

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Adoption Support Services for Fresno County



Hello, REACH families!

This quarter we are focusing on the Parents' Perspective and why parents open their hearts and homes to children in need. Let us start with, what is permanency? *"It is a commitment cemented through the challenges and struggles of uncertainty. It is a life journey walked on unknown paths. It is a faith, a hope, and a vision that the future will hold something far better than what you are experiencing now and perhaps ever dreamed possible."*

— *Wounded Children Healing Homes*

As parents who are providing permanency to children who are not biologically related, it is important to reflect on why you decided to open your home to children in need. Was it to create a family? Or you wanted to provide love and a safe home to children who needed it? Maybe you wanted to help family members in need of a caring home. What was your motivation for opening your home?

When parenting we need to look back at the reasons we opened our home, to keep us strong when we are taking our kids to all their appointments, when they are having tantrums and we can't seem to calm them down, or when they have negative behaviors and we just don't understand where they learned them.

Successful parents of "Children from Hard Places" need to be flexible in parenting, examine their motivation, and reframe their expectations. They need to be open-minded, advocate for their children and be open to education and parenting differently. Most importantly, they need to have a willingness to ask for help and the ability to commit to self-care.

Take some time as you look through the REACH newsletter and reconnect with the reason why you decided to provide permanency for a child in your home. Recommit to the compassion in your heart to care for children who need your help, love, and support. Finally, be kind and forgiving to yourself as you parent these special children.

**Fresno County
Fall 2022**

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**Your Fresno REACH
Support Team**

Chad Valorosi, MSW

Program Director II

cvalorosi@aspiranet.org

Jade Yang, MSW

Program Supervisor

jayang@aspiranet.org

Fernando Aquino, MSW

REACH Social Worker

faquino@aspiranet.org

1320 East Shaw Ave., Suite 140

Fresno, CA 93710

Ph: 559.222.4969

Fax: 559.222.0106

aspiranetreachfresnocounty.org



Kinship/Relative Adoption

Fernando Aquino, MSW

Kinship refers to relative, relations, family, connections, being of the same blood. Relative/kin of children placed in foster care may become adoptive parents. This shift comes with both challenges and strengths. As the adoptive parents take on the role of parents to children who prior were seen as cousins, nieces/nephews, grandchildren, siblings or even distant relatives, shifting occurs in the family dynamic.

Kinship adoption allows the child to keep their traditions, culture and maintain connection to biological family. The parent now plays a dual role, having a connection to the child pre and post adoption, attempting to balance both roles while fostering attachment and establishing parental guides.

Things kinship caregivers need:

Community: Utilizing natural resources around you: schools, neighborhoods, faith based organizations, social connections that can support kinship/relative families.

Empathy: The transition in role is oftentimes accompanied by its own feelings of loss and grief within the family unit. Kinship families require compassion and empathy as they navigate this new process. Keep in mind that the adoptive kin can also be processing their own feelings of trauma.

Help: Kinship adoptive parents may have an understanding of raising children, as they may have done it before. However, the family unit is now experiencing feelings of loss, guilt, embarrassment and anger as they take on this new role and relationships shift. The changing role may be from grandparent to parent, causing interrupted retirement, housing multiple children which can be exhausting to most. Connect with services and inquire about possible respite services.

Peer Support: Knowing and connecting with other kinship/relative caregivers can provide a connection through shared experience. This also allows for normalization and validation of family and the change in roles.

Parenting Support: Children adopted from foster care have often experienced trauma, which may be new and different to many parents. Parenting support can be found in trainings offered by adoption-based resources, as well as support groups. These connections also validate child experiences that may be new and complex.

Resources: Accessibility to services in the community is essential to any parent. Connection to services can aid in connection to food, clothing and basic needs. Knowledge of resources can benefit the family unit.

Respect: Be empowered by your role as a relative kin. In many social situations, others may try to “figure out” the family dynamic. Advocating for and empowering yourself helps the family unit.

Sense of Humor: Finding joy in familial connection and laughter can be the best medicine and this can aide in de-stressing the home. Utilizing play as a way to connect, and strengthen the family builds trust and healthy coping strategies.

Understanding: Loss is at the center of the adoption journey and can be coupled with grief; children may experience different behaviors unforeseen by kinship parent. Understanding and familiarizing yourself with the core issues of grief and loss throughout the developmental stages can build a better understanding of behaviors and aide in implementation of healthy coping strategies.

Source: Allison Davis Maxon, LMFT-2017



Book Review

Tara Soria, MSW

Wounded Children, Healing Homes:

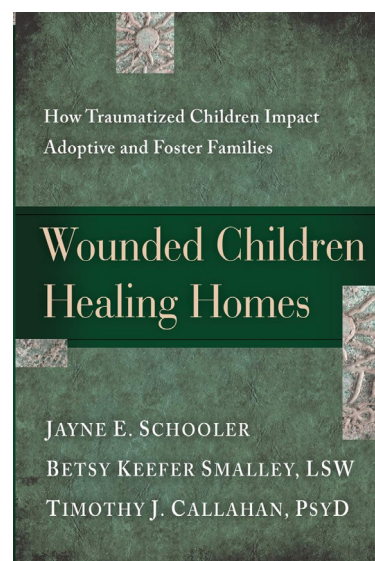
How Traumatized Children Impact Adoptive and Foster Families

(Jayne Schooler, Betsy Keefer Smalley, and Timothy Callahan)

