

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

July/August 2020

N F A N P A

HOW CAN I EMPOWER CHILDREN WITH TWO FAMILIES TO EMBRACE THEIR OWN IDENTITY?

by Kristin Berry

Foster and adoptive families are far from the traditional family unit in many ways. The biggest difference is that our children come from two families. How do we help them embrace their own identity as they grow into adulthood?

We are a multiracial, multigenerational, multicultural family. We have our own identity as a family, and it is unique to us. It includes the things we laugh at, the movies we watch, our traditions, and our inside jokes. It includes a set of values and expectations we live by. This is a very important part of our identity, but it is not our entire identity.

In any family, two separate units join under one roof. In an adoptive family, each person brings a little piece of something else to the table. In our home, we are African, Scottish, Irish, German, and Italian. We have lived in trailers, apartments, large homes, and tiny homes. We have lived in rural areas, urban areas, and suburban areas. When we come together, each person brings his or her own history. Our identity is a compilation of all that makes us who we are. It is the label we put on ourselves.

All children are trying to find their place in the world. It is in our DNA to discover who we really are. For children who are adopted, the possibilities for identity are endless. All people tug and push and pull at the things that define us throughout life. My identity is different than it was when I was twenty, and it is different from when I was ten. Parents can support

children as they find and embrace their own identities. We can empower them to see value in themselves in all circumstances.

Here's how:

1. Ask. We empower our children by asking questions that help them think on their own. A simple question, such as "What do you think about that?" allows our children to value their own opinion. Asking "Why do you think that?" helps your child stretch their ability to think through things.
2. Listen. Listen to the answer even if it is not exactly what you want to hear. Listen even if it's not exactly who you are. If your child embraces the culture of their birth, listen. If they are walking, talking, dressing, or thinking like a group of people they identify with, listen. Be open as they find where they fit in.
3. Offer exposure to like-minded people. Especially in transracial adoptive families, exposure to people who are similar to our children is vital. Our children should see themselves reflected in the people around them. We can help by exposing our children to people who look and talk like them. If your child speaks a different first language, provide a place for them to use the language of their birth. If your child is from a rural area and you have moved to an urban area,



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.

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Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a \$10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Corinne@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JulyAug2020>

We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. True or False. These traditional disciplinary strategies (including sticker-charts, time-outs, demerits, detention, suspension, and expulsion) aren't very successful for the students to whom they are most often applied.
2. True or False. Research has clearly shown that such disciplinary actions actually increase the likelihood of further disciplinary measures and are related to higher drop-out rates, as well as lower academic achievement and even eventual juvenile justice involvement.
3. List four ways we can empower our kids.
4. Fill in the blank. If your child embraces the culture of their birth, _____.
5. Fill in the blanks. Childhood trauma is caused by any situation in which a child perceives that they are in an extremely _____, _____, _____ position.
6. What are three keys to healing childhood trauma?
7. True or False. Childhood trauma is one of the hardest things to recover from and one of the deepest wounds to heal.
8. What is the last step in the healing process and the one that is the hardest to come to by?
9. True or False? More often than not, the way people act in the first decade of adulthood can be pretty well attributed to how they were raised.
10. Fill in the blank. When _____ trauma happens to a person, the brain is physically altered and the biological processes in the body are affected.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

(Continued from page 1)

allow your child to spend time in the country.

4. Embrace them. Children learn self-empowerment when the adults in their lives embrace them. If the child loves science, embrace that. If the child is a social butterfly, embrace that. Let your child know you delight in them no matter what. Assure your child that no matter where they fit in society, they will always fit in your home and your family. A solid identity comes first from a solid foundation at home.

The most important thing you can do (if you're wondering what to do now) is start! Even if this has slipped off your radar in the past, or not even shown up, that's okay. Open your heart and mind. Listen and learn. And start today!

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<https://confessionsofanadoptiveparent.com/how-can-i-empower-children-with-two-families-to-embrace-their-own-identity/>

People Don't Outgrow the Effects of Childhood Trauma Just Because They Become Adults

by W.R. Cummings



Scrolling through Facebook this morning, I passed a picture someone had posted, which said, “Stop blaming your parents for how you turned out. You’re grown now. Your mistakes are your own. Grow up. Forgiveness is important.”

I think I understand where the creator of the post was coming from, but I also think they must’ve been very under-informed about what childhood trauma actually does to the brain. I’m sure the sentiment behind the statement was to encourage people to take responsibility for their own choices, to work hard to overcome obstacles, and to avoid leaning on emotional crutches.

However, I can’t help but wonder about the life of the person who wrote it.

Maybe they feel free to write those words because they never experienced trauma that rewired the way their brain processes emotion. Or maybe they felt justified because their own

children have made negative claims against them as a parent. Or, perhaps, they genuinely know people who take advantage of their sad stories so they think it applies to everyone who talks about childhood pain.

I don’t know, but I can tell you the post didn’t consider all the people who have legitimate, residual hurt from when they were kids.

More often than not, the way people act in the first decade of adulthood can be pretty well attributed to how they were raised. These behaviors include the positive habits our parents taught us in childhood (whether intentionally or inadvertently) and the negative habits. This isn’t even limited to negativity that resulted in trauma — just negative habits, in general.

For example...

— I don’t make household chores a part of my daily routine because I wasn’t really made to do chores when I was a kid. Am I angry with my parents about that? Nope. But it affected how I prioritize my life as an adult. Could I teach myself how to be more disciplined in that area? Yep. But it goes against the grain of what feels right to me.

— My dad isn’t very emotionally expressive because he grew up in a family that didn’t hug, say “I love you,” or really talk about their feelings.

— My mom struggles with self-worth because of messages that were sent to her in childhood.

— My best friend values financial security over relational security because she spent time in and out of foster care as a child.

— Another friend struggles with making healthy food choices because it wasn’t engrained in them as a child.

— A different friend feels a deep sense of shame and embarrassment whenever they don’t do what is “morally” right because of the church they were raised in.

I could go on and on, but the point is that we’re all affected by how we’re raised, and those effects don’t just go away when we turn eighteen. Sometimes they stick with us our entire lives, even after years of therapy and hard emotional work.

When a person’s childhood involves something so negatively impactful that it causes actual emotional trauma, there’s an even greater likelihood that the effects of it will be permanent or long-lasting.

