

Family Ties

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc.

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Newsletter

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The Healing Power of the Adoptive Family

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Yogi Berra, the legendary catcher for the New York Yankees, famous for his quotable quotes, once declared: “It’s déjà vu all over again.” For many adoptive parents, it feels like they are “prisoners of déjà vu,” trapped in their children’s unfortunate past over and over again. These sad histories can live on and on without helpful intervention.

Traumatic Histories:

Ideally, children should be raised in a “cradle of development.” But, actually, prior to being placed in foster care, many special needs adopted children were raised in a “nest of thorns.” They may have experienced a wide variety of maltreatment (physical and/or sexual abuse and most commonly, neglect) over an extended period of time. Parents who maltreat often lack responsiveness and are unavailable to their children. For a host of reasons, some parents cannot or do not provide sensitive parenting nor do they offer caring structure and guidance. As a result, their children may develop an array of negative and distorted perceptions and expectations about family life, themselves, and parent figures. Traumatic histories can change many things, but especially how children perceive themselves and others. These perceptions not only become their reality, they may remain their reality. It’s déjà vu all over again. Sad histories not only alter how children view things, but can change their behavior and the people they become. In their traumatic early lives, children frequently adapted to survive. The way they behaved or misbehaved somewhat worked for them in the past. It might have been life-saving for them. Beyond individual behaviors or behavior problems, say, running away from home or bedwetting to keep dangerous individuals from entering his room, a child may have adapted by playing a specific role in a dysfunctional family; for example, acting as a “parental child.” Children play their part in an unfortunate family environment. Later, even after being placed in a healthy adoptive family, they continue to play their role. So, not only does their unusual or problematic behavior persist, so does the historic role. The upshot of all this is that helping your adopted child may take understanding two central issues: (1) the past (and present) reason(s) behind his behavior problems and (2) the child’s historic role in his earlier life.

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Reasons for Problem Behaviors :

One of the most important questions to ask yourself when dealing with behavior problems and when helping your children, is to identify “why” they do what they do. Typically, there’s a method to the madness, but sometimes we, as resource parents, can’t fathom it. Instead we often feel baffled and hamstrung by the child’s problem and are forced into dealing with it reactively and negatively. Understanding the “point” of the behavior: i.e. its purpose, meaning, cause, or the reason behind it, helps us to remain proactive and positive.

Here are six common reasons or purposes that can apply to almost any behavior problem you might be trying to sort out. Not all of them apply in each situation, but there can be more than one cause for a single problem.

1. Attention seeking (asking for needs/want to be met): The child gains and maintains attention, sometimes negative attention; the youth may be communicating a need or want, though sometimes in a roundabout way. Your child might pick fights with siblings to get you involved in breaking it up.

4. Family issues: Issues in the family may result in certain behavior problems in the child or adolescent. Modeling may occur as well, wherein the child witnesses a certain behavior at home that he then imitates. The child may show disrespect towards the adoptive mother if his own mother was a victim of domestic violence.

2. Fear factor (anxiety, fear, or phobia): The youth may have an automatic response to certain triggers or situations; his behavior may serve to help avoid or escape some undesirable, unpleasant event, task, or individual; and/or it may reduce tension or discomfort that the child or youth feels. The child may smear feces in his bedroom to keep out dangerous intruders.

5. Physical/medical: Physical ailments and psychiatric disorders can produce certain problem behaviors or symptoms. The child who erupts with violent outbursts unrelated to any discernible triggers may need a psychiatric evaluation.

3. Provide stimulation or pleasure: Some behaviors are fundamentally rewarding. A child might take some secret delight in stealing a treasured object from you and watching you search for it.

6. Cognitive distortion: Some behaviors naturally spring from distortions in the child's thinking, expectations, or from irrational thoughts. The child may wonder if taking a family vacation means you'll never return home.

