Section 11- Resources

a) Sexual Development and Behavior in Children
This article explains normal sexual development in children (pre-birth, birth to age 3, preschool, school age, pre-adolescence and adolescence) and provides guidance on parent roles at each age/stage.

b) Parenting a Child or Youth Who Has Been Sexually Abused
This article provides information on what to expect from a child who has been sexually abused and how to create a safe environment for the child.

c) The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
1) Understanding Child Traumatic Stress- When a child feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event a trauma. This booklet will help foster care parents understand the many complexities that are involved in parenting a child who has been exposed to trauma.
2) Age Related Reactions to a Traumatic Events- this booklet will help a foster care provider understand how children experience traumatic events and how these children express their lingering distress over the experience.

d) **Developmental Trauma and the Brain**-
This resource is designed to provide you with some basic information about the brain and nervous system and how it is impacted by trauma, as well as ways to support a healthy nervous system in children who have experienced trauma

e) Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents-
Provides resources to support LGBTQ+ youth in your care

f) Transracial Parenting in Foster Care and Adoption-
This guidebook was created to help parents and children in transracial homes learn how to thrive in and celebrate their bicultural family; and for children to gain a strong sense of racial identity and cultural connections.

g) Adoption of Children in Foster Care-
Provides an overview of legal issues and financial supports for foster children whose permanency plan includes adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody.

h) A Guide for Caregivers to Prevent Child Trafficking-
Provides information about Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, and vulnerabilities.

i) Tips for Monitoring Kids Online and Apps Factsheet-
how to keep children safe on the internet and common types of apps we have seen used by predators to attempt to groom and traffic vulnerable youth.

j) **Helping Children Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic**-
A tip sheet meant to help parents and caregivers address their children's concerns and worries arising from the COVID- 19 Pandemic and the disruption of normal life experienced.

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

In partnership with: NCSBY

Sexual Development and Behavior in Children

Information for Parents and Caregivers

Your five-year-old daughter is playing in her room with a couple of friends. You hear a lot of giggling and squealing.

When you open the door to check on the kids, you find them sitting on the floor with their panties off, pointing at and touching each other's genitals.

What do you do?

Every day, parents around the world are faced with situations like this. Being caught off-guard by young children's self-exploration and curiosity about body parts and sexual issues is one of the uncomfortable realities of parenting, and can raise a host of troubling questions, such as, "Is my child normal?" "Should I be worried?" "What should I say?"

Although talking with children about bodily changes and sexual matters may feel awkward, providing children with accurate, age-appropriate information is one of the most important things parents can do to make sure children grow up safe, healthy, and secure in their bodies.

Sexual Development and Behavior in Young Children: The Basics

Like all forms of human development, sexual development begins at birth. Sexual development includes not only the physical changes that occur as children grow, but also the sexual knowledge and beliefs they come to learn and the behaviors they show. Any given child's sexual knowledge and behavior is strongly influenced by:

- The child's age[1-3]
- What the child observes (including the sexual behaviors of family and friends)[4]
- What the child is taught (including cultural and religious beliefs concerning sexuality and physical boundaries)

"Young people do not wake up on their thirteenth birthday, somehow transformed into a sexual being overnight. Even young children are sexual in some form."[5]

Heather Coleman, PhD & **Grant Charles, PhD**
University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada and The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.

Very young and preschool-aged children (four or younger) are naturally immodest, and may display open—and occasionally startling--curiosity about other people's bodies and bodily functions, such as touching women's breasts, or wanting to watch when grownups go to the bathroom. Wanting to be naked (even if others are not) and showing or touching private parts while in public are also common in young children. They are curious about their own bodies and may quickly discover that touching certain body parts feels nice. (For more on what children typically do at this and other ages, see **Table 1**.)

As children age and interact more with other children (approximately ages 4–6), they become more aware of the differences between boys and girls, and more social in their exploration. In addition to exploring their own bodies through touching or rubbing their private parts (masturbation), they may begin "playing doctor" and copying adult behaviors such as kissing and holding hands. As children become increasingly aware of the social rules governing sexual behavior and language (such as the importance of modesty or which words are considered "naughty"), they may try to test these rules by using naughty words. They may also ask more questions about sexual matters, such as where babies come from, and why boys and girls are physically different. (For more, see **Table 1**.)

Table 1: Common Sexual Behaviors in Childhood[1, 3, 6]

Preschool children (less than 4 years)	■ Exploring and touching private parts, in public and in private ■ Rubbing private parts (with hand or against objects) ■ Showing private parts to others ■ Trying to touch mother's or other women's breasts ■ Removing clothes and wanting to be naked ■ Attempting to see other people when they are naked or undressing (such as in the bathroom) ■ Asking questions about their own—and others'—bodies and bodily functions ■ Talking to children their own age about bodily functions such as "poop" and "pee"
Young Children (approximately 4-6 years)	■ Purposefully touching private parts (masturbation), occasionally in the presence of others ■ Attempting to see other people when they are naked or undressing ■ Mimicking dating behavior (such as kissing, or holding hands) ■ Talking about private parts and using "naughty" words, even when they don't understand the meaning ■ Exploring private parts with children their own age (such as "playing doctor", "I'll show you mine if you show me yours," etc.)
School-Aged Children (approximately 7-12 years)	■ Purposefully touching private parts (masturbation), usually in private ■ Playing games with children their own age that involve sexual behavior (such as "truth or dare", "playing family," or "boyfriend/girlfriend") ■ Attempting to see other people naked or undressing ■ Looking at pictures of naked or partially naked people ■ Viewing/listening to sexual content in media (television, movies, games, the Internet, music, etc.) ■ Wanting more privacy (for example, not wanting to undress in front of other people) and being reluctant to talk to adults about sexual issues ■ Beginnings of sexual attraction to/interest in peers

Once children enter grade school (approximately ages 7–12), their awareness of social rules increases and they become more modest and want more privacy, particularly around adults. Although self touch (masturbation) and sexual play continue, children at this age are likely to hide these activities from adults. Curiosity about adult sexual behavior increases—particularly as puberty approaches—and children may begin to seek out sexual content in television, movies, and printed material. Telling jokes and "dirty" stories is common. Children approaching puberty are likely to start displaying romantic and sexual interest in their peers. (For more, see **Table 1**.)

Although parents often become concerned when a child shows sexual behavior, such as touching another child's private parts, these behaviors are not uncommon in developing children. Most sexual play is an expression of children's natural curiosity and should not be a cause for concern or alarm. In general, "typical" childhood sexual play and exploration:

- Occurs between children who play together regularly and know each other well
- Occurs between children of the same general age and physical size
- Is spontaneous and unplanned
- Is infrequent
- Is voluntary (the children agreed to the behavior, none of the involved children seem uncomfortable or upset)
- Is easily diverted when parents tell children to stop and explain privacy rules

Some childhood sexual behaviors indicate more than harmless curiosity, and are considered sexual behavior problems. Sexual behavior problems may pose a risk to the safety and well-being of the child and other children. (For more on this topic, see the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's factsheet, Understanding and Coping with Sexual Behavior Problems in Children: Information for Parents and Caregivers at http://nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/sexualbehaviorproblems.pdf.) Sexual behavior problems include any act that:

- Is clearly beyond the child's developmental stage (for example, a three-year-old attempting to kiss an adult's genitals)
- Involves threats, force, or aggression
- Involves children of widely different ages or abilities (such as a 12-year-old "playing doctor" with a four-year-old)
- Provokes strong emotional reactions in the child—such as anger or anxiety

Responding to Sexual Behaviors

Situations like the one described at the beginning of this handout can be unsettling for parents. However, these situations also offer excellent opportunities to assess how much children understand and to teach important information about sexual matters.

The first step is to try to figure out what actually happened. To do this, it's important to stay calm. Staying calm will allow you to make clear decisions about what you say and/or do, rather than acting on strong emotions.

To remain composed, try taking a long, deep breath, counting to ten, or even closing the door and stepping away for a couple of minutes before saying anything. In the case described above, a parent might calmly tell the children that it's time to get dressed and then ask each child to go to a different room in the house. After taking a few moments to collect his or her thoughts—and to consult with a spouse or partner if feeling very unsettled— the parent could then talk to each child one-on-one.

When talking to children about sexual behaviors, it's important to maintain a calm and even tone of voice and to ask open-ended questions as much as possible, so the children can tell what happened in their own words, rather than just answering yes or no. So, in this case, a parent might ask each child:

- What were you doing?
- How did you get the idea?
- How did you learn about this?
- How did you feel about doing it?

In the opening scenario, all of the children involved were about the same age, had been playmates for some time, and seemed to be enjoying their game. So, it's likely the children were just curious and playing around and that no one was upset about what happened. If you encounter a situation where the children are a little embarrassed but otherwise not distressed, this can present an ideal opportunity for teaching the children about healthy boundaries and rules about sexual behavior.

Myth: Talking about sex with my children will just encourage them to become sexually active.

Fact: In a recent survey of American teens, 9 out of 10 teens said it would be easier to delay sexual activity and prevent unwanted pregnancy if they were able to have "more open, honest conversations" with their parents on these topics.[7] When you talk honestly with your children about sexual issues, you can give them the knowledge and skills they need to keep safe and to make good decisions about relationships and intimacy.

Educating Children about Sexual Issues

Just because a behavior is typical doesn't mean the behavior should be ignored. Often, when children participate in sexual behavior it indicates that they need to learn something. Teach what the child needs to know, given the situation. In this case, for example, the parent might teach the children that it's okay to be curious about other people's bodies, but that private parts should be kept private, even with friends.

Although children usually respond well when parents take the time to give them correct information and answer their questions, it is important to provide information that is appropriate to the child's age and developmental level. In **Table 2**, you will find an overview of some of the most important information and safety messages for children of various ages. Keep in mind that you do not need to bombard children with information all at once. Let the situation—and the child's questions—guide the lessons you share. The important thing is to let children know that you are ready to listen and to answer whatever questions they may have.

Too often, children get the majority of their sexual education from other children and from media sources such as television shows, songs, movies, and video games. Not only is this information often wrong, it may have very little to do with sexual values that parents want to convey. Explicit adult sexual activities are sometimes found during "family time" television shows, in commercials, and on cartoon/children's channels, and can have an influence on children's behaviors.

Controlling media exposure and providing appropriate alternatives is an important part of teaching children about sexual issues. Get to know the rating systems of games, movies, and television shows and make use of the parental controls available through many internet, cable, and satellite providers.

However, don't assume that just by activating those controls you will be taking care of the situation. It's very important for you to be aware of what your children are watching on television and online, and make time to watch television with them. When appropriate, you can use this time as a springboard to talk about sexual or relationship issues, and to help children develop the skills to make healthy decisions about their behavior and relationships.

Table 2: What to Teach When[8]

Preschool children (less than 4 years)

Basic Information

- Boys and girls are different
- Accurate names for body parts of boys and girls
- Babies come from mommies
- Rules about personal boundaries (for example, keeping private parts covered, not touching other children's private parts)
- Give simple answers to all questions about the body and bodily functions.