But what qualifies as “trauma?” Is that just a word people use to overdramatize the parts of their lives they don’t like? In the world of psychology, trauma is generally defined as the emotional response the body goes through after someone is exposed to something that is deeply distressing. Not just inconvenient, bothersome, or scary.

Deeply. Distressing.

Oftentimes, when we think of childhood trauma, we think of the more “typical” traumas, such as being physically abused. However, trauma comes in many different forms and can vary in impact from one person to another. It might even

come from something that's only "moderately" distressing but happens consistently for a long period of time... because living in emergency-response mode for an extended period of time also causes the brain trauma.

For one person I know, the smell of marijuana triggers the emergency-trauma-response system in her brain. The smell reminds her of her mother, who severely neglected her as a child. Even after A LOT of therapy, and a lot of years in adulthood, the smell of weed tells her brain that it's time to go into survival mode.

For others, it's the slamming of a door. For some, it's being given the silent treatment. For others, it's being afraid of running out of food.

When true trauma happens to a person, the brain is physically altered and the biological processes in the body are affected. This isn't just a psychological theory. It's been proven in study after study of brain imaging done on those who've experienced traumatic events.

The fear center of the brain (the "amygdala") becomes overstimulated by the trauma, which causes the brain to think it should be afraid all of the time, even when not in danger. In turn, the prefrontal cortex of the brain becomes less able to function properly, which steals the ability to make logical decisions, control impulses, and organize thoughts. Over the course of time, the part of the brain that controls emotions becomes dysregulated, which means the person might feel emotions too strongly, not strongly enough, too often, not often enough, or at inappropriate times.

The brain can even develop scars after experiencing trauma. These scars exist along the neural pathways of the brain, which prevents messages from getting from one place to another. Neural pathways are sort of like the "roads" of the brain, while neurons are like the "cars" that transport messages. When the "road" becomes damaged—maybe sexual abuse in childhood caused the collapse of a massive bridge—then the road is no longer drivable by a neuron/car. Alternative routes, or detours, can be created over time with certain types of therapy, but the road itself can never actually be repaired.

This means that even after a person has reached adulthood and starts learning how to cope with their trauma, they'll still have damaged pathways in their brain for the rest of their life. There will always be road blocks.

When you think of it that way, it doesn't really make sense to say, "Stop blaming your parents for how you turned out. You're grown now."

Be understanding of how much deeper someone's story is than what you see on the surface. You have no idea how well they're doing, in spite of the hand they were dealt.

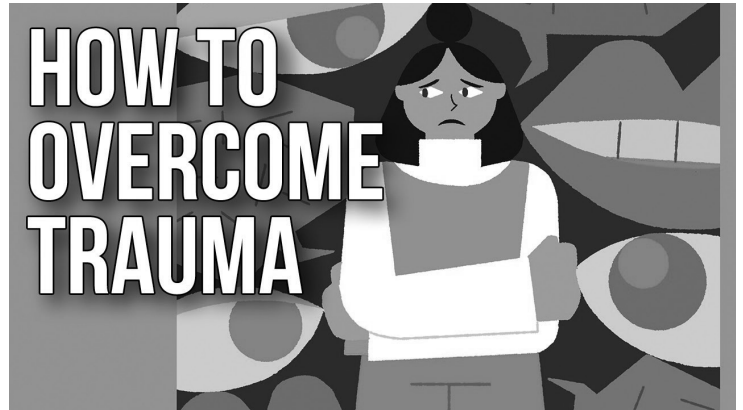
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<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/childhood-behavioral/2020/02/people-dont-outgrow-the-effects-of-childhood-trauma-just-because-they-become-adults/#.XioVnZ0js0.facebook>

Healing from Childhood Trauma: It's not impossible. It's just hard.

Healing from childhood trauma is hard, but it starts with understanding it.

by *E.B. Johnson*



When you experience childhood trauma, your life and your soul are altered forever. Those who suffer loss, abuse or neglect early-on in life can often suffer from serious psychological and emotional disorders for decades to come, changing who they are and destroying their ability to foster caring and nurturing relationships even decades after the traumatic event.

Childhood trauma holds us back and bricks up our potential in truly unimaginable ways. When our hearts are damaged at such critical developmental stages, it makes it easy to put up walls and harder to find the healing that we need.

Healing the harms and injuries of our childhood is one the hardest things we can do, but it's necessary for us to create the life we want. If you want to get over the past, you have to start by facing it — bravely and one step at a time.

Coming to an understanding.

If you want to resolve your childhood trauma, you first need to understand it. Trauma can generate some momentous emotions, and unless we learn how to process these emotions, we will continue to repeat the same damaging patters that keep us stuck and hurting. Refusing to face the traumas of our childhood causes them to fester like a sore; staying in our bodies as unconscious energy that wrecks everything from our employment prospects to our romantic relationships.

Healing trauma starts with understanding it and the vast array of emotions that can come along with it. When you've started to understand your trauma and how it affects you, you can start implementing change — but not before then.

What is childhood trauma?

Childhood trauma is caused by any situation in which a child perceives that they are in an extremely frightening, dangerous or overwhelming position.

Traumatic events cause children to feel helpless and scared

in a way that is far beyond their mental and emotional processing. These situations can occur in one-off events like natural disasters and injuries — or they could occur from regular instances of physical, sexual and verbal abuse. All these events can bring on symptoms of emotional and psychological trauma, and all of these events can haunt children well into their adult lives.

The types of childhood trauma.

Childhood trauma can look different for everyone, but there are some core events that seem to have the most lasting effect on those of us who are unfortunate enough to experience them.

- Physical abuse — This occurs when someone (anyone) who has authority over you uses it to injure you physically. This can include cuts, bruises, scratches, burns, broken bones and even the loss of consciousness.
- Physical neglect — When our caregivers fail to give us the physical resources we need to survive (like food, clothing or a place to live) this is physical neglect.
- Emotional abuse — We don't typically think of emotional manipulation as abuse, but it is. When someone intentionally causes an injury to our dignity or emotional integrity, they are abusing you. Emotional abuse most often occurs in the form of threats, shaming, scapegoating and even confinement or driving you to hurt yourself.
- Sexual abuse — This is one of the most damaging forms of abuse and sadly one of the most common when it comes to childhood trauma. It is estimated by The National Center for Victims of Crime that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys will be the victim of childhood sexual abuse in their lifetime, but these numbers are generally assumed to be higher due to the low rate of reporting.
- Loss of a caregiver — Losing a parent or caregiver is another devastating event in any child's life. Even when you are hardly old enough to remember it, the effects are far-reaching. Losing a parent is hard to understand and makes us vulnerable in ways we do not always realize.
- Emotional neglect — Emotional neglect is a big one, but also one of the hardest to realize and accept as adults. If your caregiver fails to give you the nurturing and connection you need to thrive, this is emotional neglect.
- Natural disasters — Living through a natural disaster is traumatic for everyone, but these events are especially traumatic with young, developing children. Fires, floods and hurricanes cause trauma in a different and unexpected ways.

