

FALL 2014

SUPPORT GROUPS

- Heart to Heart
- FRUA
- The Rainbow Project
- Latin American Adoptive Families of WI
- Milagros de Guatemala
- RAD Support
- Wisconsin Family Ties
- Canopy Center's Parent Stressline
- Knit Together Adoption Support Group
- Madison Families with Children from China
- FACE Kids
- Families Through Korean Adoption

SAVE A TREE

Get this newsletter via email.

No need to wait on the quarterly newsletter. Get up-to-date information about events and training as it is received. Put "PARC email database" in the subject line of an email and send your name, address and phone number to: postadoption@ccmadison.org



A WALK IN THE PARC

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN POST ADOPTION RESOURCE CENTER

Teaching Trauma in the Classroom

Children are vulnerable. In an optimal environment, they are not expected to experience this vulnerability until later in life when their minds and nervous systems are equipped to handle elevated levels of fear, stress, and overwhelm. Yet, the key phrase here is "optimal environment." Unfortunately, we live in the "real" world, so children will often find themselves in situations that are far from the optimal and the result can be childhood trauma.

Childhood trauma happens at both the emotional and psychological level and it can have a negative impact on the child's developmental process. During a traumatic event (abuse, neglect, adoption, accidents, birth trauma, etc.), the lifelong impact is even greater if the child believes he is powerless, helpless, and hopeless. When a child experiences one or all of these feelings, he begins to believe the world is dangerous. Repeated experiences of these feelings will create a lasting imprint from which he operates and behaves. A framework based in fear and survival becomes the child's viewpoint of the world around him.

These early life experiences then influence the child's abil-

ity to "behave," or more correctly expressed, the child's ability to stay "regulated." Trauma impacts a child's ability to stay calm, balanced, and oriented. Instead, children



The most effective way to change these patterns comes through safe, nurturing, attuned, and strong human connection.

with traumatic histories often find themselves in a "dysregulated" state, which manifests into a child who does not behave, cannot focus, and/or lacks motivation. It is not a matter of choice or a matter of "good" child verses "bad" child; it is simply an imprint from the child's past history. It's the child's new normal.

When working with children like this in the classroom, the most effective way to work with them is to work at the level of regulation, relationship, and emotional safety instead of at the level of behavior. These children's issues are not behavioral; they are

regulatory. Working at the level of regulation, relationship, and emotional safety addresses more deeply critical forces within these children that go far beyond the exchanges of language, choices, stars, and sticker charts.

Traditional disciplinary techniques focus on altering the left hemisphere through language, logic, and cognitive thinking. These approaches are ineffective because the regulatory system is altered more effectively through a different part of the brain known as the limbic system. The limbic system operates at the emotional level, not at the logical level. Therefore, we must work to regulate these children at the level of the limbic system, which happens most easily through the context of human connection.

When the teacher says to a non-traumatized child, "Andy, can you please settle down and quietly have a seat?" Andy has the internal regulatory ability to respond appropriately to his teacher because trauma has not interrupted his developmental maturation of developing self-regulation tools and feeling like he is safe in the world. However, when Billy (the traumatized child) is asked the same question, his response is much

Continued on page 2.

Teaching Trauma in the Classroom (Continued)

different. He takes the long way around the classroom to his seat, he continues to not only talk but projects his voice across the room as if he is still out in the playground, and once seated continues to squirm and wiggle.

Traditionally, we have interpreted Billy as a disruptive child, pasted the label ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) onto him, and reprimanded him for his "naughty" behavior. What we have failed to see is that Billy cannot settle down on his own. His internal system has not experienced the appropriate patterning to know how to be well behaved like his classmate Andy and Billy does not know he is safe in this world, even if he is now in a safe environment.

The brain-body system is a pattern-matching machine. A child with little in-

ternal self-control will pattern himself according to his past external experiences. If his past experiences have been chaotic, disruptive, and overwhelming (trauma), he will continue acting this way until new patterns are established. Thus, a child coming into a calm and safe classroom is still likely to be acting as if he is in his previous chaotic and unsafe environment. A child can be taken out of trauma but not so easily can the trauma be taken out of the child. Past patterns of chaos are now the current framework for navigating his world; he knows no different.

The most effective way to change these patterns comes through safe, nurturing, attuned, and strong human connection. For the student in the classroom, it comes through the teacher-student rela-

tionship. The reality is, for our traumatized children to learn and achieve academically, science is showing that they must be engaged at the relational level prior to any academic learning.

Written by: Heather T. Forbes, LCSW, owner of the *Beyond Consequences Institute*, presenter at the upcoming "A Place in My Heart" Adoption Conference, and author of several books. See box below for more information.