Safety Information

- The difference between "okay" touches (which are comforting, pleasant, and welcome) and "not okay" touches (which are intrusive, uncomfortable, unwanted, or painful)
- Your body belongs to you
- Everyone has the right to say "no" to being touched, even by grownups
- No one—child or adult--has the right to touch your private parts
- It's okay to say "no" when grownups ask you to do things that are wrong, such as touching private parts or keeping secrets from mommy or daddy
- There is a difference between a "surprise"--which is something that will be revealed sometime soon, like a present—and a "secret," which is something you're never supposed to tell. Stress that it is never okay to keep secrets from mommy and daddy
- Who to tell if people do "not okay" things to you, or ask you to do "not okay" things to them

Young Children (approximately 4-6 years)

Basic Information

- Boys' and girls' bodies change when they get older.
- Simple explanations of how babies grow in their mothers' wombs and about the birth process.
- Rules about personal boundaries (such as, keeping private parts covered, not touching other children's private parts)
- Simple answers to all questions about the body and bodily functions
- Touching your own private parts can feel nice, but is something done in private

Safety Information

- Sexual abuse is when someone touches your private parts or asks you to touch their private parts
- It is sexual abuse even if it is by someone you know
- Sexual abuse is NEVER the child's fault
- If a stranger tries to get you to go with him or her, run and tell a parent, teacher, neighbor, police officer, or other trusted adult
- Who to tell if people do "not okay" things to you, or ask you to do "not okay" things to them

School-Aged Children (approximately 7-12 years)

Basic Information

- What to expect and how to cope with the changes of puberty (including menstruation and wet dreams)
- Basics of reproduction, pregnancy, and childbirth
- Risks of sexual activity (pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases)
- Basics of contraception
- Masturbation is common and not associated with long term problems but should be done in private

Safety Information

- Sexual abuse may or may not involve touch
- How to maintain safety and personal boundaries when chatting or meeting people online
- How to recognize and avoid risky social situations
- Dating rules

If you are unsure of what to say to your child about sexual issues, don't be afraid to do some research. In addition to talking to your pediatrician or doctor, you can turn to online resources such as the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States' (SIECUS) *Families Are Talking* websites (listed below). There are also several excellent books available on talking to children about sexual issues, as well as books that you and your children can read together. (For a partial listing, see **Table 3**.)

Table 3: Additional Resources for Communicating with Children About Sexual Issues

For You	
Books	Haffner, Debra W. (2008). *From diapers to dating: A parent's guide to raising sexually healthy children-- from infancy to middle school, 2nd edition*. New York: Newmarket Press. Author Debra Haffner provides practical advice and guidelines to help you talk to children and early adolescents about sexuality. Includes techniques to identify and examine your own sexual values so that you can share these messages with your children. Hickling, Meg. (2005). *The new speaking of sex: What your children need to know and when they need to know it*. Kelowna, BC, Canada: Wood Lake Publishing, Inc. This update of the bestselling *More Speaking of Sex* is packed with no-nonsense, accurate, and gently funny information on sexuality and sexual health. Author Meg Hickling dispels misconceptions and unhealthy beliefs about sex, provides guidelines on how to talk with children at various stages of their development, and offers examples of how to answer tough questions. Roffman, Deborah M. (2002). *But how'd I get in there in the first place? Talking to your young child about sex*. New York: Perseus Publishing. Sexuality and family life educator Deborah Roffman provides clear, sensible guidelines on how to talk confidently with young children about sexual issues, including how to answer sometimes-awkward questions about sexuality, conception, and birth. Roffman, Deborah M. (2001). *Sex and sensibility: The thinking parent's guide to talking sense about sex*. New York: Perseus Publishing. This book is designed to inspire honest communication about sexuality between parents and their children. It focuses on the core skills parents need in order to interpret and respond to virtually any question or situation, with the goal of empowering children through knowledge.
Online Resources	The **Committee for Children** offers tips on how to teach children about safe touch (http://www.cfchildren.org/issues/abuse/touchsaferules/) as well as general information on how to talk to your child about sexual issues (http://www.cfchildren.org/issues/abuse/touchsafety/). The **Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States' (SIECUS)** *Families Are Talking* websites contain a wealth of information and resources to help you talk with children about sexuality and related issues (http://www.familiesaretalking.org and http://www.lafamiliahabla.org).
For Your Children	
Books	Bell, Ruth. (1998). *Changing bodies, changing lives: Expanded 3rd edition: A book for teens on sex and relationships*. New York: TimesBooks. *For ages 9 and up.* Designed to help young people make informed decisions about their lives, *Changing bodies, changing lives* provides answers to tough questions about how the body works and about sex, love, and relationships. It's packed with illustrations, checklists, and resources, as well as stories, poems, and cartoons from hundreds of teenagers. Brown, Laurie Krasny. (2000). *What's the big secret? Talking about sex with girls and boys*. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. *For ages 4–8*. This colorful and chatty book uses illustrations, cartoons, and very accessible text to explain the basics of anatomy, reproduction, pregnancy, and birth. Also discusses feelings, touching, and privacy. Hansen, Diane. (2007). *Those are MY private parts*. Redondo Beach, CA: Empowerment Productions. *For ages 4–8*. This short, easy-to-read book uses colorful illustrations and catchy rhymes to teach children that no one—relative, friend or neighbor—has a right to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

For Your Children (continued)

Harris, Robie H. (2006) *It's NOT the stork: A book about girls, boys, babies, bodies, families and friends*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

For ages 4 and up. This lively, engaging book uses two cartoon characters--a curious bird and a squeamish bee--to give voice to the many emotions and reactions children experience while learning about their bodies. The information provided is up-to-date, age-appropriate, and scientifically accurate, and is designed to help kids feel proud, knowledgeable, and comfortable about their bodies and how they were born.

Harris, Robie H. (2004) *It's perfectly normal: Changing bodies, growing up, sex, and sexual health*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

For ages 10 and up. Providing accurate, unbiased answers to nearly every imaginable question, from conception and puberty to birth control and AIDS, *It's perfectly normal* provides young people with the information they need to make responsible decisions and to stay healthy.

Harris, Robie H. (2004) *It's so amazing!: A book about eggs, sperm, birth, babies, and families*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

For ages 4 and up. *It's so amazing!* provides answers to children's questions about reproduction, sex, and sexuality. The comic-book style artwork and clear, lively text reflects an elementary-school child's interest in science and how things work. Throughout the book, a curious bird and a squeamish bee help tell the story of how a baby is made--from the moment an egg and sperm join, through pregnancy, to birth. *It's so amazing!* also addresses and provides reassuring, age-appropriate information on love, sex, gender, families, heterosexuality, homosexuality, sexual abuse, and HIV and AIDS, while giving children a healthy understanding of their bodies.

Madaras, Lynda. (2007). *The "What's happening to my body?" book for girls, revised 3rd edition*. New York: Newmarket Press.

Madaras, Lynda. (2007). *The "What's happening to my body?" book for boys, revised 3rd edition*. New York: Newmarket Press.

For ages 10 and up. These books—part of the acclaimed *"What's Happening To My Body?"* book series by the same author—provide sensitive straight talk on children's changing bodies, diet and exercise, romantic and sexual feelings, and puberty in the opposite sex. They also include information on sensitive topics such as eating disorders, sexually transmitted diseases, steroid use, and birth control.

Mayle, Peter. (2000). *"What's happening to me?" An illustrated guide to puberty*. New York: Kensington Publishing.

For ages 9–12. For more than 20 years, *"What's happening to me?"* has been helping young people—and their parents—navigate the "time in between" childhood and adolescence.

Mayle, Peter. (2000). *Where did I come from? The facts of life without any nonsense and with illustrations*. New York: Kensington Publishing.

For ages 4–8. Dedicated to "red-faced parents everywhere," *Where did I come from?* covers the basic facts of sexuality from physiology to love-making, orgasm, conception, growth inside the womb, and childbirth. The illustrations are clear and realistic, and the text does an excellent job of explaining things in an age-appropriate way.

Schaefer, Valorie. (1998) *The care & keeping of you: The body book for girls*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications.

For ages 7-12. This "head -to- toe" guide addresses the variety of changes that occur with puberty, and answers many of the questions girls have, from hair care to healthy eating, bad breath to bras, periods to pimples, and everything in between.

Parents play a pivotal role in helping their children develop healthy attitudes and behaviors towards sexuality. Although talking with your children about sex may feel outside your comfort zone, there are many resources available to help you begin and continue the conversation about sexuality. Providing close supervision, and providing clear, positive messages about modesty, boundaries and privacy are crucial as children move through the stages of childhood. By talking openly with your children about relationships, intimacy, and sexuality, you can foster their healthy growth and development.

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FACTSHEET FOR FAMILIES
December 2018

Parenting a Child or Youth Who Has Been Sexually Abused: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Parents

As a parent or caregiver of a child or youth who has a known or suspected history of being sexually abused, you may feel confused about the impact of the abuse and uncertain about how you can help. It may be comforting to know that most children and youth who have been abused **do not** go on to abuse others, and many live happy, healthy, successful lives. At the same time, all children and youth who have been abused need to feel safe and loved in nurturing homes. As a parent or caregiver, you can play a central role in your child's healing process, as well as in "building resilience," which strengthens your child's ability to adapt to or cope with adversity.

This factsheet discusses how you can help children and youth in your care by educating yourself about child sexual abuse, understanding the impact of the abuse, establishing guidelines for safety and privacy in your family, and seeking help if you need it. Reading this factsheet alone will not guarantee that you will know what to do in every circumstance, but you can use it as a resource for some of the potential challenges and rewards that lie ahead.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Child Welfare Information Gateway

Children's Bureau/ACYF/ACF/HHS
800.394.3366 | Email: info@childwelfare.gov | https://www.childwelfare.gov

Children's Bureau

Educating Yourself

One of the most useful steps you can take to help your child is to educate yourself about both sexual abuse and healthy sexual development in children. With this information, you will more easily recognize behaviors possibly associated with past or current abuse and avoid uncertainty if your child or youth shows uncommon sexual behaviors. Most importantly, you may gain confidence in supporting your child or youth through a variety of sensitive questions or situations that may arise. This section covers signs and behaviors that may suggest sexual abuse in children and youth, as well as common healthy sexual development behaviors.

What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) defines child sexual abuse as the following:

> — [A]ny interaction between a child and an adult (or another child) in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer. Sexual abuse can include both touching and nontouching behaviors. Nontouching behaviors can include voyeurism (trying to look at a child's naked body), exhibitionism, or exposing the child to pornography. Children of all ages, races, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds may experience sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse affects both girls and boys in all kinds of neighborhoods and communities.

For more information, see Child Welfare Information Gateway's webpage, Identification of Sexual Abuse, at https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/identifying/sex-abuse.

