From Understanding to Intervention

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Current Non-stepparent U.S. Adoptions

- Infants < 6 mo.: 17%
- Intercountry: 15%
- Child welfare: 68%
Percentage of Children (6-17) Receiving Mental Health Care (Nat’l. Survey of Adoptive Parents)

46%  Foster care adoptions (57% over 12)

33%  Private domestic adoptions

35%  International adoptions

10%  General population  
     (National Survey of Children’s Health)
Consider Intersecting Physiological & Socioemotional Tasks of Adolescence

- Maladaptive physiology from deprivation/trauma
- Puberty; hormonal shifts
- Trauma resolution: search for meaning
- Cognitive advances: formal operations
- Complex identity challenges/adoption & racial ID
- Heightened need for peer approval>stress/anxiety
- Individuation from family
Trauma Resolution: Integration of Experiences & Search for Meaning

- Physiological & psychological adaptations to trauma
- Puberty > resurfacing of trauma

Study of children treated in IL Adoption Preservation Program

PTSD Symptoms: most common at age 12 (59%); reported for 35% of all other children

Most common for SA children, followed by PA children
Also for some adopted at older ages from institutions

(Smith, Howard, & Monroe, 2000)
Adoptive parents need special knowledge, skills, & support to address challenges: Pre & Post-Adoption Services

• Understand child in light of history
• **Realistic expectations**
• Prepared to expect challenges & to know where & when to seek help
• **Ability to empathize with child/see strengths**
• Parent self-care & management of own reactions in interactions with child
• **Therapeutic parenting skills**
• Reframe help-seeking as a strength
New Resources for Treatment

Supporting “felt safety”, self-regulation & mastery

• ARC: Attachment, Self-Regulation & Competency

• Karyn Purvis & David Cross, *The Connected Child*

Trust-Based Relational Intervention


Empowered to Connect website: http://empoweredtoconnect.org/guide