Trauma doesn't discriminate, it can happen to anyone at any time, but it's especially damaging when it occurs during our childhood.

The haunting symptoms of childhood trauma.

Like any event that has an impact on our lives, childhood trauma can manifest a number of symptoms in a child that can follow them into their adulthood. If you are someone that has experienced trauma during your youthful years, you might still experience:

- Depression
- Dissociation
- Anxiety
- Aggression / Anger issues
- Shock, denial, confusion
- Racing heartbeat
- Lack of focus
- Muscle Tension
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Sleep problems
- Mysterious aches and pains

The effects of childhood trauma on our adult lives.

Decades of research has shown what many of us have known all along: childhood trauma has negative, long-lasting effects on our emotional, psychological and even our physiological wellbeing.

Childhood trauma has been associated with various forms of emotion dysregulation as well as stress-reactivity, which is believed to be one of the links between childhood trauma and physiological disorders. Those who experienced emotionally abusive environments growing up are more likely to show stronger reactivity to stress and they also show more interpersonal problems as adults.

These effects manifest themselves in strange ways throughout our adult lives no matter how much time and space may separate us from the event. Learning how to recognize these manifestations of childhood issues is the core of our healing, but they can also be uncomfortable to face.

- Passive-aggressive behavior — Adult survivors of childhood trauma usually carry a lot of anger that they don't know how to deal with. Rather than confront and deal with these painful emotions honestly, they bury them, resorting in passive-aggressive behavior that can isolate them and destroy important relationships. These are the people who often strike out with sarcasm they call a joke or "mistakes" they claim were innocent. They don't feel comfortable showing their anger because they don't know what will happen if they do. So, they act out passively-aggressively instead, protecting their already patched-up hearts in a self-defeating way.
- Attachment disorders — Those who are traumatised between 6 months and three years of age are more prone

to have trouble forming healthy attachments with the people that they care for. Usually, this condition is referred to as RAD or reactive attachment disorder, which affects your ability to form adequate social relationships. RAD can impact everything from your mood to your behavior. It also makes it hard for those suffering from it to trust others.

- Lowered cognitive ability — When children are regularly abused or neglected, they often develop cognitive problems. This can include memory problems, poor verbal skills and problems focusing or concentrating on tasks.
- Inconsistent self-concept — Having an inconsistent self-concept means that you don't know how to interpret the thoughts and feelings you have about yourself. Being unable to distinguish these emotions and perceptions makes you see yourself in a distorted view or possibly as “incompatible” with certain groups of people.
- Altered states of consciousness — If childhood trauma repeats over many years, it can force children (and even some adults) into a dissociative state. As children, we can't recognize different states of consciousness, so we aren't able to stop ourselves from slipping into them. These altered states of reality cause us to lose touch with our authentic selves and the things that bring value into our lives. Even years later, we rely on these delusional states to help us survive when the going gets tough.
- Poor behavioral control — Chances are that if you're an impulsive adult, you've experienced some type of trauma in your childhood. Those who experience trauma in their youth often have a hard time controlling their behavior. They do whatever they feel like in the present moment because they have never learned to do otherwise. For many, it is the only way they know how to get the attention they were otherwise denied.
- Perpetual victimhood — When we're children, it's impossible for us to understand why bad things are happening. For that reason, many of us often revert to absurd or even illogical reasoning to explain for the negative events in our life and this carries on into our adulthood. Being abused or emotionally neglected forces us to form our identities in a state of victimhood and when that happens it becomes hard to see yourself as someone who has any power over their own life.

Cultivating acceptance.

Healing our childhood wounds is hard, but it's possible. Once we've come to understand our childhood traumas and they form they took, it's then time to accept them for what they are and how they've impacted us.

There are three keys to accepting your childhood trauma:

Key 1: Explore your self-knowledge.

All acceptance begins with self-knowledge. Accept your emotions and where you are right now in this moment. If you're feeling sad or low or in pain, take a step back and get to the root of those problems and where they come from. Sit in a quiet space and allow yourself to be physically in your body in the present, no matter how painful that might be.

Learning how to accept our trauma is an uphill battle that can only be won by getting comfortable with it. Spend a few moments alone with your trauma each day and get to know her and the person she's made out of you.

Key 2: See things for what they really are.

We invest so much time and energy into seeing things as we want them to be, that we lose touch the reality of how they actually are. Our imaginations can carry us away and that's especially true when it comes to dealing with our childhood traumas. If you really want to accept the past and how it's shaped your future, you have to start seeing things for what they are, rather than what you wish they were.

Key 3: Don't confuse acceptance with preference.

Just because you accept something does not mean you prefer it or even support it. We often fight off acceptance because it feels a bit like “giving in”. It's important to be clear with yourself that you're not endorsing something by accepting it, you're simply saying “This happened. Let's move on.”

When bad things happen to us, we can almost feel a “need” to be uneasy with ourselves and the way things are. It proves a point and makes us feel as though we've regained some of our power over the hurts of the past. The problem is, though, that this leaves us weak and vulnerable and it sets us up for greater delusion and injury in the future.

If you want to accept who you are and where you're at, you have to realize that acceptance isn't giving in. It's simply allowing things to be as they are, without imagining that you have a right or a responsibility attached to controlling it or changing how it might have been otherwise.

The 10 best ways to heal from childhood trauma.



Once you've identified your trauma and started down the road to acceptance you can begin to heal your childhood hurts, but it's a brutal journey that can scourge the soul.

There's no one-size-fits all solution for coming back from trauma, but there are solid techniques that can help you create the space you need to get better. Try these 10 habits to come back from the brink and take your life back from the traumas of your childhood.

1. Distance yourself from toxic people.

If you've identified trauma in your life and have started the healing process, it's imperative that you distance yourself from the toxic people in your life that could hinder this process.

