Fostering Communications

Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System

September 2018

PRIDE Link

Often children report experiencing a great deal of pain, anxiety, guilt, grief, and "lost identity" when they enter the foster care system. Uprooted from their families, homes, and sense of normalcy, including a sense of detachment from their community, culture, and identity is common among children placed into care. All too often, children in the child welfare system are also separated from their siblings. Many sibling groups are separated upon entry into care; less frequently, siblings are placed together in out-of-home care initially and later separated. The PRIDE Model we follow highlights the competency of **"Supporting relationships between children and their birth families".** Facilitating regular and healthy connections between the children in foster care and their siblings is just as important as the connection with their birth parents. We can read article after article informing us how placing siblings together is best and if not placed together, how maintaining connections is in the children's best interest, but sometimes the message doesn't sink in until we hear it from the youth themselves. Epic 'Ohana Inc shares an impactful message through the following video of teen interviews on the top of keeping siblings connected.   **Brothers and Sisters: Keeping Siblings in Foster Care Connected**

Training Opportunity

Once again we will be holding four regional Festivals of Training. The Fall Festivals are just around the corner in Minot and Grand Forks. We highly encourage you to attend one of these amazing weekend sessions. If you are unable to attend your local session and need to travel outside of your region, remember prior approval from CFSTC is required for all expense reimbursements. Register **HERE** for the upcoming fall sessions.

I am "NotOK"

Growing up in today's world is harder than ever. The pressures of perfection, the stressors of social media, and figuring out who you want to be in life can be hard enough; top that with growing up in foster care and it is no wonder that we have youth that are struggling to manage daily life. Having a good support system is a protective factor that can help foster resilience against this stress and improve overall mental health. During an immediate crisis, it can be difficult at times to seek out help, even if we have supportive, healthy people around us. Two insightful teens, Hannah and Charlie Lucas developed the "NotOK" mobile app to assist with this. "NotOK takes the guesswork out of what to text someone when you need help and speeds up the process of reaching out. Instead of having to write out a message, users can press the app's digital panic button, which sends a text up to five preselected people. The text message tells your support system you aren't doing well and sends your location". We definitely understand teens and smart phones offer an entire set of complications, but there is a tool that may be life changing. This app could also be helpful if a teen gets themselves into a scary situation and just needs for a caregiver to step in last minute. We encourage you to check out this option if you have a teen in your care with a smart phone. Asking for help is never easy, thus must recognize and empathize that we may need to offer teens in care another option to reach out.   **NotOk App**

Dear Educator

One month into the school year and life hopefully is settling in a bit for most families. The hope is that every child is placed in a classroom that "fits" for them and has the proper supports for them to achieve their best throughout the year. We understand that children who have been placed in to foster care often come with the need for increased supports and/or nurturance. There are times where educators may need to be reminded how the child in your care has had experiences that change the way they view the world and impact how they react. Adoptive mom and past teacher, Sandi Lerman decided that the best way for her to inform her son's teacher was to write three letters to talk through her son's trauma, impacts into his ability to learn at times, and how his teacher can support him through his educational journey.

Dear Educator, Part I
Dear Educator, Part II
Dear Educator, Part III

The following two resources provide school administrators, teachers, staff, and concerned parents with basic information about working with traumatized children in the school system.

This is a Students Brain on Trauma
Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators

Impact of Providing Care

Center for the Study of Social Policy shares that "taking in a child who needs you can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life – but it can also be stressful for you and the rest of your family. Taking care of yourself is critically important, for your own well-being and for the well-being of the child you're caring for and others in your household. For a child, being removed from their parents and home is stressful and can be traumatic. Between the experiences that led to their placement in your home, and the removal itself, the child you are caring for is very likely to exhibit some signs of trauma. Even when you provide loving care, a child may have difficulty adjusting. They likely miss their parents and their home. This very natural and normal reaction can make it hard for them to respond positively to you and may impact their behavior in many ways". The following tool is designed to help you:
- reflect on your experience as a foster or resource parent
- identify your strengths and where you may need more support
- be aware of how traumatic experiences may affect the child in your care and how that might impact you as a caregiver
- respond to the child in a supportive way, even when their behavior is challenging

Taking Care of Yourself: Tips for Foster and Resource Parents

Self-Regulation Tools

Kristen Berry from *Confessions of an Adoptive Parent* states "to "regulate" means "to keep under control." To regulate our emotions means that we keep our emotions in control. Everyone experiences a dis-regulated state of emotions at one time or another. Being in a state of dis-regulation feels like a simmering pot that starts to boil over. We all have to learn how to re-regulate once our emotions are out of sorts. Most of us learn to do this naturally over time but some children may need extra help, especially children who have experienced trauma. After years of learning from therapists, fellow foster parents and teachers, we have compiled an extensive list of coping skills". The following link shares some insightful tips on how to teach children how to regulate.

5 Coping Skills that Help Kids Regulate