Of course, many of these reasons for individual behavior problems can emerge out of maltreating pasts. As an adoptive parent it's important to "pinpoint the point," that is, to identify why the child does what he does. The list of six reasons above may get you started. But, sometimes understanding "why" mandates taking things a step further. Adoptive parents may need to look beyond the reasons for a specific behavior problem to the larger issue of the child's early role within his maltreating family.

Understanding "why" a child behaves as he does sometimes requires taking things a step further. Adoptive parents may look beyond the apparent reasons for a specific behavior problem to the larger issue of the child's early role within his maltreating family.

Early Role Within The Family:

There are five common historic roles children have played and may cling to;

The super-compliant child: This child may be overly submissive and passive. The child avoids expressing any negative feelings and obeys "to a fault." To help this child the adoptive family needs to reassure the child that he/she is safe. The parents may need to track and observe how often the child misses golden opportunities to voice frustration, wants, and disagreements. Encouraging the child to voice feelings, needs and opinions assertively may help.

The care-giving child: Frequently called a "parental child" this youngster makes few demands of the adoptive parents and may attempt to take care of the parent or the other children. The adoptive parent should be careful not to fall into a mode of punishing the child for doing "his job" i.e. playing out his historic role in a family. Instead, find reasonable ways to channel the child's care-giving tendencies in acceptable ways. Placing the child in charge of care-giving for a pet may help. Asking the child to assist the parent in certain tasks may give the child a sense of purpose.

The coercive child: This child makes it impossible to not pay attention to him/her. The Child may clamor loudly for attention or may act so inappropriately that the adoptive parent can't help but correct him/her. It is important for parents not to fall into the negative attention trap. Instead, it may help to provide the child with ample positive attention before conduct problems force negative attention. Equipping the child with the language to directly ask for positive parental attention may forestall negative attention seeking.

The helpless child: This child may capture caregiver attention by exaggerated helplessness. This may amount to coercing parental attention through weakness or feigned illness. The child may respond to approaches which allow him/her, for a time, to be treated like a younger child.

The disorganized child: This child may send quite confused signals to the adoptive family. He/she may desperately need, yet strongly fear, involvement with others. The adoptive parent should observe to see how much undiluted positive attention the child can handle without feeling anxious. The parent may have to mete out love and attention in low-key doses.

Take Away Message:

In a nutshell, good relationships in an adoptive family can repair early emotional damage. While psychotherapy can be helpful, the central, curative relationships of the youth should be with the adoptive parents, who may have the most positive impact in the child's life. It is the healing power of the adoptive family that can provide a protective milieu in which the child can grow, learn and succeed. Helping their troubled child often requires understanding the child's behavior problems and the underlying reasons for them. It also may require understanding what historic role he/she played to survive. It is important for adoptive parents to acknowledge what the child has been through in the past, all while convincing them that better times lie ahead. In the words of Yogi Berra, "*the future ain't what it used to be.*"



Order Pizza to Eat In or Take Out
at OTTO's: 574-576 Congress St
Tuesday, October 29, 2013!
5:00 to 9:00 p.m.

**Benefitting
The Southern Maine
Foster Family
Recruitment Team**

**DATE: 10/29/2013
TIME: 5:00 TO 9:00**

Otto's Pizza, 574-576 Congress St in Portland hosts the Southern Maine Foster Family Recruitment Team's annual fundraiser on Tuesday, October 29, 2013, from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.

- Drop by Otto's at 574-576 Congress Street in Portland
- Order to eat in or take out.
- Stop by our table for raffle tickets and win great prizes!

8% of all proceeds from the night benefit the Southern Maine Foster Family Recruitment Team, a collaborative venture for recruitment and retention of foster/adoptive parents.

The team includes: Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Portland and Biddeford DHHS, Community Health and Counseling Services, KidsPeace Foster Care and Community Programs, SMART Child and Family Services, Spurwink Treatment Foster Care, The Opportunity Alliance, and Woodfords Family Services Therapeutic Foster Care.