Signs of Sexual Abuse

If you are parenting a child or youth who has been removed from his or her family, you may not know whether he or she has been sexually abused. Child welfare agencies are required to share all **known** information about a child's history with his or her caregiver. However, past records of abuse may not exist, and young children or children who are nonverbal may be unable to tell you about being abused. Children and youth with disabilities, many of whom cannot interpret or articulate abusive experiences, are at significantly higher risk of sexual abuse than their peers without disabilities (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). Moreover, many children do not reveal past abuse until they feel safe. For these reasons, foster or adoptive parents or kinship caregivers are sometimes the first to learn that a child has been sexually abused. Therefore, knowing the signs and behaviors of abuse is critical.

> For information on how to learn more about your adopted child, refer to Information Gateway's factsheet, *Obtaining Background Information on Your Prospective Adopted Child*, at https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-background/.

Children who have been sexually abused also may act out—that is, express feelings or sexual impulses that are odd, excessive, aggressive, or explicit. Although no one specific sign or behavior proves that sexual abuse has occurred, the following table provides examples of potential warning signs of abuse.

Table 1. Signs and Behaviors That May Suggest Sexual Abuse in Children and Youth[1]

Younger Children	Older Children and Youth	Both Children and Youth
▪ Imitation of sexual acts with toys or other objects, such as stuffed animals ▪ Behavior of a much younger child, like wetting the bed or sucking a thumb ▪ Refusal to take off clothing at appropriate times (e.g., bathing, going to bed) ▪ Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)[2] (especially in children who have not yet started puberty)	▪ Unhealthy eating patterns or unusual weight gain or weight loss ▪ Anxiety or depression ▪ Changes in self-care or paying less attention to hygiene ▪ Self-harming behaviors or suicidal thoughts ▪ Alcohol or drug use ▪ Running away ▪ STIs or pregnancy ▪ High-risk sexual[3] behavior ▪ Suddenly having money	▪ Explicit sexual knowledge beyond the child's developmental stage ▪ Sexual fixation indicated by language or drawings ▪ Nightmares, trouble sleeping, or fear of the dark ▪ Sudden or extreme mood swings (e.g., rage, fear, anger, crying, or withdrawal) ▪ References to a new, older friend ▪ Unexplained avoidance of certain people, places, or activities ▪ Pain, itching, or bleeding in genital areas

These red flags do not always indicate that your child or youth has experienced sexual abuse. Rather, these actions may reflect an underlying issue, such as *physical* or *emotional* abuse or unintentional exposure to sexual content. Regardless, a trained professional who specializes in working with children who have been sexually abused should assess whether there is an underlying concern. (See the last section of this factsheet, Seeking Help, for more information.)

The following organizations offer more information on behavioral signs of sexual abuse:

- Stop It Now! http://www.stopitnow.org/warning_signs_child_behavior
- The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) https://www.rainn.org/articles/warning-signs-young-children and https://www.rainn.org/articles/warning-signs-teens
- Darkness to Light https://www.d2l.org/get-help/identifying-abuse/
- U.S. Department of Justice https://www.nsopw.gov/en/Education/RecognizingSexualAbuse

Healthy Sexual Development in Children and Youth

At each developmental stage, children show a range of healthy sexual behaviors and curiosity. Children's behaviors and curiosity may develop gradually, based on their development, and may be influenced by factors such as what they observe and the guidance they receive from parents and caregivers. Understanding healthy sexual development can provide a context in which to consider signs and behaviors of possible abuse. The table below lists common behaviors considered healthy for most children and youth, according to their developmental phases.

[1] Unless noted otherwise, content in the table is adapted from Stop It Now! (n.d.). *Tip sheet: Warning signs of possible sexual abuse in a child's behavior.* Retrieved from http://www.stopitnow.org/warning_signs_child_behavior.

[2] Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network. (n.d.). *Warning signs for young children.* Retrieved from https://www.rainn.org/articles/warning-signs-young-children.

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Table 2. Common Sexual Development Behaviors in Children and Youth[4]

Younger Children	Older Children and Youth
▪ Curiosity about their bodies, occasional masturbation in public and private ▪ Consensual, playful exploration of their bodies with children of similar age ▪ Questions about sexuality, such as "Where do babies come from?" ▪ Lack of inhibition about nudity, particularly under age 5 ▪ Use of slang to describe body parts and jokes about bodily functions	▪ Adherence to social norms around masturbation, likely occurs in private ▪ Shared sexual behaviors with peers of a similar age may take place ▪ Interest in adult bodies on TV or in the media ▪ Understanding of pregnancy, HIV, and other STIs ▪ Capacity to learn about intimate, long-term, loving relationships and healthy versus unhealthy relationships

Visit http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/what-is-age-appropriate for more information about behaviors common among different ages of children and behaviors that might be uncommon or unhealthy. Seek support by calling the Stop It Now! helpline at 1.888. PREVENT (1.888.773.8368).

Understanding the Impact of Sexual Abuse

If a professional has determined that your child or youth has been sexually abused, or if you suspect that he or she has been abused, understanding the impact of abusive experiences may provide important insights into how sexual abuse has affected your child's behavior.

Impact of Sexual Abuse on Children and Youth

Sexual abuse violates physical and emotional boundaries. Children and youth who have been abused may see the world as unsafe and adults as manipulative and untrustworthy, or they may lack boundaries and be unaware when they are in unsafe situations. Many factors influence how children think and feel about the abuse they experienced, how it affects them, and how they develop resilience.

Resilience

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), resilience is the ability to adapt or cope in a positive way to adversity, including trauma, tragedy, threats, and significant stress. It involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned over time and nurtured through positive relationships with parents, caregivers, and other adults. Resilience in children and youth who have experienced sexual abuse enables them to thrive despite this traumatic event.

For ways to help your child or youth build resilience, refer to Information Gateway's tip sheet, *Building Resilience in Children and Teens*, at https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/. For more general information on resilience visit the APA website at http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx.

Factors that can contribute to the impact of abuse include the following:

- Relationship of the abuser to the child or youth; extent that the abuse was a betrayal of trust within an important relationship (e.g., the perpetrator is a father verses a neighbor)
- Frequency and duration of abuse; whether penetration occurred
- Child's age (young children may experience more adverse consequences)
- Child's emotional and social development at the time of the abuse
- Child's ability to cope with physical responses to the abuse (e.g., fear and arousal)
- How much responsibility the child or youth feels for the abuse (e.g., not telling an adult about it right away or stopping it somehow)
- Response to the child when he or she reveals the abuse
- Abuser's use of "friendliness" and efforts to make the child a willing participant
- Abuser's use of threats of harm or violence, including threats to pets, siblings, or parents
- Abuser's use of secrecy and threats to withdraw love and affection
- Gender of the abuser being the same as or different from the child (e.g., children and youth are less likely to report sexual activity with the same gender)

Children and youth must understand that they are not to blame for the abuse they experienced. Your family's immediate response to and ongoing acceptance of your child's abuse will play a critical role in your child's ability to heal, build resilience, and lead a healthy life. (See the last section of this factsheet, Seeking Help, for more information about healing from abuse.)

If you are concerned when your child acts out sexually with peers or younger children, respond calmly and take into account your child's development and the trauma he or she has endured. Children are likely asking for limits to be set and may be unaware of appropriate boundaries.

Trauma

Children who have been sexually abused may still be affected by the trauma associated with that experience when they come into care. Trauma is an emotional response to an intense event that threatens or causes harm. Understanding the effects of trauma can help you support your child's healing and improve family dynamics. For more detailed information about trauma, refer to Information Gateway's factsheet, *Parenting a Child Who Has Experienced Trauma*, at https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/child-trauma/.

Set clear limits and seek appropriate professional help for children whose behavior persists. Learning not to over- or underrespond to situations will help you care for your children with empathy and confidence in your parenting and in the healing process.

Children may respond to sexual abuse in varied ways. Some may act withdrawn and appear timid in social situations, while others may be angry and aggressive. Some may require special attention and firm limits to be set, and others may act out when situations, locations, or everyday items trigger memories of a traumatic event. Triggers occur unexpectedly by a variety of circumstances, and children may not be aware of their triggers. These may include situations as specific as seeing someone who looks like the abuser or as general as being alone in a public restroom or other location that is a reminder of where the abuse took place.

In addition, awareness of cultural differences can offer insights regarding your child's comfort level with physical space, physical affection, bathing and nudity practices, hygiene, and other factors that can lead to unwanted situations. For example, in cultures where parents do not discuss sexuality directly with their children, or child sexual activity of any type are unacceptable (e.g., children touching themselves), children may carry shame and guilt about their bodies.

Impact of Sexual Abuse on the Family

Parenting a child or youth who has experienced sexual abuse can be stressful to marriages and relationships. It may require couples to be more open with each other and their children about sexuality in general and sexual issues specifically. If one parent is more involved in addressing the issue than another, the imbalance can create difficulties in the parental relationship. If issues emerge, getting professional advice can be helpful.

Help for a Parent Who Was Sexually Abused

If you were (or suspect you may have been) sexually abused as a child, parenting a child or youth who also has been sexually abused may be particularly challenging. Reading this factsheet may have also brought up difficult thoughts and feelings. A list of resource organizations for adults who were abused as children is available on the Information Gateway website at https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=67.

In addition, if one parent or caregiver was more in favor of fostering or adopting than the other, general stress may increase, especially when children or youth have a range of behaviors that require attention. Some parents become resentful toward or withdrawn from foster or adoptive children who require a lot of time and energy.

Parents can also feel stress around their child's siblings, who may not be used to openly sexual language or behavior. If a child or youth is acting out sexually, you may need to talk with their siblings about what they see, think, and feel as well as how to respond. Children may also need guidance about what to say to friends about their sibling's behaviors. If they see that you are actively managing the situation, they may feel more secure and will worry less, which could help foster open communication within the family.

When a child or youth has been sexually abused, his or her parents can often become protective of them. Parents can provide strategies to help their children protect themselves, but parents are ultimately responsible for protecting and keeping their children safe. Finding a balance between reasonable worry and overprotection is important. Useful strategies to prevent further abuse may include teaching your children or youth to stand up for themselves, talking with them about being in charge of their bodies, and encouraging open communication about *anything*—not just sexual abuse.

Establishing Family Guidelines for Safety and Privacy

Establishing family guidelines for safety and privacy is critical, as survivors of sexual abuse are vulnerable to later abuse. Some children and youth who have been sexually abused have heightened sensitivities to situations that involve physical contact, evoke sexual innuendo, or include implicit or explicit sexual content. Practicing some of the following guidelines may make your home a comfortable place for children or youth who have been abused. It may also reduce your vulnerability to abuse allegations by children living with you:

- **Respect every family member's comfort level with touching, hugging, and kissing.** Encourage children and adults to respect the comfort and privacy of others.
- **Be cautious with playful touch, such as play fighting and tickling.** This type of play may be uncomfortable or trigger memories of sexual abuse.
- **Be mindful that some children who have experienced sexual abuse may not have healthy boundaries.** Teach your children and the entire family about healthy age-appropiate boundaries. (To learn more about communicating respectfully and reassuringly about boundaries, visit http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/tip-sheet-8.)
- **Teach children and youth the importance of privacy.** Remind children to knock before entering bathrooms and bedrooms and model privacy and respect.
- **Keep adult sexuality private.** Adult caretakers need to pay special attention to intimacy and sexuality when young children with a history of sexual abuse are around.