Wounded Children, Healing Homes: How Traumatized Children Impact Adoptive and Foster Families, is an engrossing and relatable read for foster and adoptive parents alike, and is filled with personal stories, as well as practical strategies and tips. Readers have described the book as “eye-opening, honest, hopeful, heart-wrenching, validating, and real.” It can be a valuable resource to those parents who find themselves immersed in struggle, confusion and, at times, even resentment, as they experience the complexities of the foster care and adoption journey. The authors dare to ponder the questions that often torment parents: Why doesn’t my child return my love? What am I failing to understand? What am I failing to do? Some of the topics addressed throughout the book’s chapters are unmet expectations, impact of the foster/adoptive parent’s own trauma history, how living with a traumatized child affects siblings in the home, the crisis of adoption breakdown, school issues and interventions, and the importance of self-care. The realistic lens of not if difficulties arise,

but when, serves to provide a realistic view of parenting children who have been deeply traumatized, while also normalizing the struggles and sharing hope. An excerpt from the book’s Foreword, as written by adoptive parent and expert, Sharon Roszia, states: “Families need to be reminded that healing takes place over time; that change is slow and, at times, barely visible. Parents must pass the many tests their child may devise to see if he can truly trust this new family. The tests lessen over time but may emerge when another trauma, large or small, occurs for the family. Trauma leaves vulnerable spirits.”

I hope you have an opportunity to read this book, and find it to be a valuable tool in your parenting journey.



Infertility and Adoption

Yaneth Arceo, MS

A family's decision to pursue adoption is not one made overnight. There is no easy "Am I prepared to adopt a child?" quiz that can inform you whether or not this direction is the right one for you and your family.

Potential adoptive parents need to determine whether adoption is the correct course for them and whether or not they are prepared to begin the process.

Here are three ways to identify if you are prepared for this life-changing journey:

1. You have moved on from infertility- In order for an adoption to be successful, it should be a decision completely embraced by each partner. If you have struggled with infertility, it is vital you have thoroughly grieved the loss of having a biological child.
2. You and your spouse have similar adoption plans- Just as each partner needs to be prepared to adopt, they additionally should be on the same page for how

they are going to undertake the process and whom they hope to adopt. There are several ways to pursue adoption and each family needs to determine which process is right for them.

3. You are financially prepared for adoption- Depending on the type of adoption, there may or may not be significant costs. It is important to have a clear picture of any impact pursuing adoption will have on your finances.

When you and your partner feel ready to pursue adoption, communication is key. Discuss all factors of adoption, each other's emotions involving infertility, and acceptance of the child you adopt. Taking these factors into consideration will help you be better prepared to welcome a child into your heart and home.

Source: https://www.americanadoptions.com/adopt/is_adoption_right_for_your_family



Newsletter activity: Healing Circle for Children of Trauma

Griselda Santillan Mejia, MA

What is a healing circle? A healing circle is the foundation of the healing process. It is a safe place where individuals who have experienced trauma can come together. Healing circles recognize trauma and pain and uphold the hope of healing and growth. While engaging in a healing circle, individuals are encouraged to share their experiences so a bond can be created and support can be provided for one another.

How can we facilitate a healing circle at home for our children?

The first step is to identify a special place in your home to gather. It's important for this place to feel cozy and welcoming as well as large enough to sit in a circle. To

promote openness, it's important to listen and not engage, question or provide feedback, just listen. Do not pressure to talk, and if they do engage, encourage them to speak from what is on their heart. By listening and not pressuring to talk, children will feel like this is a safe place allowing them to speak up when they are ready.

Just like it can take the body time heal, those who have experienced trauma do as well. When given the right tools and support, people have the opportunity to heal.

Adams C., Baldwin C., Robson C., (2019, March 19). Healing Circle for Youth. <https://healingcirclesglobal.org/2019/01/16/healing-circles-for-youth/>

Support Groups & Events

October

- 20 Parent Café**
10:00-11:30am - ZOOM
- 25 Parent Support Group**
6:00-7:30pm - In Person
- 26 Parent Support Group in Spanish**
9:30-11:30am - ZOOM

November

- 16 Parent Support Group in Spanish***
9:30-11:30am - ZOOM
*date change due to Thanksgiving holiday
- 17 Parent Café**
10:00-11:30am - ZOOM
- 29 Parent Support Group**
6:00-7:30pm - In Person

December

- 15 Parent Café**
10:00-11:30am - ZOOM
- 27 Parent Support Group**
6:00-7:30pm - In Person
- 28 Parent Support Group in Spanish**
9:30-11:30am - ZOOM



REACH Support Groups for Parents

REACH Parent Support Group

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm - In Person

Designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced resource and adoptive parents. Training hours provided. The Adoption Support Group is offered on the fourth Tuesday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. To register, email Fernando Aquino at faquino@aspiranet.org.

Parent Café

10:00 am - 11:30 am via Zoom

Based on the Five Protective Factors, Parent Café provides an opportunity for parents to explore their strengths and learn from each other's experiences. Training hours provided. Parent Café is offered on the third Thursday of each month, 10:00-11:30am via Zoom. To register for Parent Café, email Fernando Aquino at faquino@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you.

REACH Parent Support Group in Spanish

9:30 am - 11:30 am via Zoom

Este grupo está diseñado para adultos que piensan en la adopción, padres que esperan colocación adoptiva, y padres de niños adoptados. Horas de entrenamiento impartidas. Los enlaces de Zoom y los recordatorios se enviarán mensualmente. El Grupo de Apoyo para Padres de REACH en Español se ven en el cuarto miércoles del mes. Para registrarse, comuníquese con Fernando Aquino llamando al número 559-222-4969 y preguntar por REACH o mandando email a faquino@aspiranet.org y se le enviara por correo electrónico un enlace a la reunión.





1320 E. Shaw #140 Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 222-4969
www.aspiranet.org



Fresno County Department of Social Services
2135 Fresno Street, Stop 109
Fresno, CA 93721

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Aspiranet REACH 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.