **Please note that our REACH parent cafés have been changed to the third Thursday of the month and to a morning time.** Dates, times, and more information can be found on page 5 of the newsletter.

Our REACH newsletter continues to focus on the five protective factors that keep families strong and thriving. Our Fall newsletter specifically focuses on the protective factor of Concrete Support in Times of Need, and the importance of ensuring that families have access to goods and services that address families' needs. The REACH program is ready to partner with you and your family to be a concrete support when times get challenging. Please do not hesitate to contact the REACH program for a brief consultation or for more information.

We hope you enjoy this Fall newsletter!

Best regards,

Jade Yang, MSW

Fresno County
Fall 2021

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Finding Concrete Supports for Your Family

By: Hortencia Munoz Casarez

It's an undeniable truth... parenting is challenging. It really does take a village. We can't raise a healthy, much less thriving family, completely on our own without support and resources. Parents need access to the types of concrete supports, goods, and services that can minimize the stress of difficult situations. Building this protective factor helps ensure that the basic needs of a family are met. Likewise, when families encounter a crisis such as domestic violence, mental illness, homelessness, or substance abuse, adequate services need to be in place to provide stability, treatment, and ongoing support for family members to get through the crisis. Meeting these basic economic needs is essential in preventing families from entering into, or lifting them from poverty and/or adversity.

When parents are faced with overwhelmingly stressful conditions they likely need to seek help, but for some parents, seeking help from others and accessing services is a difficult thing to do. Embarrassment may hinder them from reaching out due to feelings of incompetence or failure. Other parents may not be aware of, or know how to access resources. Other families may have hesitations about accessing services that have societal or cultural stigmas associated with them, such as domestic violence shelters, financial benefits, or family planning. And for many families, language barriers limit their knowledge of, access to, and ability to navigate through the service systems. Thus, when parents ask for help, it's an important step towards building resilience, lessening their adverse experiences and stressors, mitigating the impact of stressful conditions, and raising happy and healthy children.

Every family's needs are different and the need for concrete supports may include:

- Food
- Clothing
- Child care
- Health care
- Transportation
- Legal assistance
- Family planning
- Personal supplies
- Financial benefits
- Parenting education
- Employment opportunities

- Safe shelter, affordable housing
- Mental and behavioral health services
- Access to telephones, computers, and/or wifi
- Access to public education and academic supplies
- Information regarding community services and how to access them
- Culturally-informed services, translation assistance, special accommodations

Following are some suggestions for accessing the concrete supports your family may need:

- Resource fairs
- Support Groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Community bulletin boards
- Schools and college counselors
- Your local Aspiranet REACH office
- Referrals from your therapist or doctor
- United Way and/or 211 (directory of local resources)
- Health & Human Services agencies and social workers
- Make a list of family, friends, and neighbors to contact for support
- Local government and non-profit organizations' social media pages

Your community provides many concrete support services so that when things get tough, you have somewhere to turn for help. Don't hesitate to use the services available to you in order for your family to be the safest, healthiest, and most resilient it can be. Remember, everyone needs a bit of help sometimes, because it really does take a village.

How Will You Find Supports?

By: Tara Soria

Mr. Fred Rogers once said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" After reading Hortencia's newsletter article on the topic of Concrete Supports in Times of Need, I encourage you to delve into your personal experiences and ponder the following questions:

- What gets in the way of asking for or getting the help you need for you and your family?
- Besides friends and family, who supports you and what difference does their support make?
- Where do you seek academic, social, and emotional assistance for your children?
- When you find “good help” how do you make sure other parents know about it?
- What is the most difficult part of accessing services and what strategies have you learned to make it easier?
- When do you allow yourself to accept help?

As you mulled over these questions, what were your conclusions about the level of concrete supports present in your family’s life? Are there any areas where you feel you could use more support? Oftentimes, it is hard to know

where to go for help or who to talk to. Sometimes it’s even hard knowing what to say or ask for! Something I have found helpful is to write down my questions (or other information) before I call, and have it in front of me for reference. Keeping notes on who you called, the date you called, and what was discussed can be beneficial for future reference. In my experience I haven’t always found the help I was looking for during my first (or fourth) attempt, however, that person often pointed me in the right direction, to someone else that could help. It can surely be a learning process; a learning process that will also strengthen your knowledge and skills in locating the supports you need. Remember, we at REACH are here to help too! You don’t have to do this alone.

“When parents seek concrete support, it’s a huge step towards building resilience and teaching their children how to deal with life’s difficulties.”

—Family Exchange Center

What Happened to You?

Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing

By Bruce D. Perry, MD., Ph. D., and Oprah Winfrey

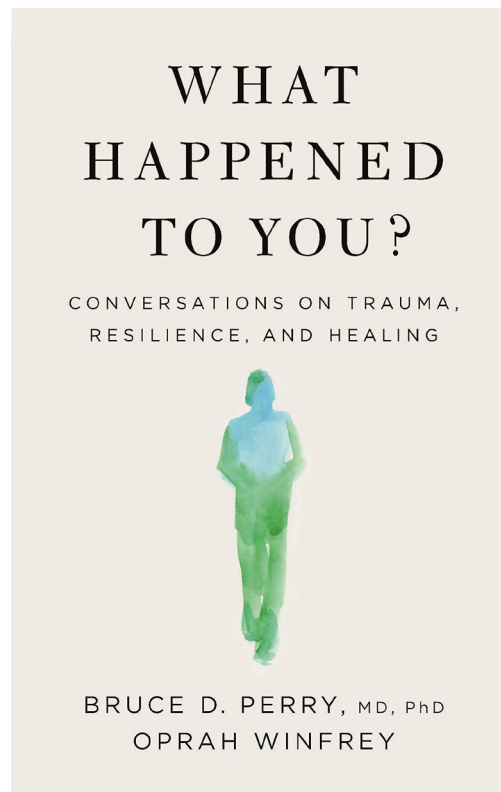
Book Review By: Yaneth Arceo, MS

As a survivor of child neglect and maltreatment, Oprah Winfrey has joined with Dr. Perry, a clinician, researcher, and teacher, to advocate for trauma survivors. Together, in their book, *What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing*, they show how individuals who experience trauma can address it and find healing. This book is connected to our current Protective Factor of “Concrete Support in Times of Need” because it gives examples of how people overcome their traumas by receiving the proper resources when needed.

Oprah shares in the book that in her early years, she experienced a great deal of loneliness. Her mother was a teenager when she gave birth to Oprah, and she didn’t have the assets needed to truly meet her daughter’s needs. The majority of Oprah’s childhood was spent with different relatives; most of whom neglected her.

Dr. Perry states our brains are molded by the experiences we have during childhood. As a child, our brain creates thousands of new neurons per second in which every single

experience is registered. These experiences can regulate our brain or cause it to be in constant states of dysregulation.



In the book, Dr. Perry shares the story of a boy named Sam. Sam was physically abused by his father and was removed from his father’s care by Child Protective Services. While Sam was in foster care, he started to receive the help he needed to thrive. However, at one point his behavior changed. No one could find a reason for his behavioral changes until Dr. Perry met Sam’s dad, and noticed his father and Sam’s new teacher wore the same cologne. For Sam, the smell brought up negative memories of when he was abused by his father. After the teacher started using different cologne, Sam’s behavior improved. Dr. Perry understood Sam’s trauma and his expertise was the concrete support that allowed Sam to be successful in the classroom.

Oprah states we all can learn positive regulation strategies and recapture balance. People want to believe we can be resilient and can recover from our traumas without receiving