Sexual Messages From the Media

While some children and youth who have experienced sexual abuse become overstimulated or disturbed by sexual content in various media, others use screen time to excessively watch pornography or inappropriate, sexualized Internet videos. For these children or youth, limiting computer time and monitoring social media may encourage discussions on meaningful topics, such as the harmful effects of pornography, dangers of online sexual grooming, and showing respect for themselves and others online. For more information on monitoring social media use, staying safe online, the effects of pornography on children, and tips to help parents promote healthy sexuality see the following resources:

- *Social Media: Tips for Foster Parents and Caregivers* (Information Gateway) https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/smtips-parent/
- Internet and Digital Media Safety Prevention (Stop It Now!) https://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/internet-and-digital-media-safety-prevention
- Understanding the Effects of Pornography on Children (Prevent Child Abuse America) http://preventchildabuse.org/resource/understanding-the-effects-of-pornography-on-children/
- Predators 101: An Introduction (Enough Is Enough) https://internetsafety101.org/internetpredators

Other family guidelines for safety and privacy include supervising and monitoring children's play. If you know that your child has a history of sexual abuse, supervise and monitor his or her play with siblings or other children in your home. Some children require constant supervision—they cannot be left alone with younger children for even a moment. Consider placing locks or bells on bedroom doors so you can track a child's movements at night. Other measures, such as audio and visual monitors or installing door alarms, can also help ensure safety.

If your teen has a history of sexual abuse, maintaining open communication is advisable. Knowing who your youth is with and what he or she is doing and setting clear expectations for check-ins can enhance communication and mitigate high-risk behavior. To learn more about positive ways to supervise youth, visit https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/parental_monitoring_factsheet.pdf.

Practicing responses to children and youth who exhibit sexual behavior issues prepares you to help children develop self-awareness and learn to respect others. Encourage your children to talk to you or another trusted adult if they want to engage in inappropriate sexual behavior, and let them know it's OK to talk about the feelings they're having. For children and youth who have been abused, you can say, "Just like it was not okay for so-and-so to touch your private parts, it's not okay for you to touch other people's private parts." You might also give clear directives like, "We don't use that language in this house," or "I'd like you to use different words so that we can really hear what you're saying." To learn more about helping your children or youth who have sexual behavior issues, visit https://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/children-and-youth-with-sexual-behavior-problems.

If your child has demonstrated inappropriate touching or sexually aggressive behaviors, you may need to take additional steps, such as creating a family safety plan, to help ensure safety for your child as well as his or her peers. Consider how these tips may apply to your situation:

- **With friends.** If your child has known issues with touching other children, you will need to ensure constant supervision by informing other caregivers when he or she is playing with friends, whether at your home or theirs. You should be able to see your child at all times when he or she is with other children. Constant supervision will help to ensure safety for all children and prevent the sexually aggressive behaviors from becoming a habit. Sleepovers may not be a good idea when children have touching issues.
- **At school.** Working closely with the school to set up a safety plan for children or youth with aggressive sexual behaviors ensures an appropriate level of supervision and protects everyone involved. The plan should address concerns such as bathrooms and locker rooms, lunch, recess, transitions between classes, field trips, and other situations. Children or youth who have been sexually abused should not be alone with one teacher. At lease one additional teacher should be in the room.
- **In the community.** Setting up a safety plan with coaches, camp counselors, and other adults who are monitoring your child also may be useful. Children with sexual behavior concerns should not be given authoritative roles over other children. If your child has these issues, do not ask him or her to watch over younger children at any time. If your child or youth is focused on specific individuals, make sure he or she is not alone or placed together in small groups.

For an example of a safety plan, visit the Stop It Now! website at https://www.stopitnow.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/section_2.3.pdf. Although this example is intended for foster families, the suggested family rules may be equally helpful for adoptive families.

For more information about visual supervision and creating a safety plan for your family, see the following resources:

- Safety Planning (National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth) http://www.ncsby.org/content/safety-planning
- Tip Sheet: Create a Family Safety Plan (Stop It Now!) http://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/tip-sheet-create-a-family-safety-plan

Even as sexual behaviors diminish, continue to look for changes over time. These sexual behaviors can reemerge as children develop, so do not be discouraged if this occurs. Because sexual behavior may be a reaction to stress, it is also important to remove stressors from the child's life as much as possible.

For more information about communicating with children or youth who have sexual behavior issues, see Parenting Children or Youth Who Are Sexually Reactive at https://www.nacac.org/resource/parenting-children-or-youth-who-are-sexually-reactive/.

For information on working with your child's therapist, see the Counseling for Parents and Children section of this factsheet on page 9.

Seeking Help

Responding to the needs of a child or youth who has been sexually abused may involve the entire family and will likely affect family relationships. Mental health professionals (e.g., counselors, therapists, or social workers) can help your family cope with reactions, thoughts, and feelings about the abuse. Look for a mental health professional with a background in sexual abuse, child development, and child trauma. (See the Where to Find and What to Look for in a Mental Health Professional section of this factsheet on page 10 for more information.) Before agreeing to work with a particular provider, ask questions about the person's background, experience, and approach to treating children. (Growing evidence supports using certain types of interventions; see pages 9 and 10 for more information.)

Counseling for Parents and Children

Working with a specialized mental health professional as soon as issues arise can help you determine if your child's behavior is cause for concern. Specialists can also provide guidance in responding to your child's difficulties; offer suggestions for how to talk with him or her; and offer suggestions for creating structured, safe, and nurturing environments.

Many mental health professionals begin with a thorough assessment exploring how a child or youth functions in various areas of life. The specialist will want to know about the following:

- Past stressors (e.g., history of abuse, frequent moves, and other losses)
- Current stressors (e.g., a medical problem or learning disability)
- Emotional state (e.g., Is the child or youth usually happy or anxious?)
- Coping strategies (e.g., Does the child withdraw or act out when angry or sad?)
- Friendships (e.g., Does the child have challenges making or maintaining friends?)
- Strengths (e.g., Is the youth creative, athletic, organized?)
- Communication skills (e.g., Can the child communicate appropriately for his or her age?)
- Attachments to adults in his or her life (e.g., Does the child seem comfortable around adults?)
- Activities (e.g., time spent watching TV, using the Internet, playing video games)

After a thorough assessment, the professional will decide if the child and family could benefit from therapy. A child's social worker can help you understand your child's assessments and select the most appropriate form of therapy. The social worker will assist you in finding a therapist with the right credentials for your child and family as well as help you understand insurance coverage and payment plans.

Not all children who have been abused require therapy. For those who do, the mental health professional will develop a plan tailored to the child and to the family's strengths. This plan may include one or more of the following types of therapy:

- **Individual therapy.** The style of therapy will depend on the child's age and the therapist's training. Some therapists use creative techniques (e.g., art, play, and music therapy) to help children or youth who are uncomfortable talking about their experiences.
- **Group therapy.** Meeting in groups with other children or youth who have been sexually abused or who have developed sexual behavior issues can help children understand themselves; feel less alone; and learn new skills through play, role playing, discussion, and games.
- **Family therapy.** Many therapists will see children and parents together to support positive parent-child communication and to guide parents in learning new skills that will help their children feel better and support healthy behaviors.

Regardless of whether therapy for the family is advised, parents should stay involved in their child's treatment plan and therapy sessions. Skilled professionals will always seek to involve the parents by asking for and sharing information. Parents can benefit from professionals who understand the parenting needs of a child who has experienced sexual abuse.

Some forms of therapy are designed for dealing with trauma in general and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) specifically.

- **Trauma-Informed Therapy.** This therapy acknowledges the impact of trauma and recognizes that even a child who is not old enough to remember a traumatic event may still experience its effects. Trauma-informed therapy focuses on processing traumatic memories and experiences so they become tolerable. For information about types of trauma-informed therapy, refer to Information Gateway's factsheet *Finding and Working With Adoption-Competent Therapists* at https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-therapist/.

- **PTSD Therapy.** Children and youth who are coping with symptoms of PTSD may be dealing with flashbacks and nightmares. They may be easily frightened and experience outbursts of anger and negative thoughts and distorted feelings. Approaches such as cognitive processing therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, and group therapy can reduce symptoms of PTSD. For more about PTSD therapy, see https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Posttraumatic-Stress-Disorder/Treatment.

Several evidence-based programs have been found useful for treating children who have been sexually abused and their families. Websites with descriptions include the following:

- The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare lists programs for the treatment of sexual behavior issues in adolescents (http://www.cebc4cw.org/topic/sexual-behavior-problems-in-adolescents-treatment-of/) and in children (http://www.cebc4cw.org/topic/sexual-behavior-problems-in-children-treatment-of/).
- NCTSN includes information about trauma-informed treatment for sexual abuse (https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/sexual-abuse#q3).

Where to Find and What to Look for in a Mental Health Professional

Finding an experienced mental health professional who specializes in treating children who have been sexually abused is key to getting the help your family needs. Some communities have special programs for treating children who have been sexually abused (e.g., child advocacy centers and child protection teams). The organizations and resources below also may provide specialists in your community.

- Stop It Now!
  - (https://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/healing-and-support-for-children-and-parents)
  - (https://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/finding-and-choosing-professional-treatment-and-support)
- Child advocacy centers (http://www.nationalcac.org/find-a-cac/)
- Rape crisis or sexual assault centers (https://centers.rainn.org/)
- Child abuse hotlines (See Information Gateway's State Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Numbers at https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspList&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=%205)
- NCTSN maintains a list of its members that specialize in research and/or treatment (https://www.nctsn.org/about-us/network-members)
- Nonprofit service providers serving families of missing or exploited children
- Hospitals with child and adolescent protection centers
- Crime-victim assistance programs in a law enforcement agency or in a prosecutor or district attorney's office
- Group mental health private practices with a specialization in trauma services
- Family court services, including court-appointed special advocate groups or guardians ad litem (http://www.casaforchildren.org)
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resources/CAP_Finder.aspx)
- American Psychological Association (https://locator.apa.org/)

Therapy for children who have been sexually abused is specialized work. When selecting a mental health professional, look for the following:

- An advanced degree in a recognized mental health specialty, such as psychiatry (M.D.), psychology (Ph.D. or Psy.D.), social work (M.S.W.), counseling (L.P.C.), marriage and family therapy (M.F.T.), or psychiatric nursing (R.N.)
- Licensure to practice as a mental health professional in your State

- Special training in treating child sexual abuse and the dynamics of abuse, how abuse affects children and adults, and the use of goal-oriented treatment plans
- Knowledge about the legal issues involved in child sexual abuse, especially the laws about reporting child sexual victimization, procedures used by law enforcement and protective services, evidence collection, and expert testimony in your State
- A willingness to collaborate with other professionals involved in your family's care

If you are interested in finding a support group for parents, visit Information Gateway's Parent Support Group Programs webpage at https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/prevention-programs/parent-support-groups/support-group-programs/ or see the National Foster Care and Adoption Directory at https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/.