Survivors of trauma need to get away from anyone who creates more of the stress and disharmony they are already trying to escape.

Healing can't take place in a turbulent environment, it needs peace and quiet to grow. Those who lie, cheat, steal or otherwise manipulate and blame are toxic for your development and poisonous to your sense of self.

One of the most important thing a survivor can learn is that you are allowed to remove yourself from anyone who stresses you out — no apologies needed. Cut them free before they do even more damage to your sense of self and wellbeing.

2. Learn self-regulation and stress-reduction techniques.

Stress has a funny way of forcing us back into the coping mechanisms and the negative behaviors we develop as damaged children. By learning simple techniques likes mindful breathing, relaxation and meditation we can actually develop the distress tolerance skills we need to undo our traumatic pasts and learn how to stay calm with things push us to the brink.

Simple yoga and meditation can do wonders when it comes to battling depression, anxiety or feelings of hopelessness. While they're not a cure all, they can help us recenter and refocus on the things we need to do to feel better.

3. Seek out support.

Sometimes, it just isn't possible to heal from the trauma of your past alone. It's common for trauma survivors to become isolated, but this isolation is actually counter-productive to your healing. If you really want to find your way back to harmony, start by seeking out support and get the strength you need to put the pieces back together.

Connecting with others doesn't mean you have to talk about the things that happened in your past (though that is often one of the most healing things we can do). It simply means staying engaged in the normal day-to-day activities that keep us plugged in and feeling like we're an active and engaged part of this world.

4. Get more sleep

There's not much that a good night or two of decent sleep won't cure. Adult and children survivors of trauma often have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. Managing your sleep routine is crucial for healing the hurts of your past, however.

5. Tighten up your diet.

There are some really striking relations between our neurobiological states and the ways we deal with and process stress. When we're stressed or dealing with painful traumas, it actually generates an inflammatory response in our bodies not unlike the ones that occur when we suffer a sports injury.

This inflammation can be addressed by tightening up your diet and focusing on a healthy balance of nutrients that gives your brain the fuel it needs to get past the pain. When we feel uncomfortable or in pain, it can impact our mood and the way we deal with people and situations in our lives. Minimize your mood swings and symptoms of depression by giving yourself a well-balanced diet.

6. Allow yourself to get close to people.

Trauma forces us into survival mode, a suspended state of animation that monopolizes and uses up all our energy. When you're in survival mode it's hard — if not impossible — to get close to people. Experiencing trauma before the age of 10 makes you prone to isolating yourself and cutting of the relationships that give you the love you so desperately need.

Nothing melts shame faster than allowing the full weight of your heart to be seen by another person.

You can counteract this behavioral coping mechanism by allowing yourself to be vulnerable and loving with others. Find a small handful of friends (or a lover) and double down on your connection with them.

When you allow yourself to be loved and you give love in return, you send the message to your inner child that your pain is in the past and you are worthwhile as you are. Give the love you need in your life to the right people and you'll see it returned tenfold to you.

7. Realize you're safe now.

Distanced from the traumatic events and people of our pasts, we have to remind our inner child that they are no longer in danger.

Unresolved trauma leaves us in a constant state of "fight or flight". This state can lead to longterm physical issues and is one of the contributing factors of PTSD. Childhood trauma has such a dramatic impact on our continued physical health and the longer we refuse to address it, the worse those effects become.

Spend some time alone with your inner child and spend some time comforting her. Reassure her that she had no part to play in the events that happened and let her know that she's safe now in your loving care.

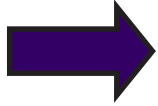
Until we resolve the hurts sustained by the broken child that lives inside of all of us, we cannot move forward to blossom into the powerful adults we were meant to be. Reclaim your power by realizing that you're safe now from the things that once hurt you so deeply.

(Continued on page 10)

Upcoming In-Service Trainings

Register online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Inservice2020>

or call the office at 402.476.2273 or 800.257.0176



Building & Empowering Family Connections

Presented by Amy Schnacker, TBRI Practitioner, Occupational Therapist, Foster/Adoptive Parent

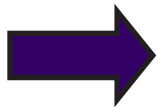
Saturday August 8, 2020 (NEW DATE)
9:00am-4:00pm
(lunch on your own)

Harvest Christian Fellowship
1501 South Dewey
North Platte, NE

This training is for you if...

- Your child has outbursts of emotion
- Your child can get out of hand and out of control
- You would like to see growth and deeper connection in your home
- Your child has experienced trauma and you would like to find strategies to parent more effectively
- Traditional Parenting strategies are not working for your child

You will learn how to handle challenging behaviors using the three principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) and understand the meaning behind the behaviors, brain chemistry, and how to help heal and connect with your child.



Saturday, August 29, 2020 (NEW DATE)
Time 9:00am—4:00pm
(lunch on your own)

St Paul Lutheran Church
1515 South Harrison Ave, Garden Room
Grand Island, NE

Do you know what to do and say when a child has some challenging behaviors?
Attend this *FLIP IT* training!

It explains *FLIP IT*'s four simple steps for transforming challenging behavior in young children:

- F – Feelings
- L – Limits
- I – Inquiries
- P – Prompts

This straight forward and practical approach to addressing behaviors can help children learn about their feelings and gain self-control.

Instructor—Terry Robinson
 Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
 Central Service Area Resource Family Consultant

Sponsored by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Facilitated by Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association





What beautiful weather we are having this summer. A chance to get outdoors and do fun activities with our children. With the uncertainty of what lies ahead with Covid-19, I have included a few articles on how our children are dealing with Social Distancing. My hope is for school to open on time and give our kids back a sense of normalcy. In the meantime, are you taking care of your needs? If you need some adult conversation feel free to join our Tuesday Night Faces Chat. It's a great way to network with other foster parents. Also please check out our Facebook page, we are always adding information on all foster care related topics. If you want to catch a great in-service, check out Flip-It coming soon to the central service area. Hope you all have a great summer!

*Tammy Welker RFC
Editor of Newsletter &
Social Media.*

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

As Nebraska is opening up with changes due to COVID please contact the RFC in your area to see when support groups will be back up and running or continuing with an online support. Registration is required when meeting in person.

