Children that have long-term unmet attachment needs, what they need the MOST are primary attachment relationships. It’s terrifying for them to move into the vulnerability of attachment. You will see increased behaviors from them, as they start to get feelings of connection, they will start to get feelings of fear.

Allison

Our intention is to keep you safe. But often (in child welfare) what we’re doing is breaking relationships - how can they move forward if we don’t teach them how to make relationships?

- Ann

Child prep is AS IMPORTANT as parent prep!!!

- Lauren

They (teens) should get to say, when do I want to see your physical home, when do I want to stay over, when do I want to move- you give them the control. They are driving the car of course, you (the adults) need to help them drive it, like a bumper car.

- Barry

What parents basically need to know is: The behavior is an expression of the need - We’re taking the next step in the relationship, and it’s scary!

- Ann

Workers need to understand what ‘giving consent’ means- it means giving consent to not give, it’s not giving consent for us to do our job. Older kids totally need some efficacy, need their say- our job is to try to teach.

- Michelle

If the kid refuses, I would just ask them what’s going on? What fears, energies, what memories are coming up when they go on visits? We tell everyone this is going to happen, we will treat them with love.

If the kid refuses, I would just ask them what’s going on? What fears, energies, what memories are coming up when they go on visits? We tell everyone this is going to happen, we will treat them with love.

- Michelle

LOVE is extremely Scary!

- Ann

Did You Know...

They don’t want to lose who they are!!

from a truth: wanted at 15

Paraphrased from talk on “Neuroscience & Permanency” by Bruce D. Perry, MD, PhD

What fires together, wires together: 0-5 is when our brains hardwire the patterns of our early experiences. 6-12 is when all the circuits are hardwire.

If a child has fear, pain, unmet needs, or unpredictability, in early childhood, it can get wired into their pattern of what a “mother” is. This pattern will be used to interpret interactions with all future primary caregivers. Youth who had 0-5 trauma are at risk to misperceive and mistrust even nurturing caregivers.

Everything new is scary- good OR bad! Let the teen control their own dosing. We manage our stress over anything new or scary by “dosing”- controlling how often and how much we allow ourselves to think about it. A youth sensitized by early trauma may need to take it slow.

Dr. Perry suggests that even a skilled clinician may only be able to “dip into” the topic twice, or maybe three times, in a weekly session. Raising the topic, unless the teen brings it up, robs them of their controllability of the dosing- which can turn the new thing, good or bad, into a negative stressor.

Regulate, relate, reason- in that order!

With anything new, a kid’s biggest need is for regulation. Supportive adults can help youth regulate and learn to self-regulate, to stay out of alarm state. When we’re well-regulated, we can reason and learn.

Flock, Fight, Flight, Freeze

If a kid’s stress escalates into alarm, they’ll Fight, Flight or Freeze, and the higher reasoning brain shuts off. The biggest determinant in how a kid reacts to something new is, FLOCK- they look to see how their adults react. If adults are calm, kids are more likely to stay calm. If the adults show alarm, so will a kid.

Learn more: The Seven Slide Series (Youtube), Child Trauma Academy, TX

Overrepresented in substitute care, yet underrepresented in adoption, older youth need love, too. Teens’ and teens’ needs for extra support in the preadoptive transition process may not be as apparent as younger children’s. However, experts dedicated to permanency for older youth believe greater youth voice and coordinated support for preadoptive matches during the visiting period are crucial for success.

Just at the age they are most likely to reject primary caregivers, youth (12+ in MA) are rightfully required to consent to formal adoption. CWIG states a 25% preadoptive disruption rate for 12-17 yo in state care. Anecdotally, perhaps twice as many matches “fizzle” before move-in! We know ‘ageing out’ is a predictor for homelessness, early pregnancy, under-education, incarceration, and a host of health issues. Much has been written on how to seek permanency for older youth, and on the importance of post-placement services to support families in adjustment. However, the deliberate period of meeting and getting to know a new family is less examined, and offers opportunities for gain.

Goal:

ID and disseminate best practices for supporting teens and teens in preadoptive transition

Method:

Review existing materials and conduct phone interviews with experienced practitioners/advocates, to gather useful links, innovative ideas, and direct testimony on why and how to steward preadoptive matches with tweens and teens.

Present excellence in practice and resources of immediate usefulness in a simple format accessible to busy workers, caregivers, and others who care about and work with youth.

Two valuable classics stood out:

“Breaking Barriers to Teen Adoption” video (Youtube) by You Gotta Believe, NY

“Finding a Fit to Last a Lifetime” by AdoptUSKids

Both contain timeless suggestions in a range of voices and perspectives, and informed a preference for direct quotes in our project’s handout.

Outcome:

A handbook of collective wisdom from those in the field!

“The Letter for When I Freak Out”!!!

Teen Safety Plan!!!

Like to Free Resources!

Reprints of the AdoptUSKids classic:

“Finding a Fit to Last a Lifetime”

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Bruce D. Perry, MD, PhD: “Branding Barriers to Adoption” awarded specimen from Voices for Adoption, MA

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National Permanency Conference, Harmony Family Center, Nashua, NH - Listen: http://nationalpermanencyconference.org/Clinical-Permanency-Conference/