Your Child Welfare Agency

If you are a caregiver or parent, or if you are seeking to adopt a child, you may wish to talk with your social worker about what you discover about your child's history and any behaviors that worry you. Sharing your concerns will help your social worker assist you and your family. If your child or youth exhibits sexual behavior issues toward other children, be aware that you may also be required to report these to child protective services to comply with mandated reporting laws in your jurisdiction (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016).

For more information about services available after adoption, see the following Information Gateway resources:

- *Accessing Adoption Support and Preservation Services* (factsheet) https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-postadoption/
- Parenting After Adoption (webpage) https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting/

Conclusion

As the parent of a child or youth who has been or may have been sexually abused, you have an opportunity to provide comfort and security as well as help him or her build resilience and effective coping strategies for the trauma they have or may have endured. Creating a structured, safe, and nurturing home is the greatest gift that you can give to all of your children. Seek help when you need it, share your successes with your social worker or other community supports, and remember that a healthy relationship with your children allows them to begin and advance the healing process.

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

Age-Related Reactions to a Traumatic Event

A fundamental goal of parenting is to help children grow and thrive to the best of their potential. Parents anticipate protecting their children from danger whenever possible, but sometimes serious danger threatens, whether it is manmade, such as a school shooting or domestic violence, or natural, such as a flood or earthquake. And when a danger is life-threatening or poses a threat of serious injury, it becomes a potentially traumatic event for children.

By understanding how children experience traumatic events and how these children express their lingering distress over the experience, parents, physicians, communities, and schools can respond to their children and help them through this challenging time. The goal is to restore balance to these children's lives and the lives of their families.

HOW CHILDREN MAY REACT

How children experience traumatic events and how they express their lingering distress depends, in large part, on the children's age and level of development.

Preschool and young school-age children exposed to a traumatic event may experience a feeling of helplessness, uncertainty about whether there is continued danger, a general fear that extends beyond the traumatic event and into other aspects of their lives, and difficulty describing in words what is bothering them or what they are experiencing emotionally.

This feeling of helplessness and anxiety is often expressed as a loss of previously acquired developmental skills. Children who experience traumatic events might not be able to fall asleep on their own or might not be able to separate from parents at school. Children who might have ventured out to play in the yard prior to a traumatic event now might not be willing to play in the absence of a family member. Often, children lose some speech and toileting skills, or their sleep is disturbed by nightmares, night terrors, or fear of going to sleep. In many cases, children may engage in traumatic play—a repetitive and less imaginative form of play that may represent children's continued focus on the traumatic event or an attempt to change a negative outcome of a traumatic event.

For school-age children, a traumatic experience may elicit feelings of persistent concern over their own safety and the safety of others in their school or family. These children may be preoccupied with their own actions during the event. Often they experience guilt or shame over what they did or did not do during a traumatic event. School-age children might engage in constant retelling of the traumatic event, or they may describe being overwhelmed by their feelings of fear or sadness.

A traumatic experience may compromise the developmental tasks of school-age children as well. Children of this age may display sleep disturbances, which might include difficulty falling asleep, fear of sleeping alone, or frequent nightmares. Teachers often comment that these children are having greater difficulties concentrating and learning at school. Children of this age, following a traumatic event, may complain of headaches and stomach aches without obvious cause, and some children engage in unusually reckless or aggressive behavior.

Adolescents exposed to a traumatic event feel self-conscious about their emotional responses to the event. Feelings of fear, vulnerability, and concern over being labeled "abnormal" or different from their peers may cause adolescents to withdraw from family and friends. Adolescents often experience feelings of shame and guilt about the traumatic event and may express fantasies about revenge and retribution. A traumatic event for adolescents may foster a radical shift in the way these children think about the world. Some adolescents engage in self-destructive or accident-prone behaviors.

Some adolescents engage in self-destructive or accident-prone behaviors.

HOW TO HELP

The involvement of family, physicians, school, and community is critical in supporting children through the emotional and physical challenges they face after exposure to a traumatic event.

For young children, parents can offer invaluable support, by providing comfort, rest, and an opportunity to play or draw. Parents can be available to provide reassurance that the traumatic event is over and that the children are safe. It is helpful for parents, family, and teachers to help children verbalize their feelings so that they don't feel alone with their emotions. Providing consistent caretaking by ensuring that children are picked up from school at the anticipated time and by informing children of parents' whereabouts can provide a sense of security for children who have recently experienced a traumatic event. Parents, family, caregivers, and teachers may need to tolerate regression in developmental tasks for a period of time following a traumatic event.

Older children will also need encouragement to express fears, sadness, and anger in the supportive environment of the family. These school-age children may need to be encouraged to discuss their worries with family members. It is important to acknowledge the normality of their feelings and to correct any distortions of the traumatic events that they express. Parents can be invaluable in supporting their children in reporting to teachers when their thoughts and feelings are getting in the way of their concentrating and learning.

For adolescents who have experienced a traumatic event, the family can encourage discussion of the event and feelings about it and expectations of what could have been done to prevent the event. Parents can discuss the expectable strain on relationships with family and peers, and offer support in these challenges. It may be important to help adolescents understand "acting out" behavior as an effort to voice anger about traumatic events. It may also be important to discuss thoughts of revenge following an act of violence, address realistic consequences of actions, and help formulate constructive alternatives that lessen the sense of helplessness the adolescents may be experiencing.

When children experience a traumatic event, the entire family is affected. Often, family members have different experiences around the event and different emotional responses to the traumatic event. Recognizing each others' experience of the event, and helping each other cope with possible feelings of fear, helplessness, anger, or even guilt in not being able to protect children from a traumatic experience, is an important component of a family's emotional recovery.

Understanding Child Traumatic Stress: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

What is Child Traumatic Stress?

Child traumatic stress is when children and adolescents are exposed to traumatic events or traumatic situations, and when this exposure overwhelms their ability to cope.

When children have been exposed to situations where they feared for their lives, believed they could have been injured, witnessed violence, or tragically lost a loved one, they may show signs of traumatic stress. The impact on any given child depends partly on the objective danger, partly on his or her subjective reaction to the events, and partly on his or her age and developmental level.

If your child is experiencing traumatic stress you might notice the following signs:

- Difficulty sleeping and nightmares
- Refusing to go to school
- Lack of appetite
- Bed-wetting or other regression in behavior
- Interference with developmental milestones
- Anger
- Getting into fights at school or fighting more with siblings
- Difficulty paying attention to teachers at school and to parents at home
- Avoidance of scary situations
- Withdrawal from friends or activities
- Nervousness or jumpiness
- Intrusive memories of what happened
- Play that includes recreating the event

What is the best way to treat child traumatic stress?

There are effective ways to treat child traumatic stress.

Many treatments include cognitive behavioral principles:

- Education about the impact of trauma
- Helping children and their parents establish or re-establish a sense of safety
- Techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotional reactions
- An opportunity to talk about the traumatic experience in a safe, accepting environment
- Involvement, when possible, of primary caregivers in the healing process

For more information see the NCTSN website: www.nctsn.org.

What can I do for my child at home?

Parents never want their child to go through trauma or suffer its after effects.
Having someone you can talk to about your own feelings will help you to better help your child.

Follow these steps to help your child at home:

1. Learn about the common reactions that children have to traumatic events.
2. Consult a qualified mental health professional if your child's distress continues for several weeks. Ask your child's school for an appropriate referral.
3. Assure your child of his or her safety at home and at school. Talk with him or her about what you've done to make him or her safe at home and what the school is doing to keep students safe.
4. Reassure your child that he or she is not responsible. Children may blame themselves for events, even those completely out of their control.
5. Allow your child to express his or her fears and fantasies verbally or through play. That is a normal part of the recovery process.
6. Maintain regular home and school routines to support the process of recovery, but make sure your child continues going to school and stays in school.
7. Be patient. **There is no correct timetable for healing. Some children will recover quickly. Other children recover more slowly.** Try not to push him or her to "just get over it," and let him or her know that he or she should not feel guilty or bad about any of his or her feelings.

How can I make sure my child receives help at school?

If your child is staying home from school, depressed, angry, acting out in class, having difficulty concentrating, not completing homework, or failing tests, there are several ways to get help at school. Talk with your child's school counselor, social worker, or psychologist. Usually, these professionals understand child traumatic stress and should be able to assist you to obtain help.

Ask at school about services through Federal legislation including:

1. Special Education—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which, in some schools, includes trauma services; and
2. Section 504—which protects people from discrimination based on disabilities and may include provisions for services that will help your child in the classroom.

Check with your school's psychologist, school counselor, principal, or special education director for information about whether your child might be eligible for help with trauma under IDEA.

The good news is that there are services that can help your child get better. Knowing who to ask and where to look is the first step.

This project was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

Developmental Trauma & the Brain: How to Take a Bottom-Up Approach to Supporting Healing & Regulation with Children

FAST FACTS

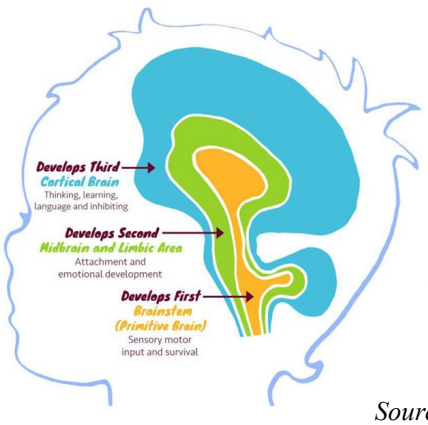
Research has shown us that brain development is impacted at any stage when children experience trauma, adverse experiences, chronic stress and attachment disruptions. This may seem discouraging or overwhelmingly negative, but the good news is that research has also as shown that our brains are plastic. Plastic may be a strange word to describe our brains, but what that really means is that thanks to *neuroplasticity* (or brain plasticity) our brains are able to form new neural pathways throughout our lifetime. So with the right supports in place, children's brains can heal, grow and change to encourage healthy growth, repair and development.

This resource is designed to provide you with some basic information about the brain and nervous system and how it is impacted by trauma, as well as ways to support healthy nervous system in children who have experienced developmental trauma.

How the Brain Develops

Our brains develop from the bottom up to help us survive and grow from birth through adolescence (and beyond!). The first part of the brain to develop is called the *brainstem* and is also known as the *primitive brain*. This part of our brain is responsible for keeping us alive and safe. It helps us fight for our life, freeze inside or in our bodies, and/or run away from danger. It also takes in important sensory information for survival and development. The second part of the brain to develop is the *limbic brain*, which is the home to our feelings, our ability to form attachments with others, and plays an important role in the formation of memories. The third part of our brain to develop is called the *cortical brain*, which is where thinking, learning, language, identity formation and cognitive processing of emotional information takes place.

Having an understanding of how and in what order the brain develops is helpful in guiding us in how to support children with getting their developmental needs met and regulating when they are having a tough time.