CONTACT A RESOURCE FAMILY CONSULTANT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Jolie Camden (Panhandle Area): 308-672-3658

- Scottsbluff • Chadron

Tammy Welker: 402-989-2197

- Columbus

Terry Robinson (Central): 402-460-7296

- One on one support or if you would like one started in your area, please contact

Robbi Blume: 402-853-1091

- FACES-Our online support group. Meets Tuesday night at 9:00 pm Central Time

NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176

- Parenting Across Color Lines in Lincoln

NO LONGER FOSTERING? WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Foster parenting is HARD! It takes a special person to care for hurting children. Many of you have decided to no longer provide foster care. We are interested to learn about families leaving foster care and the reasons behind their decision. This information can assist us to advocate for future policies to support foster families. If you are a former foster parent, please take a moment to provide feedback on your foster care experience.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nfapaexitsurvey>

(Continued from page 7)

8. Find a trauma specialist.

Facing and resolving the pain of the past is not something that we can always do alone and it's not something that can be managed simply with the help of a few good friends.

Sometimes, it's necessary to find a specialist when dealing with childhood trauma; but it's important to make sure you're finding the right person to help you resolve past issues.

Trauma symptoms vary from case to case and as such need to be assessed by qualified and experienced trauma professionals. Finding a therapist who has experience treating trauma like yours can take time, but cognitive-behavioral therapists and EMDR professionals are a good place to start.

Take your time and don't rush into anything that doesn't feel right. A professional can help you get to the root of your problems, but you need to be ready to open up and need to know what direction you want to head in.

Healing is hard but living eternally in pain is harder. If you think you need more serious help, reach out for it.

9. Find an experienced medical specialist.

Considering the wide array of physical symptoms that come alongside childhood trauma, it's crucial that you also find a medical doctor that can help you with your physical healing as well as your mental and emotional healing.

While a therapist might be able to send your thoughts in the right direction, a medical professional will help you get your body going in the right direction which can make the healing that much easier. A functional medical provider will be able to evaluate your health as a whole and will work like an investigator to piece together the puzzle and identify the missing pieces that trigger your emotional and physical imbalances.

Doctors can help us save time and money when it comes to resolving our childhood traumas by pointing us in an exact direction of healing. If you don't know where to begin, a trusted medical professional can give you the right tests and treatment methods you need to get back on top of things.

When you feel better physically, you have more strength to engage in the mental and emotional war of healing and resolution. This puts our overall wellness in clearer focus and makes our efforts to heal more effective and less costly in the long run.

10. Get honest about how you're surviving.

Stop and take an honest look at your life as it stands right now in this moment. Allow yourself to recognize all the ways you have attempted to keep yourself safe and be brutally honest in recognizing all the coping mechanisms you've built up over the years.

Notice what mechanisms you used to get through your childhood and analyze their value in your life today. Do they still fit you and the goals that you have for your life? If they no

longer serve you, then chances are they're taking away from the person that you could become.

Maybe you use anger, aggression and intimidation as a means to control the people around you, or maybe you're so untrusting of others that you've developed a self-reliance that is self-destructive at its core.

However it is you've managed to survive all these years, take a good hard look and don't be afraid to be brutally honest. The truth will out, whether you like it or not. The sooner you open up to it, the easier the going will be.

BONUS: A 9-Step Process for Healing Childhood Trauma

If you still don't know where to begin your healing, then don't worry. You're not alone. Childhood trauma is complex in nature and the healing it requires is even more complex. Understand that this journey takes time and there will be missteps along the way. When you feel strong enough to face the journey, start with this 9-step healing process.

Remember: *Everyone's trauma is different and everyone's healing happens in different stages and at different ages. Be patient with yourself and drop any of these steps which don't serve your process.*

Step 1: Get grounded.

To engage in any meaningful healing, you need to be present in the here and now. Do that by starting out in a quiet place. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Take several deep breaths and pay close attention to your body. Squeeze and release your muscles, a few groups at a time. Feel the ground beneath you and the way your body moves with your breath. Imagine, then, a solid column of energy travelling all the way down your spine and into the center of the earth. Be in your body and be in the moment. When you're there, move to step 2.

Step 2: Recall the trauma.

Starting small, recall an event or situation in your life that left you feeling very vulnerable or upset. Review what happened in as much detail as possible and imagine that you are back in that time and place. Experience it again with all your senses and open yourself up to the tremendous honesty of the emotions it elicits from you. When you feel the emotions coming to head, move on to the next step.

Step 3: Allow yourself to feel it.

Problems arise from our emotions because we don't allow ourselves to feel the unpleasant ones. We shut them off like a spigot, but the problem is they never stop flowing. The pressure builds and builds until the tap flies off and torrent comes spraying out. If you want to heal, you have to feel.

Continue breathing deeply and spend another moment or two in quiet relaxation as the feelings start to come. As the tension builds, scan your body for signs of sensation and notice the way the emotions bubble up inside of you. Your

body might respond with tingling, tightness or pain; each of these sensations are valuable for the insight they provide you.

Explore each one of these sensations and silently describe them to yourself in as much detail as you can when they occur. Once you feel comfortable with these feelings and sensations, move on to step number 4.

Step 4: Give your emotions name.

Start to associate your emotions with the sensations you feel by giving name to your emotions. If there is tightness in your chest caused by anxiety, say it. If there is heat that travels up your neck into your face because of anger, state it and say so pointedly.

Giving a name to your emotions and the sensations they bring up gives you a greater sense of experience and a deeper knowledge and understanding of self and how you react to pain, pressure and stress.

Step 5: Love your feelings.

Mindfully healing from trauma means fully accepting everything we feel and loving our emotions (even the negative ones). To feel is to be human and to be human is a gift. Whether it's your conscious mind at work or your unconscious mind in the moment, tell yourself, "I love myself for feeling sad/angry/anxious/etc."

Do this with every emotion you feel, but do it especially with the hard ones. Only when you learn how to love every facet of yourself (emotions included) will you learn how to accept the trauma and detach yourself from it.

Step 6: Feel and experience it.

Sit with your emotions and all their unpleasant sensations and let the feelings ebb and flow through you as they will. Don't try to hide them and don't try to stop them. Let them be in the moment with you and watch them carefully as they pass by.

Let your body respond the way it needs to and don't be afraid to cry or scream or let yourself collapse in a puddle of tears if that's where they take you. Expressing your emotions in a productive way is the key to getting them moving inside you. Once your emotions have had their time, move on to step 7, but make sure you're ready and make sure you've given your feelings all the time they need.