Cakes for Youth in Care!

Do you have a foster child in your home with an upcoming birthday? Are you in need of a birthday cake but don't have time to make one? You're in luck! Shalece Fiack in Orono will donate her time and talent to make that special someone in your home a birthday cake! Shalece will be able to make 2 cakes per month and will need at least 10 days of notice. Please keep the requests for youth in Orono and surrounding areas. Cakes that are made will be available for pick up at AFFM's office in Old Town.

If your child has a birthday approaching send Shalece and email at shalecefiack@yahoo.com and don't miss out on this incredible opportunity!



Adoption Announcement!

The Spaulding family are happy to announce the finalization of the adoption of their 3 kin care kids on Aug.6 2013. Michael Lee Spaulding 10, Kiana Alexis Spaulding 8, and Kayla Abigail Spaulding 6 were welcomed into the family by their new parents Clint and Christine Spaulding and all their older sibling Nicole 26, Christopher 17, Clint 17, Casey 15, Samantha 14, and Amy-Kate 12. Clint and Christina are now the proud parents of all 9 kids in a forever safe home!

New Additions to the Discount Card Program!

Dragonflies-Consignment

28 Main St. Dexter & 128 Elm St. Newport
15% off Store-Wide

Errand Runner

Shopping, Pick Up, Delivery, Shipping
Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM
Serving Greater Bangor area
20% off hourly rate
Errand.runner@outlook.com
Call or Text: Jes 249-1414 or Nate 249-1413

Everything Kids

24 Main St. Winthrop
395-8086
www.facebook.com/everythingKIDSMMAINE
20% off

Family Thrift Shop

54 Cumberland St. Bangor
10% off regularly priced items

Fresh Off The Farm

495 Commercial St., Rt. 1 Rockport
236-3260
10% off anything in the store

The Once More Store

1480 Lisbon St. Lewiston
513-6135 www.theoncemorestore.com
15% off



Thank you to the businesses that participate in the Discount Card Program! If you have a business that you would like to see added to the discount card give AFFM a call 1-800-833-9786 or send an email to info@affm.net

Kinship Corner

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine & The Kinship Program is gearing up for the Holiday Gift Giving Program! Kinship families are invited to add their children's names, gender, clothing size and age to a wish list for holiday gifts. Once again, the amazing Ogunquit Spirit of Giving Project will work to provide holiday presents to kids in AFFM programs. Give the office a call at 1-800-833-9786 and have your child's information and gift wish ready. We ask that you keep requests to under \$50.00 per child. The sooner we get the information the more likely we are to fulfill the children's wishes. We look forward to hearing from you!



Frequently Asked Questions



Have you had a question about adoption, foster care, kinship care, guardianship, financial supports, working with the department, etc. that you would like to know the answer to? You're in luck! Each month the Family Ties Newsletter will feature a FAQ section. Send your questions to info@affm.net and we'll answer them the best we can!