Source: Beacon House Therapeutic Services & Trauma Team, 2019

Recognizing and Understanding Dysregulation

Being curious about a child's behavior is a great way to begin understanding how and why they become dysregulated, and what can be helpful for them in order to regulate themselves (self-regulation) and to regulate with your support (co-regulation). Behaviors tell us a story about what a child is experiencing and what they might be needing in any given moment. If we can figure out the story that we are being told, we can begin to experiment with different regulation strategies and supports to bring a child back into their *window of tolerance* (a state of arousal that is both tolerable and allows the child to connect, learn, think and be regulated). Here are some tips for how to spot if your child is in a state of *fight, flight, freeze* or *collapse*, as well as some tips for how to respond accordingly:

Source: Beacon House Therapeutic Services & Trauma Team, 2019

Activities to Support Regulation, Connection and Repair

If you are the caregiver of a child who has experienced trauma and attachment disruption, you know how out of control it can feel for both you and your child when they are dysregulated and either over or under aroused (also known as *hyper aroused* or *hypo aroused*). Behaviors and emotions can get big and messy, which is challenging for everyone. While there is no right or wrong way to support your child during these times, there are some helpful tools you may consider when figuring out how to help your child feel more in control of their body, behaviors and feelings when they are struggling.

A helpful way to start, can be to identify a list of activities you and your child can engage in to help calm their brain stem and bring them out of a state of fight/flight/freeze/collapse. Some examples of these activities are:

- Rhythmic activities such as dancing, drumming or singing
- Walking, running or jumping
- Jumping on a trampoline or bouncing/rolling on an exercise ball
- Breathing together
- Rocking
- Chewing crunchy or chewy snacks

- Therapeutic massage
- Using a weighted blanket
- Tossing or rolling a ball back and forth

Additionally, using this helpful framework can provide some structure when you are determining what best may help you and your child in any given moment:

- The Three R's

  Dr. Bruce Perry, a trauma clinician and researcher has developed a helpful tool to support a child when they are having a difficult time to bring their thinking and learning brain back online by first helping to regulate and calm their brainstem.

Regulate	**—>**	**Relate**	**—>**	**Reason**
First, we help the child regulate, feel calm, safe and loved. We can use a variety of helpful regulation tools depending on what is most helpful for the child.		Next, we help the child by connecting with them in compassionate, attuned and validating ways. We may say things like, "I can see how upset you are right now" or "Your body is showing me that this is really tricky/tough for you".		Third, we can help the child to learn and reflect about the challenge and try to solve it together when you are both calm, regulated and connected.
We all do best with learning, reflecting and talking when we are regulated and feeling connected to a safe person.				

Resources:

- MN ADOPT HELP program, www.mnadopt.org/help
- Beacon House: https://beaconhouse.org.uk/useful-resources/
- Attachment Regulation and Competency resources: https://arcframework.org/resources-for-parents-and-caregivers/
- **Book***: The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel van der Kolk

Information presented by:

Mariah Rooney, LICSW, RYT is a clinical social worker and specializes in treating the complex challenges that arise as a result of traumatic stress, attachment trauma, intergenerational trauma, and dissociation. Her clinical experience includes work with children, adolescents and adults in outpatient, community, hospital and specialty care settings. She was a fellow at the Trauma Center in Boston, MA where she received extensive training in treating individuals and families of all ages with histories of complex trauma. Mariah is deeply committed to examining the intersections of social justice, trauma and mental health and participating in efforts to decolonize mental healthcare and increase access to anti-oppressive healing spaces.

Transracial Parenting in Foster Care and Adoption

Strengthening Your Bicultural Family

This guidebook was created to help parents and children in transracial homes learn how to thrive in and celebrate their bicultural family; and for children to gain a strong sense of racial identity and cultural connections.

Iowa Foster & Adoptive Parents Association

Funded By: Polk County Decategorization Grant

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INTRODUCTION

> *According to transracial adoption expert Joseph Crumbley, all foster children, whether in a transracial placement or not, worry* ***"Will I be accepted in this home, even if I am from a different (biological) family?"***
>
> *Children in transracial homes also worry* ***"Will I be accepted even if I'm from a different race?"***

This booklet will help you understand the importance of race and culture for your family; and share helpful hints, parenting tips and resources for you on the culturally rich journey of transracial parenting. Building your child's sense of racial identity, connecting your child to his or her culture and race, and preparing your child to deal with discrimination are important and often intimidating parenting tasks. It is okay to be uncomfortable. Knowledge is key to helping you navigate the path of transracial parenting effectively. Ask questions, seek information, and forge through the discomfort and anxiety. This is an exciting and eye-opening journey, full of ups and downs, full of laughter, and full of heart-warming experiences. Parenting a child of another race and creating a bicultural home environment will be the foundation for success in your family.

As a transracial parent, have you ever asked yourself the following questions?

- *Am I doing enough to help my black child feel a sense of belonging in our family?*
- *How can I better connect my Latino child to his culture, his racial roots?*
- *How can I prepare my daughter for the impending discrimination she will experience because she is black?*
- *How can I prepare my family to experience racism now that we are a transracial family?*
- *What do I need to do to meet my Korean child's needs around race and culture?*
- *How can I advocate for multicultural educational materials in the schools?*

Or, have you ever been too embarrassed to ask questions about culture, afraid of saying the wrong thing or embarrassed about not knowing the answer?

To understand the "how-to's" of parenting transracially, it is necessary to visit the past and understand the historical foundation of race and white privilege in society. Though racism today is not usually as overt as it was in decades past, it is still very present on a more subtle and institutionalized level. To best help your children develop a healthy racial identity, it is necessary to educate yourself about racism yesterday and racism today. For more information on any topic in this manual, we have included an extensive resource section in the back of this book.

A Transracially-Adopted Child's Bill of Rights

Adapted by Liza Steinberg Triggs from "A Bill of Rights for Mixed Folks," by Marilyn Dramé

- Every child is entitled to love and full membership in her family.
- Every child is entitled to have his culture embraced and valued.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that this is a race conscious society.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that she will experience life differently than they do.
- Every child is entitled to parents who are not looking to "save" him or to improve the world.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that being in a family doesn't depend on "matching."
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that transracial adoption changes the family forever.
- Every child is entitled to be accepted by extended family members.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that, if they are white, they benefit from racism.
- Every child is entitled to parents who know that they can't transmit the child's birth culture if it is not their own.
- Every child is entitled to have items at home that are made for and by people of his race.
- Every child is entitled to opportunities to make friends with people of her race or ethnicity.
- Every child is entitled to daily opportunities of positive experiences with his birth culture.
- Every child is entitled to build racial pride within her own home, school, and neighborhood.
- Every child is entitled to have many opportunities to connect with adults of the child's race.
- Every child is entitled to parents who accept, understand and empathize with her culture.
- Every child is entitled to learn survival, problem-solving, and coping skills in a context of racial pride.
- Every child is entitled to take pride in the development of a dual identity and a multicultural/ multiracial perspective on life.
- **Every child is entitled to find his multiculturalism to be an asset and to conclude, "I've got the best of both worlds."**

Transracial Parenting Pledge

As one committed to parenting cross-culturally, transracially, and or internationally,
I pledge the following:

1) To recognize the added value that diversity brings to my life, even outside of my children
2) To create a diverse home environment and family life that is reflective of our multicultural family
3) To prepare my child with survival skills to successfully navigate a race conscious society
4) To help my child to develop pride in his or her racial, ethnic identity and group membership
5) To confront racial, ethnic and cultural intolerance within my family, friends, and community
6) To seek and develop friendships that reflect my commitment to multiculturalism
7) To engage multicultural communities in order to learn, grow and share
8) To learn what matters to the racial/ethnic group of my child and why
9) To see ourselves as a multiracial family, a family of color and to embrace what that means in today's and tomorrows society
10) To move beyond the limits of my comfort, knowledge, and biases (to a place of cultural competence and responsiveness within my family and community through words and action)
11) To not ascribe to the notion of color blindness, but to color appreciation
12) To recognize that love is not enough, that it is necessary, but not sufficient in and of itself

_____ _____
Parent's Signature Date

_____ _____
Parent's Signature Date

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TRANSRACIAL FAMILY?

How are transracial foster and adoptive families defined?
Transracial foster and adoptive families consist of children of one race or culture being raised by parents of a different race or culture. Transracial families are considered families of color.

How is "culture" defined?
Culture is defined in many different ways; however, most definitions contain the following elements: shared language, race, customs, beliefs, values, social status, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, and others. Given this broad definition, every person is a part of several different cultures. Interacting with people from a different culture than one's own can create discomfort and anxiety. Interacting with people of one's own culture brings comfort and a sense of belonging.

What do these definitions mean when it comes to parenting children of other cultures and races?
White parents of children of color have the responsibility to help their children define themselves as a member of their own genetic racial community. Whether of a single race or a mixed race, (biracial), children either feel "a part of" or "separate from." Without connection to their own roots, a black child being raised in a white world will feel "separate from" the white people surrounding him who look different than him. He will also feel "separate from" the black people he looks like, who have the same cultural background, but he has no connection to. He needs connection to those that have shared culture and race. This is vital to his healthy development. No matter how he is raised, society will assign him to the race and culture of being black, and without connection, he will feel lost and isolated, not fitting in with the white culture he was raised in and not fitting in with his own racial culture. By connecting your children to their own race and culture, they will learn to grow in their roots while incorporating what they are learning from you about their identity in a transracial home. **They become bicultural, bridging the gap between the two worlds**.

Knowing this, it is important to evaluate your own beliefs about other cultures and other races before parenting transracially. Every person has biases, and uncovering them is a lesson in self-awareness and an opportunity for personal growth.

Here are questions to ask yourself before deciding to parent transracially:

- *How many friends do you have of another race or culture?*
- *What types of things do you seek to know about other cultures?*
- *Do you attend multi-cultural events and celebrations?*
- *What do you know about specialized skin and hair care for children of color?*
- *Have you incorporated other races and cultures into your home life?*
- *Are the schools in your area diverse with children of many cultures?*
- *What cultures are represented in your church?*
- *How do your extended family members view people of different races?*

HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?

The History of Transracial Foster Care and Adoption

In the mid 1950's, the Child Welfare League of America reported that African American children were the largest group of children in need of adoptive homes. Public and private agencies stepped up efforts to place these children by opting to include more kin, single female and foster parents in the pool of prospective adoptive parents. The next alternative for adoptive placement was to cross racial lines and transracially place children.

At the time, racial matching became one of many matching criteria that was considered to be good social work practice and in the best interest of the children. Children and families were matched on physical characteristics, including skin color, as well as social status and religious preference. While most of these other matching criteria were abandoned in the 1970's and 1980's in favor of matching criteria that focused on the ability of families to parent children with specific needs, racial matching was still an often used criteria of workers. The field was divided and the National Association of Black Social Workers voiced concern about children in transracial placements being at risk for racial identity issues and a disconnect from their cultural roots.