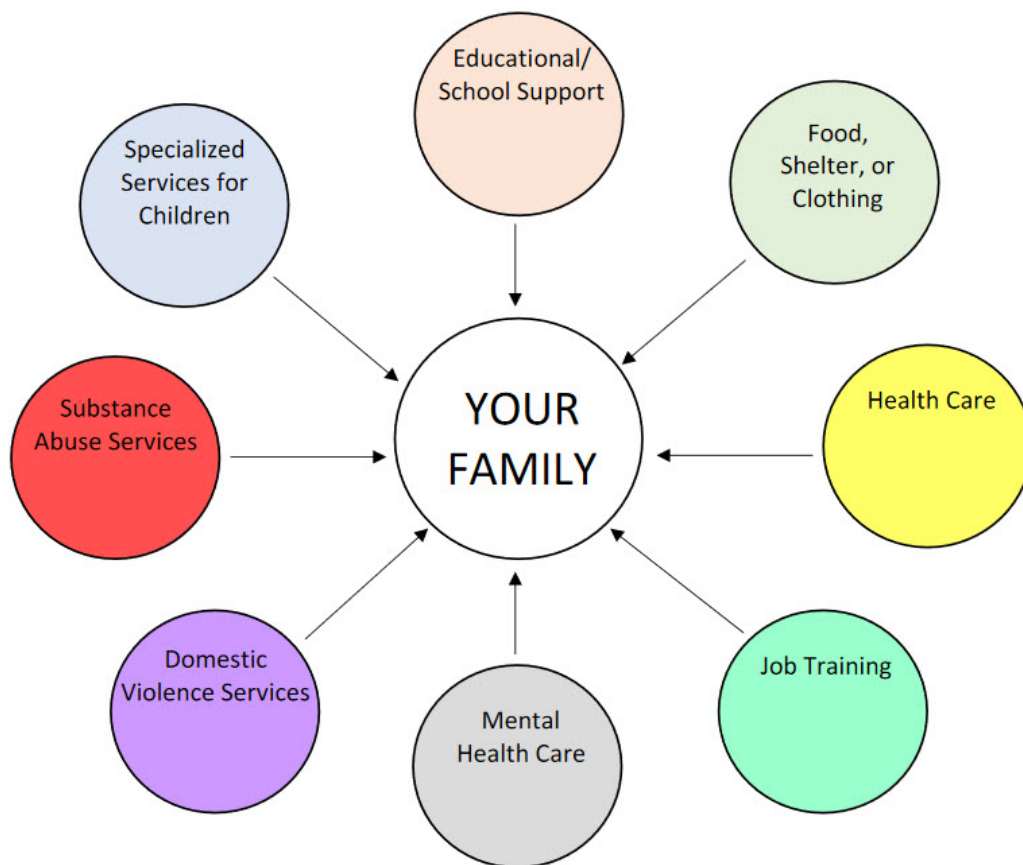
help. In reality, once our experiences are connected and start making sense for us, we discover that acquiring the proper support helps us heal. *What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing* helps us understand that children who come from difficult backgrounds need support. Not just temporary, but throughout their lives, to help them find strategies to heal from their trauma. Receiving support from professionals who understand a traumatized brain can make the difference.

On a closing note, we all need concrete support to help us overcome trauma, thrive, and help others.

Having the ability and willingness to ask for help can create change for an individual and the entire family. Requesting or finding concrete support can be challenging when families do not know where to begin or feel they need to solve their challenges on their own. If you feel the health and well-being of your family are at risk because of a lack of resources and support, the REACH program is here to guide and walk alongside you. Please contact your REACH program for additional information and resources.

Circles of Concrete Support Activity

This activity is intended to help you identify a person, agency/program, or a source that is a concrete support for your family during times of need. List the names of anyone who represents who you would contact during each particular need.



Action Plan: When you have completed your circles, identify one concrete need that, if met, will lighten your burden. Now, take the first step in reaching out for support!

Identify your most significant need: _____

Steps taken to meet this need: _____

Support Groups & Events

October

4

Adoption Preparation Training: Birth Family

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Zoom Meeting – Register at

<https://tinyurl.com/x7swv3k2>

11

Adoption Preparation Training: Redefining Family & Preparing Siblings

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Zoom Meeting – Register at

<https://tinyurl.com/x7swv3k2>

18

Adoption Preparation Training: Normative Adoption Issues & Stuck Spots

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Zoom Meeting – Register at

<https://tinyurl.com/x7swv3k2>

21

REACH Parent Café

10:00 am – 11:30 am

Zoom Meeting

25

Adoption Preparation Training: Self-Care & Supports

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Zoom Meeting – Register at

<https://tinyurl.com/x7swv3k2>

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Parent Support Group

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Zoom Meeting

November

18

REACH Parent Café

10:00 am – 11:30 am

Zoom Meeting

23

Parent Support Group

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Zoom Meeting

December

16

REACH Parent Café

10:00 am – 11:30 am

Zoom Meeting

28

Parent Support Group

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Zoom Meeting



Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all in-person meetings have been suspended. All groups and trainings will be provided on virtual or video platforms until further notice.

Please note that unforeseen last minute changes may occur with regards to a group's time or location. For more information or to RSVP to a group or training, please contact Jade Yang at (559) 229-4969 or at jayang@aspiranet.org.



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Aspiranet REACH Post-Adoption Support Services for Fresno County

Educational/Support Groups – Monthly meetings where families are able to receive education/training and meet other adoptive families in the community.

REACH Newsletter – Quarterly newsletters filled with adoption articles, local trainings, book reviews, on-line resources and more.

Educational Workshops and Trainings – A variety of workshops and trainings will be made available.

Lending Library/Resource Directory– The REACH lending library is open and available for book review and check outs for families. A resource directory of local providers is also available to families.

Case Management – Ongoing case management is provided. REACH clients are provided with information, resource referral or other assistance as needed.

Crisis Counseling – Crisis intervention is available. Please contact our REACH staff for this support.