

Getting to know you: Innovative Strategies for Increasing Adoptability for Older Youth in Child Welfare

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My journey

- From looking for a baby to getting a 10 year old who had 26 moves in her little life. Never being in one place more than a year and often less than that.
- The mixer that the county was afraid to repeat

Love is like a virus;
It can happen to anybody at any time

Maya Angelou

▪ But in Adoption out of Foster Care... This love that "can happen at any time" could be years later....

The most important thing for a child in the Child Welfare system is the endurance of the foster or adoptive home. Your reality that this can work, has to be stronger than their history of how everyone has let them down.

Cindy Adams

▪ We take for granted how we woke up in the same bed day after day. These kids don't take that for granted or even as normal.

▪ Syleena Adams – You can't imagine what it means to a child to have a family.

▪ We have to help ongoing closeness feel normal for most of our kids

But lets back up

- What brought me from doing therapy to training foster and adoptive parent's Trauma Informed Care?
- Silly me I thought somehow I could give folks the context of what they were getting themselves into and thus a road map....
- Some people yes... but most people no

So I realized they need context!!!

Now how to get it

Context comes through contact

- Why are agencies are fearful of contact with vulnerable children?
- Why is contact is critical for both kids and families?

Types of contact

- Mixers
- Mini-mixers
- Respite
- Coaching of new parents by current foster parents of children looking for homes
- Offer multiple foster parent activities that include pre adoptive parents
- Mentoring events
- Input by Kids
- Interviews of families by kids
- Video

Look who's coming to dinner

- Common top needs of older children in foster care
- Check your gut – fall in love yet?
- Fall in like?
- Scared to death?
- Probably not –so what to do?

Brain storm – memory activity how did you develop your close relationships ... how did they begin, and then and then ...

TAKE 5 MINS TO WRITE DOWN THE ELEMENTS OF BUILDING TRUST AND CONNECTION

How do we get to know people

- How have you made friends – brain storm
- How long did it take to feel a close connection
- What seemed to enhance the connection and what seem to strain the connection

Transitions

- Vera Fahlberg " A Child's Journey Through Placement"
- Minimizing the Trauma of moves in the foster care system

A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically and spiritually wired to love, to be loved and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick.

Brene' Brown

So why do kids in the foster system fight against this closeness?

- Most often due to a false sense of self that comes from not knowing the people you live with or yourself

Holly Van Gilden's work

- How a foster parent needs to assimilate and transmute pain
- Star trek anyone?

Life books

- Sue Badeau- turning life books into futuristic documents and vision boards(books)
-

Ralph Waldo Emerson

A Hero is no Braver than the ordinary man,
but he is brave five minutes longer

So.... Adoptive parents have to be braver
years longer!

Taking Time for You.

- Comments?