Step 7: Receive the message.

Our emotions can give us invaluable insight into the root of our traumas and negative patterns. Rather than assuming you get nothing from the feelings that make you uncomfortable, ask yourself, "What is this emotion trying to say to me?" Free writing is often one of the best ways to get to the root of our emotions, but all that matters is that we hear the messages they have for us. You can uncover this wisdom in any way that works for you, just make sure the meanings are clear.

Step 8: Share your experience.

After you've spent some time with your emotions and places that they stem from, it can be helpful to open up about your experience with someone that you trust.

If you feel like you're ready, open up with your partner or a close friend about the traumatic events of your past that trouble you today. Describe what happened when the incident occurred and openly explain how you felt and how you reacted.

Talking or writing about our painful pasts is an important step in the healing process. You can also write letters (that you don't have to send) to the people that hurt you and remove toxic emotions from your system by shifting the blame back to where it belongs.

Step 9: Let it go.

Letting go of our childhood traumas is the last step in the healing process and the one that is the hardest to come to. When you've spent enough time getting familiar with your hurts and the emotions they trigger, you can start letting go of the pain by visualizing an exclusion of the negative energy or by performing a ritual of release that allows you to move on.

Burn the letter that you wrote to your original offender, or cast off the trauma by casting a symbolic item into the sea. Resolution is an important step in the healing process, but we often never get resolution from perpetrators of childhood trauma. Give yourself your own resolution by symbolically cutting ties to the negative events and emotions that keep you shackled to your past.

Putting it all together...

Childhood trauma is one of the hardest things to recover from and one of the deepest wounds to heal. When we are touched by danger and loss of self-sovereignty as a child, it haunts us into our adulthood and the relationships we rely on for happiness and fulfillment.

Minimize the impact of childhood trauma by learning how to understand the ways in which trauma has affected your life. When you have come to intimately understand those traumas and the way they've impacted you, you'll be able to accept those events and the emotions they elicit for what they are: a survival response to a situation you had no control over.

The things that occur in our childhoods shape us forever, but we can minimize their effects by taking an active stake in our own healing. Reclaim your power by taking back responsibility for your life and accepting that the perpetrators of your past have no power over you anymore. That lonely, broken child inside is safe now, but she needs to be reminded from time to time

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<https://medium.com/lady-vivra/healing-from-childhood-trauma-7f5b979a2631>

School Discipline Is Trauma-Insensitive and Trauma-Uninformed

Why change is needed to meet the needs of students exposed to trauma



by J. Stuart Ablon Ph.D.

I was asked to write a blog post about a recent trend in education for K-12. Talk that I find either exciting or concerning. I decided to write about a topic that is both exciting and concerning: the impact of trauma on learning and behavior. I've re-created that blog post below.

First the exciting part:

These days, many educators are being trained to understand the impact of chronic stress and trauma on students' development, behavior, and learning. Schools everywhere are devoting significant professional development time to this topic and prioritizing being "trauma-informed" or "trauma-sensitive." Thankfully, as a result, educators have far more empathy for how chronic stress and trauma can derail learning and be a primary cause of disruptive behavior in the classroom.

Now the concerning part:

These same schools often still rely heavily on punitive school disciplinary strategies. I recall visiting a school recently where the leadership proudly described their trauma-informed training and then proceeded to show me examples of the behavior contracts they use with their students. These traditional disciplinary strategies (including sticker-charts, time-outs, demerits, detention, suspension, and expulsion) aren't very successful for the students to whom they are most often applied. Research has clearly shown that such disciplinary actions actually increase the likelihood of further disciplinary measures and are related to higher drop-out rates, as well as lower academic achievement and even eventual juvenile justice involvement (APA, 2008). And to whom are they most often applied? Sadly, to the most at-risk, misunderstood, and marginalized students, including those with histories of trauma and exposure to chronic stress. Students who exhibit challenging behavior are often the students with trauma histories because being exposed to chronic stress or trauma delays brain development, causing lags in skill development which in turn result in challenging behaviors. As a direct result of their trauma, many of these students struggle with skills like flexibility, frustration tolerance, and problem-solving.

They don't lack the will to behave well; they lack the skills to behave well. No wonder traditional school discipline doesn't work with traumatized students: motivational strategies don't teach students the neurocognitive skills they lack.

Even more concerning:

Not only do punitive interventions not work with traumatized students, they can do developmental damage and make matters worse. Nowhere in the trauma-informed practice literature have I seen anyone advocate for the use of power and control to manipulate a traumatized student's behavior. Using behavior charts and rewards and consequences is doing just that. It is leveraging a power differential to increase compliance. Put more simply, traditional school discipline revolves around rewarding students when they do what we want and revoking privileges when they don't: a toxic dynamic that many traumatized kids are already all too familiar with in their past relationships with adults. In other words, traditional school disciplinary strategies are about as trauma-uninformed and trauma-insensitive as it gets!

There are additional side-effects of this vicious cycle of chronic stress and punitive discipline (Ablon & Pollastri, 2018). When punitive discipline is ineffective, it adds more stress, which further delays skill development, which results in escalating behavior, which is then often met by raising the stakes with even more punitive discipline. Systems of escalating consequences are sometimes called "progressive discipline." But this is a misnomer: when it comes to curbing challenging behavior, those systems are anything but progressive. In fact, I like to refer to them as "progressive dysregulation," since both students and educators become increasingly dysregulated, with dire consequences for everyone, including the teachers. Dealing with challenging behavior in the classroom is one of the biggest sources of stress for educators; it drives talented, young teachers out of the profession just when we need them most.

Thankfully there is still good news.

We have the power to interrupt this cycle of chronic stress and trauma. We don't have to respond to challenging behavior with punitive discipline. Proven alternatives exist. Instead of adding stress that further delays skills and escalates behavior, we can buffer stress, build skills, and reduce challenging behavior in a truly trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive way (Perry & Ablon, 2019). Effective alternatives, such as Collaborative Problem Solving and restorative practices, are relational forms of discipline that do not revolve around the use of power and control.

Schools represent a remarkable opportunity to help our most vulnerable, traumatized kids. Students spend the majority of their waking hours—the majority of their youth—surrounded by trained professionals who are experts in helping kids build skills. So, let's harness that opportunity and turn trauma-informed principles into concrete, actionable strategies that transform school discipline.