What to Ask Prior to a Child Being Placed

- 1. Name, age, gender?** Reason for placement? Has the child been in a placement before coming to your home?
- 2. Has level of care been assessed?** Reimbursement rate?
- 3. Visitation?**
 - A. Are there safety concerns regarding visitation?
 - B. With whom will the child visit?
 - C. Where will visits occur?
 - D. Will someone other than I supervise/monitor the visits?
 - E. If outside of the resource home, who will supervise?
 - F. Who will transport?
- 4. Child's medical history and current medical needs**
 - A. Who is the child's pediatrician/medical doctor?
 - B. Has a mental health assessment been made?
 - C. Does child have a medical diagnosis?
 - D. Does child have mental health diagnosis?
 - E. Is child currently on medication? If so why and what?
 - F. Is there a neurological diagnosis?
 - G. Is child up-to-date with dental care? Who sees the child for dental care?
 - H. Who will set up appointment with physician within the first 7 days of placement?
- 5. Siblings?** Are visits established between siblings separated by foster care, adoption and/or kinship care
- 6. Developmental level?**
 - A. Does child require educational interventions or special education?
 - B. Has child ages birth to 3 been seen by child development services?
 - C. What is name of last school attended?
 - D. Is there a current Individual Education Plan?
- 7. Is the child in therapy?** If yes, where? And with whom? How often is the child seen by therapist? What amount of time will be spent with Resource Parent to assist with the therapy at home?
- 8. Known or suspected dangerous behaviors?** Suicidal ideation; Gang affiliations; Lying and or stealing; sexual active; Involvement with law enforcement/Juvenile Justice System?
- 9. Safety Plan?** Ultimate placement with relative? Is there a religious preference? Does child have unusual habits? Likes? Dislikes?
- 10. What should the case worker bring with the child to your home?**
 - A. Medical history
 - B. Clothing: If needed a purchase order for clothing
 - C. Name of Guardian ad litem (anticipate a visit from GAL within first ten days of placement)
 - D. Date and time of first court hearing (It is your right to be there and you should attend)
 - E. Family history
 - F. Educational history
 - G. Favorite toy/ blanket (If available)
 - H. Date and time of Family Share meeting so you and birth parents can meet



Announcements

Attention Licensed Families:

You are urged to turn in mileage reimbursement requests within 30 days! Anything submitted after 30 days will not be accepted by the State.

Here are some tips that might help you avoid the deadline.

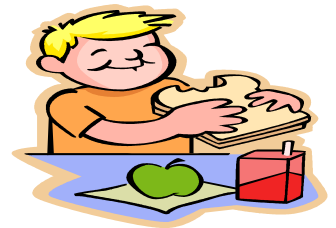
1. Submit requests routinely every two weeks.
2. Double check the request for accuracy. Make sure the dates, reason for mileage, and the mileage indicated for each trip is accurate. Make a dated copy for your records.
3. Think about the fastest, the most convenient and most consistent way you can submit your request. Faxing, snail mail, handing it to the caseworker, dropping it off at the district office? Get into a routine of submitting it the same way every time.
4. Notify your caseworker that you have submitted a request. Leaving a voicemail, texting, or emailing the worker works well. (Be cognizant about confidentiality. Remember to use the child's initials when communicating via electronically.)
5. Your way may not always be convenient for the case worker. Have a conversation with the caseworker to what communication style and submitting process best work best for them.

New Resource Family Newsletter

In July, The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) started a monthly newsletter. OCFS is hopeful that it will help improve the direct communication that transpires between the department and resource families. The Resource Family Newsletter can be found on the OCFS website at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cw/resource-parent-newsletter.html>

Attention Resource Parents:

All children in custody of the Department are categorically eligible for free breakfast and lunch in their school district. The resource parent does not have to fill out an application and report family income.



Save the Date for the Annual Adoption Tea at the Blaine House in Augusta



Are you a newly adoptive family? Did you finalize an adoption in the past 12 months? Are you about to adopt a child? If so AFFM would like you to consider attending a tea in honor of adoptive families at the Blaine House in Augusta November 7, 2013 from 2-3:30pm. Space is limited so it will be first call first served and by confirmation only. AFFM hopes to see you and your family there for this wonderful celebration of National and State Adoption Awareness Month this November!

FREE SKATING AT GREAT SKATES: 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students skate for FREE every Saturday from noon to 1pm during the school year. This hour is designed to introduce young skaters to the healthy and exciting activity of roller skating. For more information call Great Skates at 945-0202 or visit greatskates.net



Resource Family Support Groups Throughout Maine

Bangor: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets from 6:00-8:00pm the 3rd Monday of every month at 26 Downeast Circle (between Davis Road and Mt. Dessert Drive), Bangor. For more information please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 Please RSVP.

