

Parenting Trauma

Trauma experienced by a child does not disappear when he or she enters your home. Here are some tips about trauma-informed parenting that will help the journey of healing in your home.

1. Relationships are vital to healing the ongoing trauma your child has faced. Children need a loving encounter with people that will not reject them and will be committed to them even on their worst days. By committing to healthy interventions, we can change the neurochemistry of the brain.
2. Allow children to experience grief and loss; this is important to letting them heal. Different experiences will trigger the **grief and loss cycle**. There may be lots of tears or misbehavior on this journey. Make time and space to listen to children placed in your home. This means plans, activities and expectations may go on hold as you allow your child to talk and experience emotions as needed.
3. Children who have faced trauma before being placed in your home may either be “acting in” or “acting out” (*The Connected Child, Dr. Purvis & Dr. Cross*).
 - Acting in (withdrawing, hiding, running away, getting depressed or sullen, or becoming unresponsive)
 - Acting Out (screaming, spitting, biting, hitting, or lying)
4. As a child becomes more comfortable in your home, they may become more comfortable expressing themselves and their emotions, therefore, may act out more.
5. After visitation with biological parents, build in time to stop at a park or do large muscle activities. This will give your child time to process and calm down from the emotional rollercoaster of seeing and leaving their parent again.
6. Keep a journal or use a calendar to document your child’s behavior and specific triggers to help you to monitor and develop strategies for their healing.
7. Holidays, special events, or simple ordinary things such as food or a scent can be triggers that remind them of their trauma.



Fostering and Adopting in Faith

8. When providing correction for your child, try to prevent your child escalating and becoming more dysregulated by remaining as playful and calm as you can.
9. When planning to go somewhere, be sure to leave a window of time.
Meltdowns can often happen before leaving because processing transition is difficult.
10. Intentionally providing food, water and activity throughout the day is essential.
For example, offer protein every two hours, fluids every two hours, activity breaks every hour or two.
11. 10/20/10 Quality Time Rule: 10 (10 minutes in the morning when they wake up; open up, nurturing), 20 (one-one during the day - let your child choose what those 20 minutes look like), 10 (bedtime).
12. Set realistic expectations for your child reaching age appropriate milestones and how you can help them move toward them. Children who've experienced trauma may demonstrate behaviors of children half their chronological age. Meet your child where he or she is at developmentally, not chronologically.
13. Establish responses to intrusive questions that might frequently be asked of you and/or your child about foster care/adoption. Equip your child to respond.
14. As your child develops, encourage him to find his voice in his experiences.
Respect the child's privacy in how his story is told.
15. As your child develops, she can develop new triggers or old ones can resurface as they experience new seasons of life. Examples include:
 - Breaking up with a boyfriend may trigger grief over loss of father
 - Introducing a new child into the family may trigger feelings of abandonment
 - A friend moving away may trigger the feeling of abandonment
16. Serve as an advocate for your child, not an adversary. Meeting the child's needs will do more for their healing than having the expectation that they will conform to your lifestyle and plans.
17. Communicate with your child's teachers and school about their school work and progress.
 - The book, [Help for Billy](#) could be a helpful resource for teachers of children who have faced trauma



18. Consider environmental influences that can help your child's progress.

If your child has sensory issues, what can be changed?

What sensory experiences are calming for you child?

19. Children who are adopted may be very interested in learning their biological history. Allow this to be an opportunity to learn together.

20. Explore other resources and trainings about parenting with attachment and providing trauma-informed care. Parenting a child who's experienced trauma requires a different kind of parenting.