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<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changeable/202001/school-discipline-is-trauma-insensitive-and-trauma-uninformed?eml>

How Can I Help My Child Process The Hard Parts Of Their Story?

by Mike Berry

At some point or another, children with a trauma history will begin to recount, remember, or talk about the hard parts of their story. How do we help them process through this? Here are some steps...

On an unseasonably warm night in February last year, we sat on our front porch with our children gathered around. Our objective was to assemble a new wagon we had just bought for our new farm (yes, we bought a farm!). The excitement was palpable because this wagon would carry our kids' toys, pets, neighborhood friends, and a few of their odd inventions.

We laughed together as we tried to stay on track with the assembly directions. We stopped several times to locate critical parts of the wagon, but mostly we had fun on a rare opportunity to be outside in Indiana in the winter without dressing head to toe in thermals. The conversation bounced from topic to topic: What kind of animals will we have on our new farm? Will everyone get their own room? What will the new school be like?

At one point we began talking about adoption (which is not an abnormal conversation since all our children have been adopted). Suddenly, without warning, one of our kids blurted out, "I don't give a sh— about my birth mom." Everyone froze. Our other kids glanced quickly at us to see our reaction. We motioned subtly for them to head inside as we sat down on the front steps next to our solemn child. We asked lovingly what was going on, and then we listened. We did the best we could to help him process.

So how do we help our children process these hard, deeply wounding parts of their story? Here's what we've learned to do:

1. Give permission. You must give your child permission to feel, express, and share openly their thoughts and deep feelings about their tremendous loss. When you and I have faced deep grieving moments in our lives, we process with friends and family. We must give our kiddos permission to do the same.
2. Be transparent and vulnerable. We must allow our children to share openly and not interrupt them or redirect them (yet). A dear friend of ours has been walking through this with her daughter. Recently their therapist told her to let her daughter share her story (the good, bad, and ugly) and to do nothing but listen to everything she shares. No response. No counter. Nothing.

This is a hard thing to do. Why? Because when she says, "I'm worthless," you want to jump in and say, "Oh no, sweetie, you are worth more than I could ever say!" When she says, "Nobody loves me. How could anyone love me?" you want to interrupt and tell her how much you love her. You need to let her share

openly without interruption. There will be a moment when you can say all these loving things in response to her broken heart, but she must be permitted to dump every emotion out first. Your constant presence and your willingness to listen will build her trust in you.

3. Be authentic. Please be real with your child. Don't shame them for their colorful language or display of emotion. Don't try to soften the blow to your own system. Just listen. As people of faith, we remember that Jesus doesn't respond with shock to human brokenness. Jesus allowed human beings to grieve deeply in their sorrow. He loved people in a radical way that threatened some religious leaders. He charged into the mess of human existence without flinching. Be silent, listen, learn, give permission, and allow your child to be free with their words and expression.
4. Be honest. Your child's hard storylines may be difficult for you to grasp. You deplore the hardships they've faced. Because of this, you may want to soften the blow by skirting around the truth when they ask. Do not do this. Don't eliminate details, thinking you're protecting their heart. They are going to find out sometime anyway, especially with access to the internet. Honest questions from your children deserve honest answers.
5. Be compassionate. Your compassion is an ointment in the wounds of your child. Your presence with them as they grieve slowly puts the broken pieces of their soul back together.
6. Remain open. Be open to having this conversation as much as your children want to, always, for as long as it takes. These hard storylines are embedded deep within them. The images, the memories, the fear, the trauma they've gone through may never go away. They may have to learn to live in spite of it, and that may mean they need to continue talking about it with you for a very long time. It can be exhausting, but your willingness to listen is critical.

There's a reason we use the word "journey" so often in our posts, on our podcast, and in classes we teach. Adoption is a journey, not a destination. Navigating the hard parts of your child's story with them is a journey. You may never arrive at a place where there is no more pain, no more grief or deep sorrow (for you or your child). Be ready and willing to walk this messy road for as long as it takes.

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<https://confessionsofanaadoptiveparent.com/how-can-i-help-my-child-process-the-hard-parts-of-their-story/>



‘What happens to my girl when society realizes it’s not ‘cute’ anymore? How do I make people see the beauty I see?’: Mom to daughter with autism urges us to challenge our idea of beauty

by Dr. Lisa Peña

“When she was born, she breathed loudly like an old man with a light snore. It was weird but so cute.

When she was 1, she didn’t walk. Instead, she clapped and begged to be held by wiggling her chubby fingers in the air.

When she was 2, she didn’t talk. Instead, she said one word, ‘Hi,’ over and over and over and over. I was worried, but most agreed it was so cute.

When she was 3, she started having problems with sleep. She would wake up at all hours of the night and stumble in the dark with her rolling curls and sleepy eyes.

When she was 4, she started to become impulsive, particularly when eating. She would stuff food in her mouth quickly and messily, which meant food would usually end up in her hair, eyebrows, hands, and thighs. Gosh, it was so cute.

When she was 5, she began biting her nails, chewing her hair, and nibbling on things that should not be nibbled on. Regardless, she was so cute.

When she was 6, she was diagnosed with autism. Although everyone agreed, she was still so cute, now that sentiment was followed by a smile of pity with, ‘What a shame,’ written all over their faces.

When she was 7, she began urinating on herself as an escape mechanism from learning activities. Her momma didn’t share that with anyone. In public, at parties, with family and friends, they didn’t see any of that themselves because she was so cute.

When she was 8, she began disrobing when she was anxious or overwhelmed. Her momma didn’t share that with anyone. In public, at parties, with family and friends, they didn’t see any of that themselves because she was so cute.

When she was 9, she started to enjoy dancing, but the uninhibited I-don’t-give-a-crap-who-is-watching kind of dancing. Her body moved differently, awkward but so cute.

When she was 10, she went back to public school. Despite the fact she cannot read or write, some would see her broken, scribbled tracing on Pre-K level homework and think, ‘Awww, so cute.’

Now she is 11.

Her body is changing.

She is over 5 feet tall and wears my size shoe.

She has body odor.

She sits with her legs wide open, regardless of how she is dressed.

She picks her nose with no regard to onlookers.

She undresses with no consideration of her audience.

She has speech delays and drools when she is tired or when she attempts to pronounce a difficult word.

She has accidents weekly because she gets so distracted or

forgets to go to the bathroom.

She is goofy and awkward.

