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

Ten Common Parental Expectations

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.
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.
When Early Life Neglect and Trauma is the Child’s Story

Let’s Talk about the Reality of Complex Developmental Trauma

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

- Early
- Chronic
- Maltreatment
- Failure of the caregiver
WHERE DO OUR CHILDREN LIVE

Calm
Alert
FEAR!

WHAT FEAR DOES

Global
Suppresses the conscience
Sets up protective strategies

Shuts off cortex (thinking)
“Bad Behavior”

FEAR

WHAT FEAR DOES

FEAR

Suppresses the child’s voice
Not able to discern needs of other

Alters brain chemistry

Flight, Fight, Freeze
Moving from being

Consciously Compassionate

TO

Competently Compassionate

Bill Hancock Faith Bridges Foster Care

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.

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
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.

The journey begins

Hyper arousal
Which looks like bad behavior

Parents get caught in negative responses

Need

What is happening?

We are getting worn down!

Is there a correlation between parental connection and tolerance of behaviors?
Marital issues
Lack of PA Support
Financial Stress

Anger/Rage
Depression/Meds
Run away from it all

Isolated
Thoughts of Suicide

From Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control Heather Forbes
Pay attention to warning signs.

Vicarious Trauma – Who is at risk?

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

Vicarious Trauma – What does it look like?

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

- Lack of validation
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of support
- Living with uncertainty
- Mood swings
- Drained energy

Guiding Principles

- Learn the Principles of Success
- Seek a mentor/circle of support
- Open conversation early about post adoption emotions
- Recognize the early signs
- Be honest about expectations

Circle of Support

- The Rock
- Advocate
- The Wise
- Helping Hand
- The Learner