

## Wounded Children, Healing Homes Understanding the Impact of Parenting Traumatized Children on Foster and Adoptive Parents



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Now that you have had experience as a foster or adoptive parent, how would you fill in the blank.

I wish I had .....

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## A Critical Issue from the Beginning



- Understanding and Managing Expectations

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## The Power of Unmet Expectations

- Numerous studies have examined predictors of adoption disruption. It is estimated that adoption disruption rates are highest among special needs and older child adoptions and these range from 10% to 20%. "The following are predictors for disruption among special needs adoptions related to the adoptive family: unrealistic expectations, rigidity of adoptive family functioning, low levels of social support for the adoptive family, and the adoption by new or "matched" families.

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## Ten Common Parental Expectations



Albeck, age 11 and Maksat, age 13, two brothers in an orphanage in Kyrgyzstan.

1. Our love will be enough.
2. We (I) will feel love and connection to this child quickly.
3. This child will step into our family system and easily learn how to function within our "rules," goals, and ambitions.
4. This child's needs will be just like those of our biological children
5. Our child will fit well into our extended family and be welcomed by them.

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Expectations adapted from Wounded Children, Healing Homes

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## Ten Common Parental Expectations



Vania, age 9, living in an orphanage in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan.

6. My friends and acquaintances will validate my role as parent in our child's life and support us through the adoption process and beyond.
7. Our child will see us as his family and forget about his birth family and his past.
8. We/I can do for this child what was not done for me,.
9. We/I will not do to this child what was done to me.
10. I will never feel any regrets or ambivalence in adopting this child with a traumatic past.

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Expectations adapted from Wounded Children, Healing Homes

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## When Early Life Neglect and Trauma is the Child's Story

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## Let's Talk about the Reality of Complex Developmental Trauma



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The reality of complex developmental trauma in adopted children who come from a difficult history



- Early
- Chronic
- Maltreatment
- Failure of the caregiver

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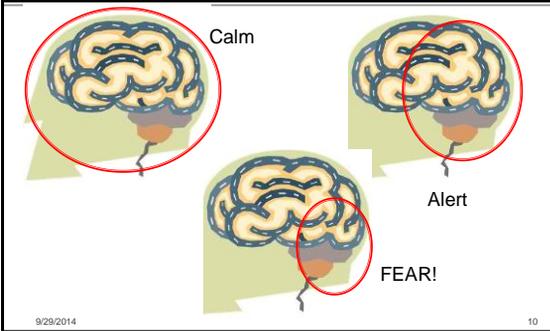
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## WHERE DO OUR CHILDREN LIVE



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## WHAT FEAR DOES



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## WHAT FEAR DOES



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## Moving from being

Consciously  
Compassionate  
TO  
Competently  
Compassionate

Bill Hancock Faith Bridges Foster Care

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## Frog in a Kettle



If you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will leap out right away to escape the danger.

But, if you put a frog in a kettle filled with cool, pleasant water and gradually heat the kettle, it will not become aware of the threat *until it is too late.*

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## Recipe for Trouble

*What does this story have to do with adoptive or foster parents and traumatized children? Here's the recipe:*



One loving and potentially unprepared adoptive family



One new child with significant trauma and survival strategies



One "cool and pleasant" home



An emotional thermostat to which no one is paying attention

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## The journey begins



I really will enjoy parenting this child.



This is a little more than I expected, but I am doing okay.



I am getting overwhelmed, angry, frustrated.



I can't do this anymore.

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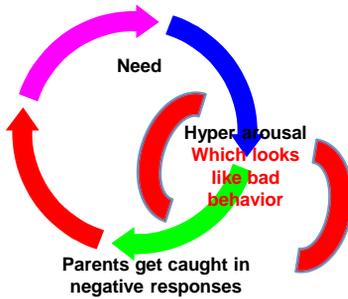
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## What is happening?



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## We are getting worn down!



Is there a correlation between parental connection and tolerance of behaviors?

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## Interesting Research

67%

Marital issues

85%

Lack of PA Support

61%

Financial Stress

From Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control Heather Forbes

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## Interesting Research

77%

Anger/Rage

50%

Depression/Meds

93%

Run away from it all

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## Interesting Research

77%

Isolated

14%

Thoughts of Suicide

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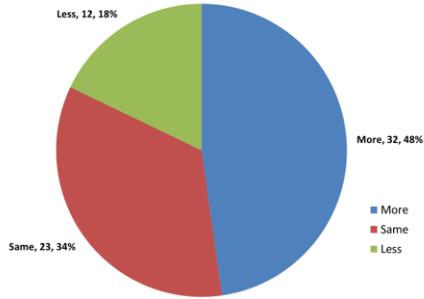
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Review results from the questionnaire

Does your wife seem to be struggling more than you in the relationship(s) with your child(ren)?



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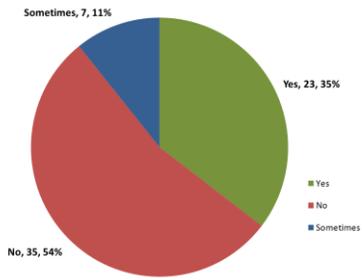
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Review results from the questionnaire

Are you purposeful in spending quality time with your wife to work through the issues that your children are facing?



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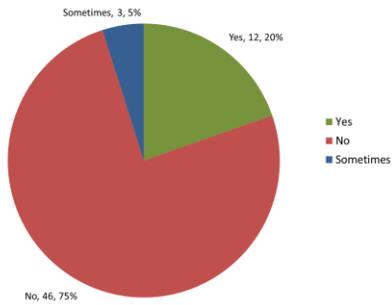
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Review results from the questionnaire

Are you purposeful in spending **one-to-one** time with each of your children?



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### Vicarious Trauma – Who is at risk?

Empathic	No recovery time	Own history of trauma
Isolated	No resources or support	Perception of failure

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### Vicarious Trauma – What does it look like?

No time or energy for yourself		Disconnection from loved ones
Diminished self capacities		Social withdrawal
Unclear thoughts		Cynicism, negativity and irritability
Nightmares		A short fuse
Despair/hopelessness		

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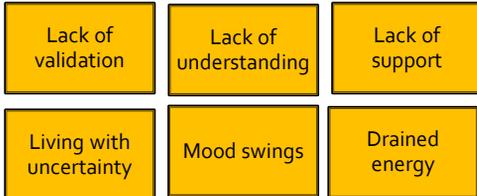
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## Effects Identified by Adoptive Families



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## Guiding Principles



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## CIRCLE OF SUPPORT



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