She laughs with her mouth wide open and usually full of food.

She eats with both hands as if she is in a race against time, with the remnants usually falling all over her clothes and chair.

Still cute?

Over the past few months, I’ve wrestled with this. This idea that we have passed the point of cuteness. We have officially crossed over.

I found myself moody, grouchy, and annoyed. I couldn’t tell where that negativity was stemming from, but I think I figured it out now.

For the entirety of my daughter’s life, being ‘cute’ has gone hand in hand with acceptance. Not my acceptance, but other peoples’.

Being ‘cute’ has gone hand in hand with tolerance. Not my tolerance, but other peoples’.

Oddness can be so easily masked with aesthetic appeal.

But what now?

What happens to my girl when society realizes it’s not cute anymore?

The self-help gurus say, ‘Don’t worry about the opinions of others.’ But what if their opinions about my most vulnerable child actually determine the way she is treated? Whether she is respected or not? How she is cared for? How she is spoken to?

Never in my life has the phrase ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’ been so painfully true. It makes me wince when I read or hear it.

That’s a nice sentiment when the beholder is the momma but what happens when it’s not?

I’m scared.

I’m mad.

All over again.

One minute, I can rationalize it all in my head and find peace. The autism, the delays, her terrifying vulnerability, the foreverness, the constant nagging of the unknown future before us. All of it. Peace.

But the next minute, my mind is sent reeling.

I’m worried for her.

How do I make people see the beauty I see?

How many blog entries do I write?

How many stories do I tell?

How many trainings do we need?

This is where the negativity I was feeling was stemming from — the crazy, heavy weight of something being too big, too hard, and impossible for me to change or control.

As the gap widens between the rate at which her mind is developing and the rate at which her body is developing, I’m struggling to reach a new level of acceptance. I’m struggling to rediscover peace with it all.

But this is not just about my girl. This is about something way bigger. It’s a social awareness that needs to come to the forefront. It’s about a social movement that needs to catch fire.

Because guess what? All of the special needs children you know right now will be teenagers and adults one day. They,

too, will cross the cuteness threshold.

I can't control what society defines as 'cute' but I can try to change the perspective of the beholders. I can try to switch out the lens of their life's camera.

We can behold a messy, compulsive eater and see the beauty in a healthy appetite, which some mommas desperately pray for.

We can behold the oral fixation as a sensory mechanism to cope with stress and see beauty in those who try to make her feel safe.

We can behold awkward public dancing and see the beauty in living a non-filtered, completely free life.

We can behold the weight gain, body odor, and oily t-zone and see the beauty in puberty that makes her fit so perfectly in nature's plan.

We can behold the homework that resembles preschool-level at best and see the beauty in the effort.

We can behold a teenager who wears mismatched clothes and shoes on the wrong feet and see the beauty in a young woman who could give a flying flip about what she looks like. She will still say hi to you, hug you, and help you, just say the word.

We can behold a human being with the mind of a child and the body of a woman and see the beauty in the preserved innocence of those who fiercely protect her.

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<https://www.lovewhatmatters.com/society-not-cute-autism-special-needs-bullying/>

My Teens Aren't Socializing the Way They Did and I'm Concerned

by Grown and Flown

It's no surprise that people the world over, especially our teens, are worried and stressed that their social lives are taking a hit. We all need and crave a certain amount of human connection, even if we are introverted.

While I'm entering midlife and I know my friendships are strong, our young adults don't always have that same sense of security. I know if I can't see my girlfriends for a few months, or longer, things will go back to normal when we do see each other. My kids don't have that luxury, for the most part, anyway.

And we all remember the angst of being a teen and feeling as though your social life was the thing which most defined you.

Not having a car to see your friends when you pleaded and having to rely on others to cart you to and fro was one thing. But this? This quarantine is a whole other anxiety-spiking disaster. I can't even begin to know what it would feel like to be a teenager in the midst of all of this.

I can't begin to know what being a teen right now feels like. (Twenty20 @Terralyx)

At first my kids were FaceTiming their friends all the time

The first few weeks in seclusion my kids seemed to be doing just fine. They were texting and FaceTiming their friends more than usual which, I thought, was good. They were missing each

other as they were used to spending their days side by side. It seemed natural to want to talk about everything that was going on and catch up on each others lives.

After the announcement came they wouldn't be returning to school, they really, really wanted to see their friends. What we all thought would be a few weeks apart, was a far longer separation and they definitely felt it.

I reminded them daily that keeping to ourselves wasn't punishment, but for their safety and the safety of their parents and grandparents and really the whole community. They reached a point where they seemed to realize that I wasn't going to change my mind.

Our family has started some new traditions and we've grown closer. I guess you could say we've gotten used to this new and scary normal and are trying to make the best of it.

I still don't know when I'll be comfortable letting my kids go out

I still don't know when I'll be comfortable letting my kids see their friends. I know it's not this week though and it won't be next week either.

As positive as it was that we all made peace with this situation, I have a new worry now; my kids aren't socializing as much as they once were with their friends. FaceTime calls have all but stopped. They've been putting their phones down for longer periods of time while getting engrossed in a Netflix series or doing stuff outside— which is all great.

But as a mom to three very extroverted kids with busy social lives, how do I know what's normal? Are they isolating themselves too much? Will their relationships suffer? When do I become concerned that they aren't reaching out to friends enough. And since they haven't been anywhere except my house and their father's house in almost three months, what can I do to keep them from feeling isolated?

We know that loneliness is bad for people. Are their siblings and mother enough for them right now? Will there be long-term effects I need to watch out for?

I just hope that my kids' friendships pick up where they left off

I certainly can't force my kids to pick up the phone and call a friend. They've said they just don't feel like it and they seem to be lost in their own world between our four walls. Maybe it's just part of the survival process and they are adjusting beautifully and I don't need to worry at all.

My more fervent hope is that they will pick up where they left off with their friends. Much like moms do when they are busy with life, then reconnect and it feels like no time has passed.

And maybe this has made them learn a thing or two about friendships and the quality of people they want in their lives because you never know what will happen next. Mother to mother, please tell me: how much are your kids socializing and are you concerned?

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https://grownandflown.com/teens-not-socializing-online-now-mom-concerned/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=socialflow

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- Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
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My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- Gold Donation, \$1,000
- Silver Donation, \$750
- Platinum Donation, \$500
- Bronze Donation, \$250
- Other, \$ _____