Belfast: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets the 4th Friday of the month at the Calvary Chapel Church in Belfast 147 Waldo Ave. in the Wentworth Building. Contact BraveFamilies@gmail.com to RSVP.

Biddeford: Foster/Adoptive Support. Meets from 9:30-11:00 am the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month. For more information please contact Meredith Crain at 283-4314. Please call before you come.

Caribou: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship parent support. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:30PM at Caribou Adult Education Building on Bennett Drive in between Caribou Rec and the gas station. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Dover-Foxcroft: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 2nd Tuesday of the month from 6PM-7:30PM at Mayo Regional Hospital, Borestone and Sebec conference room. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Ellsworth: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month from 5:30pm-7:00pm at the United Baptist Church, located at 28 Hancock St in Ellsworth. Child care is provided. Please contact Mindy Kane, Community Health and Counseling Services (CHCS), at 263-2014 or email MKane@chcs-me.org to reserve a spot for childcare. *Thanks to a local grant awarded to CHCS, AFFM is able to provide mileage reimbursement for families traveling more than 30 miles from home.*

Sherman: Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets the 1st Monday of the month at 7 Cow Team Road in Sherman. Please contact Debbie Irish at 365-7133 for more information. This group does not meet during the summer.

Houlton: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship support. Meets every 2nd Thursday of the month from 5:30pm-7:30pm at Houlton CHCS 2 Water Street. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Lewiston: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets the 4th Tuesday of the month 7:00pm-9:00pm at B Street Community Center 57 Birch Street Lewiston, ME. Call Deb Hallowell at 783-3291 or 344-5101 or Lisa Cates at 336-3760.

Machias: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 1st Friday of the month 5:30PM-7:00PM at Rose M. Gaffney Elementary School 15 Rose Gaffney Road, Machias. Childcare is provided. Please contact Mindy Kane, Community Health and Counseling Services, at 263-2014 or email MKane@chcs-me.org to reserve a spot for childcare. *Thanks to a local grant awarded to CHCS, AFFM is able to provide mileage more than 30 miles from home.*

Rockland: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every 3rd Monday of the month 5:30PM-7:00PM at Knox Center (Pen Bay Healthcare) 6 White Street, Rockland. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

Skowhegan: The group meets 5:30-8:00PM every second Wednesday of the month located at Skowhegan Federated Church 13 Island Avenue in Skowhegan. Childcare is provided. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP and to reserve a spot for childcare.

South Paris: Kinship Support. Meets 9:00AM-10:00AM every second Saturday of the month, unless noted. Meets at Deering Memorial Church, 39 Main Street, South Paris. Please RSVP to Shelley Newcomb at comb2599@roadrunner.com

South Portland: Kinship support. Meets at 4:30PM-6:30PM at 62 Darling Ave, South Portland. This group will meet every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Please contact Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025 to reserve childcare.

Turner/Hartford: NEW Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets every second Friday of the month 5:30-7:30PM at "A Bend in the Road" 235 Berry Road, Hartford. Please contact AFFM at 1-800-833-9786 to RSVP.

Westbrook: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. Meets 10:00AM-12PM at the Westbrook-Warren Congregational Church at 810 Main Street. Meets every 1st Wednesday of the month. Childcare is provided. Please contact Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025 to RSVP and reserve childcare.

York: Foster/Adoptive/Kinship. This group will meet every 2nd Thursday of the month 5:30PM-6:30PM at York Hospital. Please use the Hancock Entrance, group will be held in Ellis Conference Room (on your immediate left). Please RSVP to Meagan Stearns at meagan@affm.net or call (207) 478-8025.

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The National Foster Parent Association and Florida State Foster/Adoptive Parent Association are teaming up in the magical land of Florida!

**Join NFPA/FSFAPA at the conference, Launching Tomorrow's Dreams Today
June 5-8, 2014 at Caribe Royale in Orlando!**

Learn how the dreams of you and the children in your care can become a reality.



Visit www.nfpaonline.org for more information