Because many black children lingered in care too long while waiting for a black foster or adoptive home, the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 was signed into law. MEPA prohibits denying or delaying placement of a child based on the race, color or national origin of the child or of the foster/ adoptive parent. MEPA was enacted to decrease the length of time that children waited to be placed in homes; to focus on recruitment and retention of foster parents who can meet the unique needs of children waiting to be placed; and to eliminate discrimination based on race, color or national origin. However, this version of MEPA contained a stipulation that racial and ethnic background could still be considered in making a placement. The Interethnic Adoption Provisions Act (also known as MEPA II) was then passed in 1996. This version amended the language of the original MEPA to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race in placement. Race was now to be excluded from placement guidelines. Under MEPA II, race may only enter into the placement decision when race issues are a matter of the best interest for the particular child in question.

Transracial Foster Care and Adoption Today

Currently there is a disproportionate number of African American children in foster care. In the general population, African American children represent 15% of all children. In foster care, African American children represent 32% of the 510,000 children. In addition to these findings, African American and Native American children have lower rates of adoption than other races (U.S. DHHS, 2008a; U.S. GAO, 2007).

In May 2008, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute released findings on Families for African American Children: The Role of Race & Law in Adoption from Foster Care to address these disparities. The recommendations of this report are supported by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, the Child Welfare League of America, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, the Adoption Exchange Association, the National Association of Black Social Workers, Voice for Adoption, the Foster Care Alumni of America and the National Association for Social Workers.

This report details the results of 35 years of research on transracial adoption, concluding the following 3 key issues:

1. Transracial adoption in itself does not produce psychological or social maladjustment problems in children.
2. Transracially adopted children and their families face a range of challenges, and the manner in which parents handle them facilitates or hinders children's development.
3. Children in foster care come to adoption with many risk factors that pose challenges for healthy development. For these children, research points to the importance of adoptive placements with families who can address their individual issues and maximize their opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

Though there is limited research on the topic of transracially adopted children, recent findings reported by the Evan B. Donaldson Institute have detailed the following issues common to children in transracial homes:

1. Transracially adopted children face challenges in coping with being "different."
2. Transracially adopted children may struggle to develop a positive racial/ethnic identity.
3. A key life skill for transracially adopted children is the ability to cope with discrimination.

To summarize the conclusions of recommendations made by the Evan B. Donaldson Institute, it is recommended that children of color are placed with families who can meet their long-term needs, through supporting connection of the child to his or her own culture, fostering a healthy and positive racial identity, and preparing the child to deal with discrimination.

To read the entire report by the Evan B. Donaldson Institute, log onto: www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/2008_05_mepa.php

What is "white privilege" and what does it mean in transracial foster care and adoption?

What is white privilege? It is being in the majority group in society, having power, and benefiting as a result. Think of a time when you were not in the majority group and you will quickly understand how difficult it is to be a minority in any group.

- Being the only female in a male group, or vice versa.
- Being the only overweight person in a group of non-overweight people.
- Being the only foster parent in a group of social workers.
- Being the only married person in a group of single people.

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, said that white privilege is "like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks." McIntosh has written several articles on the issue along with the book **"**White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" that address this cultural phenomenon.

Some of the items on McIntosh's White Privilege Checklist include:

- "I can arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time."
- "I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed."
- "I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented."
- "I am never asked to speak for all of the people of my racial group."
- "I can take a job or enroll in a college with an affirmative action policy without having my co-workers or peers assume I got it because of my race."
- "I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race."
- "I can walk into a classroom and know I will not be the only member of my race."

These are only a few of the items on McIntosh's White Privilege Checklist. These items are a stepping off point for discussion and for discovering more about how white privilege impacts all families, including transracial families.

White parents of minority children must educate themselves about white privilege to better understand their children's experience in the world, to help their children navigate a world of being in the minority group, and to begin advocating on behalf of equality for their children.

When minority children are surrounded by people of their own culture, it is usually a needed "break" from being stared at for being different, from feeling like they don't belong because of their race, from wondering who is and isn't making assumptions about them for their race, from being watched by store security, and from being lumped together into one broad and inaccurate stereotype. Surrounded by people of their own culture, children will feel a sense of belonging and a freedom to be themselves not otherwise felt in the majority culture. This "break" is what children need on a regular basis.

To further understand how a person of a minority race feels in this society of white privilege, challenge yourself to go somewhere where you are in the minority race. Suddenly you are thinking about things that normally you might take for granted.

Imagine walking down the sidewalk as a white person in a predominantly black community. How do you think you would feel? Would you feel like you fit in? Would you be acutely aware of the fact that you are the only white person in the area….are you feeling alone? Would you know how to "fit in" if you lived here? Would you need to talk differently to fit in? Or dress differently? Would you be in danger of being attacked for not looking like most of the people here or for being different? Would you be treated the same way in the neighborhood stores, or cautiously watched because of your different-ness? Where would you feel like you fit in? What would you want to know if you were transplanted to this neighborhood to live long-term? And how would you find out?

GENERAL PARENTING TASKS FOR TRANSRACIAL PARENTS:

One of the most common things parents and professionals hear from transracial adoptees is that they want friends or brothers and sisters that look like them (eyes, skin color, etc.).

Children living in transracial homes need parents who recognize their need to know their cultural roots. Experts recommend that parents do the following things to meet the cultural needs of their children :

1. Interact with people of your child's race – form friendships with people of all cultures, valuing diversity.
2. Live in a diverse, integrated neighborhood.
3. Recognize multiculturalism is an asset and valued.
4. Seek out mentors within your child's culture - for yourself and for your child.
5. Choose integrated schools that offer unbiased educational materials.
6. Stand up to racism and discrimination. Have a no tolerance policy for it.
7. Provide the appropriate hair and skin care for your child.
8. Make your home a bicultural home.
9. Talk about race and culture often.
10. Go to places where your child is surrounded by people of his/her same race and culture.

The Culture of Children in Foster Care and Adoption

Trauma, Grief, and Attachment

Before looking at the above parenting tasks, it is important to recognize the culture of children in care that impacts their growth and well-being. Because children in foster and adoptive homes often have a background of abuse and neglect, along with separation from their parents, it is necessary to briefly outline how the many layers of trauma and grief impact a child's sense of identity, belonging and general well-being. When children experience trauma through abuse, neglect, and/or separation from birth parents, they must deal with trauma and grief. Your first task is to provide them with a safe environment to heal.

If there are attachment issues present, as there often are with children in foster and adoptive homes, it is important to seek out the professional help of an attachment-trained therapist. Without healthy attachment, the traumatized brains of these children will stay stuck in a flight or fight response, experiencing parental nurturing from you as pain and sometimes terror. Intimacy hurts for children with attachment issues. Specialized parenting techniques are necessary to help them heal.

Again, a trained therapist can assist in this process. In general, the earlier the intervention occurs on a developing brain, the better the results.

In addition to the issues of attachment, trauma, grief and loss, children in transracial homes experience an additional layer of struggle to find their racial identity in a home that doesn't represent their own race. Building a child's racial identity is an important task for parents in transracial homes.

Self-Esteem and Positive Racial Identity

Robert O'Connor, adult transracial adoptee, therapist and trainer has said, "if you are the only one, you are alone." If you are the only one who doesn't look like the others, you are alone. Feeling different from others can create low self-esteem, especially if a child views "different" as "bad".

What is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is a person's feeling of self-worth or a feeling of being of value - in their family, in their circle of friends, in the world.

High self-esteem creates a foundation to go out into the world with confidence and resiliency; with a willingness to take necessary risks and persevere through challenges. Self-esteem is built through repeated small successes, through a sense of belonging and feeling safe at home, and through being valued within the family and in broader society.

Low self-esteem robs a person of the courage to step out into the world with confidence. A child with low self-esteem might struggle with the ability to take necessary risks or form new relationships, or go after a dream. Low self-esteem also sets a child up to lack resilience to stress and can set him or her up to be vulnerable to others. This can play itself out in situations of peer pressure, or an inability to defend oneself against bullies or perpetrators, or many other possible scenarios. People with low self-esteem don't always have the ability to stay in touch with who they are on the inside, and instead they are susceptible to yield to what is around them – including unhealthy people or circumstances. Additionally, when a person suffers from low self-esteem, it can be very difficult to try new things, work toward goals, persevere through challenges, or learn new skills. They have an intense fear of failure, and a generalized belief that they ARE a failure as a person. The good news is that self-esteem can be taught.

How to Build Self-Esteem

Create a sense of safety for your child – physical and emotional safety. Children need a safe place to live, free of abuse, and a safe place to talk about their thoughts and feelings - ALL of their thoughts and feelings. This creates a sense of being valued, a belief that he or she has the right to exist, to think, and to feel; and the knowledge that he or she is important.

Create a sense of belonging. Children need to feel a sense of belonging in their families. Acknowledging similarities helps children feel like they belong. It is also important to acknowledge and celebrate differences as well. Let children's voices be heard and respected, so that they feel valued in the context of family.

Point out your child's strengths and abilities often. As they learn new skills in a certain subject (how to multiply or divide; how to solve complicated word problems; how to play a musical instrument; how to shoot a basketball…), acknowledge these small successes. Small successes provide the foundation for building self-esteem in children.

There are many resources for parents on how to build self-esteem in children. Check out your local library, book store, or Internet for resources on this topic.

What is racial identity? How can parents instill it?

> *"Positive racial identity depends on our ability to identify fully with our ethnic roots, yet remain confident that race or ethnicity does not limit our opportunities in life."*

In addition to understanding what it means to be in foster care or to be adopted, children in transracial homes need to know what it means to be a member of their own minority group. Having positive experiences within their own cultures creates a strong racial identity and sense of belonging, along with a resiliency against negative stereotypes that are portrayed in the media and that are experienced in society through racism and discrimination.

Children in transracial homes will also need to learn what it means to be a member of a minority group while living in a family of the majority culture. These children have the additional challenge of learning how to live "bi-culturally," walking in two worlds; the world of their own culture and the world of the culture they are living in. Parents who make it a priority to become a bicultural home will help their children develop a strong sense of racial identity and self-esteem. There are many suggestions for helping children connect to their own cultures on pages 14-15, to provide a great foundation of success for your child.

A child's self-esteem and racial identity are strengthened when his or her cultural differences are valued. Examples of this would include providing for the unique skin and hair care of your child, along with their dietary and health care needs.

In general, it is important to celebrate similarities and differences.
Sharing similarities creates bonding and a feeling of belonging.

"Your favorite food is spaghetti, just like mine."
"You like to learn about insects, just like your brother."
"You are good at math, just like your father."

Celebrating differences acknowledges that a child is valued because of their uniqueness and that having differences is positive.

"Yes, your skin is darker than mine. God makes people with all kinds of beautiful skin colors."
"Your hair only needs to be washed once each week; your sister's hair needs to be washed every day. You both have beautiful and different hair."

In general, children in transracial placements need to:

- Live in a home that provides positive experiences with the children's culture.
- Remain connected to same-race relationships, with peers and mentors.
- Live in a home that allows them to feel racial and ethnic pride; and provides the children with survival skills.
- Have parents who allow the children to explore their culture in many different ways; and who recognize the differences between the children's birth families' culture and their own family culture.
- Have parents who recognize and understand what the children will experience in a race-conscious society.
- Have parents who can care for the children's skin and hair care needs, along with dietary and medical needs.
- Have the right to feel a belonging to their current family culture as well as to their culture of origin.