To read more or to subscribe to Heather Forbes' eNewsletter, please visit: www.beyondconsequences.com



"A Place in My Heart" Adoption Conference

"Beyond Consequences in the Classroom: A Trauma-Focused Approach"

Presenter: Heather Forbes, LCSW

Saturday, November 8, 2014
9 am to 4 pm
Wilderness Hotel & Golf Resort
Wisconsin Dells, WI

Register online at:

<https://apimh2014.eventbrite.com>



SPOTLIGHT: Trauma & School Resources

(available through the PARC Lending Library)

Help for Billy: A Beyond Consequences Approach to Helping Challenging Children in the Classroom, by Heather Forbes, LCSW

Dare to Love: The Art of Merging Science and Love into Parenting Children with Difficult Behaviors, by Heather Forbes, LCSW

Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control, Volumes 1 & 2, by Heather Forbes, LCSW, and B. Bryan Post, LCSW

The Connected Child, by Karyn Purvis, Ph.D., David Cross, Ph.D., and Wendy Lyons Sunshine

Parenting Teens with Love and Logic, by Foster Cline

From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide, by Peter Wright and Pamela Darr Wright

Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow, by Gregory Keck

Responding Instead of Reacting

Table 6.2 Examples of changing traditional reactions to beyond consequences responses from the book Help for Billy: A Beyond Consequences Approach to Helping Challenging Children in the Classroom (2012) by Heather Forbes, LCSW, pages 78-79.

| Traditional Reactions | Beyond Consequences Responses |
|---|---|
| "It's not that difficult." | "I need to know how hard this is for you." |
| "Go to the principal's office." | "I'm here. You're not in trouble." |
| "You're a teenager now and you need to learn to deal with life." | "I don't want you alone in this. Let me help you." |
| "Stop crying." | "It's okay to feel." |
| "You're so dramatic." | "You need to be heard." |
| "Stop acting like a baby." | "That really set you back, didn't it?" |
| "Detention is waiting for you." | "Sit with me." |
| "Stop being so needy." | "What is it you need help with?" |
| "You need to learn to be responsible." | "Let's chunk this down so it is more manageable." |
| "I can't help you with this issue-I've got thirty other children in the classroom." | "We'll get through this together. Every single student in this class is important." |
| "Don't you talk to an adult like that!" | "You're allowed to have a voice. Let's talk together." |
| "Stop whining." | "I want to understand you better. If I know how you feel, I'll be able to help you better. Use your voice so I can really understand." |
| "You should have never acted like that." | "Sometimes life just gets too big, doesn't it?" |
| "I'm calling your parents. Wait until they find out." | "Let's get everyone involved to support you. You're not in trouble. I want your parents involved so we can all find a way to make this better." |
| "Act your age." | "This is too big to keep to yourself." |
| "You need to take ownership/responsibility for this." | "I'm sorry this is so hard." |
| "You're old enough to handle this on your own." | "Let's handle this together." |
| "Grow up." | "I'm here to support you." |
| "You won't have help in college, so you need to do this on your own now." | "Let me help you now so you'll be ready for college." |
| "You need to behave because you're in my classroom." | "I am here to make it safe for you." |
| "You need to be like Andy." | "You have your own kind of genius." |
| "Nobody is going to like you if you keep misbehaving." | "I know you want to be well liked, so let's make that happen." |

Copy & share with teachers!



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FALL ADOPTION CLASSES

- **Transracial Parenting**
 - o Wednesday, October 29, 6:00pm – 9:00pm
- **Talking with Kids About Adoption**
 - o Wednesday, November 12, 6:00pm– 9:00pm
- **Managing Challenging Behaviors: A TBRI Approach**
 - o Saturday, November 8, 9:00am – 12:00pm
- **Grief & Loss in Adoptive Families**
 - o Wednesday, December 3, 6:00pm – 9:00pm
- **Nature & Nurture: Factors Influencing Child Development**
 - o Tuesday, December 16, 6:00pm – 9:00pm
- **Positive Parenting**
 - o Wednesday, January 14, 2015, 6:00pm –9:00pm

Each class is \$35/person. Reservations are required.
Please RSVP at least one week before the class date.

For more information and to register, please contact:

Lori DuRussel, Red Thread Learning, LLC
(608) 345-8217 or lori@redthreadlearning.com



Support Group Forming!!

Are you interested in connecting with other families who have children with challenging behaviors?

If so, please send an email to:
postadoption@ccmadison.org



**Culture Camp for adoptive families
raising black and bi-racial children.**

STILL TIME TO REGISTER!!

Oct 17-19, 2014

Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake, WI

To Register, please visit:

www.umojabhe.com