Considerations for biracial children:

"People of mixed heritage do not have half the experience of being one race and half the experience of the other, any more than children of a mother and a father have half the experience of being their mother's child and half the experience of being their father's. They are the product of both, always, whether both are present or not," from Steinberg and Hall, 1998, "Is Transracial Adoption Easier for Multiracial Kids?" from www.pactadopt.org.

White parents may inadvertently believe their biracial child identifies more with their white culture, since the child is half-white and being raised by white parents. The truth is actually the opposite. Most biracial children identify themselves as children of color. Society places them in this category as well, since a person's appearance is what sets him or her apart from others. They can't choose to be one-half of who they are. It is important to explore all aspects of a child's racial roots so that they can form a strong sense of self and racial identity.

How to Connect Your Child to Their Culture; How to Become a Bicultural Family

The following are suggestions and not an exhaustive list. These are starting points and considerations for transracial families as they continue to grow on their journey of learning about culture.

Live in an integrated neighborhood. Choose a neighborhood where there are members of the child's culture or race and schools comprised of diverse cultures and ethnicities.

Socialize with members of your child's race or culture. The relationships you choose serve as a role model for your child. Building relationships with people of your child's culture may create natural mentor relationships for yourself and for your child. Allowing your child to connect to people of their own culture or ethnicity can minimize the loss they feel from being separated from it.

Talk openly about race and culture. This requires confronting your own discomfort, hidden biases and stereotypes you have collected over the years. There are many resources to do so listed in the back of this booklet.

Counter negative messages about a culture with positive ones. Point out that negative stereotypes are untrue and that, unfortunately, some people still believe them. Some people "just don't know" that what they're saying is wrong. Remind your child that every person is unique and everybody has strengths and weaknesses. Note your child's strengths often. Remember, two of the factors important to building self-esteem are a feeling of belonging and mastering small successes.

Balance your own discomfort with the belief that you ARE the right parent for this child. Making your child feel like he or she belongs in your family is important. Interracial families have a richness of diversity and experiences to celebrate.

Make your home a bicultural home. Incorporate the following areas of diverse cultures into your home life:

Art – Display art from various cultures.
Crafts – Create crafts/art from various cultures.
Cultural Life Book – Create a book about your child's country and culture.
Maps – Display maps or flags of your child's country.
Dolls – Collect multi-cultural dolls.
Vacation – Plan a vacation to your child's country.
Games – Play games from various cultures.
Music – Listen to music from different cultures.
Bedtime Stories – Consider buying **"**Cultural Bedtime Stories for Interracial Adoptive/Foster Families" (see the resources section for more on this book).
Literature – Visit libraries to learn more about your child's culture and other cultures.
Museums – Visit cultural museums.
Language – Learn a new language as a family.
Clothing – Purchase clothing of your child's culture.
Food – Make food that reflects your child's culture and various cultures as the norm in your home.
Friends – Develop friendships with people of diverse cultures.
Support groups – Join a group of others who have adopted transracially.
Animals – Learn about animals from your child's country.
Holidays – Celebrate holidays that are significant to his/her culture.

Incorporate Cultural Communities Whether you live in an integrated neighborhood or not, you can incorporate the following activities and visit the following places to help your family connect to its cultural roots:

- Schools - (Attend schools that are diverse in culture – also advocate for unbiased learning materials.
- Camps - (Attend camps/ cultural camps) - see the resources section in the back of this booklet
- Daycare - (Go to day care centers) that are diverse in culture.
- Churches - (Attend churches) that are integrated with diverse cultures.
- Sports - (Participate in athletic organizations) in neighborhoods of your child's culture.
- Social Organizations - (Participate in social organizations) where your child can connect to his or her culture.
- Cultural museums – Visit cultural museums and historical places specific to your child's culture and diverse cultures.
- Shops - Frequent beauty/barber shops, restaurants, and other places that are frequented by people of your child's heritage.
- Celebrations - Attend celebrations and events where most of the people present are of the same race or ethnic group as your child. This will not only help your child, it will help you understand what it feels like to be in the minority of a group.
- Take a trip to your child's country - If your child is from another country, consider a trip to that country to explore the culture and heritage. This could provide answers to your child about their history, along with providing an enriching and educating experience for everybody.
- History Classes - Take a history class on your child's culture.

In general, embrace diversity and celebrate all cultures in your home. Practice traditions from your child's ethnic heritage. This is imperative to becoming a bicultural home. Discussing cultural education should
be a frequent topic of conversation at home. All members of the family should talk frequently about diversity and culture in the home.

As discussed earlier, celebrate the similarities and differences within your family. To feel a sense of belonging, similarities must be noted, such as a like for music, a love of animals, a desire to learn about science, and many others. Pointing out to your child how his or her likes and dislikes are the same as yours or your spouses will forge a strong sense of belonging; while celebrating differences.

As children adopted into transracial homes become adults, their voices are helping to guide important changes for families and professionals. The following articles are by Jae Ran Kim, MSW, LGSW, and John Raible, EdD. Ms. Kim is an adult transracial adoptee, social worker, writer and teacher. She has worked as a child specific recruiter for Hennepin County in Minnesota and serves as a community faculty instructor at Metropolitan State University. Dr. Raible is a biracial African American adult adoptee raised by white parents. He is the father of two grown African American sons adopted from foster care and the grandfather of biracial children. Dr. Raible works as an Assistant Professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the College of Education & Human Sciences.

Being Anti-Racist Is a Journey, Not a Destination

By Jae Ran Kim, MSW, LGSW

The following was article was published in the New Demographic e-book, "How to Be An Anti-Racist Parent."

I was thinking about what kinds of tips to suggest, and found myself struggling. I suppose I could suggest a bunch of books I found inspirational or poignant; maybe even come up with a "Top 10" list too – but being an anti-racist parent is truly a lot more challenging than any book or list can even begin to address. What I've learned comes down to just a few lessons, learned experientially in the past 13 years as a parent:

- You can't expect your children to behave better than you do. What you say is important, but it's your own actions that speak louder than words. In other words, you need to talk the talk and walk the walk. If you tell your children that they should accept "all kinds of people" yet they never see any diversity in your life, why would they believe your diversity talk?So much about race and racism intersects with other types of diversity, including class, culture, religion, gender and sexuality. Racism doesn't exist in a bubble and it isn't a problem to be "solved." Parents need to be able to address diversity in all its forms.
- You can't protect your children from racism. You need to be able to show them how ugly racism is, or they won't be able to recognize it for themselves. If your children are kids of color, they'll need to have survival skills – verbal, intellectual, and physical. And these survival skills aren't just about driving while Black or confronting skinheads – your kids will need to know how to survive the racism embedded in our educational, economic, judicial and occupational institutions.
- Children need to have the language to discuss race and racism. If you don't give them the chance to talk about it at home, they'll learn it from their classmates and from the media and much of it will be wrong information.
- Don't wait for your kids to come to you with questions about racism. In my home, discussions about race, racial representation and racism are as common as the latest episode of "American Idol." In fact, American Idol has been the starting point for some discussions! What my 8-year old contributes towards these discussions are very different than what my 13- year old contributes – but the main point is that they both contribute.
- You need to be able to recognize your own biases and privileges. Because we all have them.

To me, talking about race and racism is like talking to my kids about sex. You have to really work at it! You don't want to get too graphic when they are young so you need to figure out what is behind their questions. It will be a challenge as my kids get older and their questions become more abstract and harder to answer.

The Significance of Racial Identity in Transracially Adopted Young Adults

An Address by John Raible, 1990

Often after I speak to white parents about my experiences growing up in an interracial family, I come away feeling misunderstood. If only I could have said it differently, I think to myself. If only I could make them see what I see and feel what I feel. It is important to me that people understand why I identify so strongly with people of color. As an adoptee, I know that my childhood experiences may be quite different from what transracial adoptees experience today. Yet as a teacher with a degree in Multicultural Education, I firmly believe in the need for all people of color to develop a clear, affirming cultural identity in order to minimize the psychological effects of racism.

The main idea I want to leave with you today is the vital necessity for you to encourage the development of such an identity in your adopted sons and daughters of color. By using my life as an example, I hope to illustrate how a child in a predominantly white environment faces an enormous challenge. I hope to offer some insight into what needs to happen in families in order for their children to feel good about their cultural and racial heritage. I also hope my comments will be of some use to social workers and others involved with transracial adoptions, so that they might more effectively serve the children with whom they come in contact.

As a biracial child growing up in a virtually all-white setting, I set out on a search for a cultural and racial identity. I was looking for a social niche I could fit into, in which I could feel whole and affirmed. I needed such affirmation of who I was culturally because I wasn't taught a racial identity in a clear, straightforward, unambiguous manner. Yet all the while I was receiving very clear messages, from people in my surroundings and from the media, that I was different, unacceptable, and by extension, inferior.

Particularly stressful was my adolescence, the time when we all struggle for an identity separate from our parents. I found I had to struggle very hard to find role models and knowledge to help me answer the nagging question of "who am I?" It was painful because while I perceived racism all around me, I didn't have people around me to talk to who had experienced what I was experiencing, and who could therefore validate and share my perceptions.

You may ask, "Where were you perceiving racism?" I sensed it at school, in the Eurocentric curriculum that excluded a multicultural perspective. I sensed it among my peers. I felt it from the fathers of the white girls I was interested in. I sensed it from prospective employers when I was job hunting, and from security guards in shopping mall stores, and from police who watched me and sometimes stopped me on the streets. I detected it in the comments and jokes that went unchallenged among friends, and even among members of my family.

I often felt crazy, doubting my perceptions of racist situations, because I was told I was being "too sensitive" and "too serious." At some point I gave up trying to talk to my family about what I was going through, and resigned myself to expecting less in the way of support and understanding from them. I felt alienated from my family and friends, and totally alone as the only person of color I knew who was coping with a racist reality. *(article continued on next page)*

It took years of pulling away from, and scrambling back to, my adoptive family before I could say with conviction and certainty, "I am black." It took years because I had to figure out for myself what being black meant. I had to unlearn false information and negative stereotypes I had absorbed from the racism in the environment we all grow up in. I had to gather my own strength and proceed to read and educate myself about the black experience, while my parents worried that I was rejecting them, which made me feel guilty and disloyal for seeking knowledge of my black heritage. My loyalties were divided. I was torn and confused by what I felt emotionally and what I had been taught intellectually. I felt hurt and belittled by the racism I was experiencing, yet simultaneously guilty, ungrateful, and maybe even wrong in my thinking. I felt isolated and misunderstood. My days were filled with anxiety, and anger.

Many of you are no doubt thinking, "Sounds like a typical adolescence to me!" But let me remind you, I'm just talking about my feelings about race at the moment. Of course I was also dealing with regular adolescent issues around dating, peer pressure, sexuality, gender roles, going to college, and growing up in general. The racial confusion made adolescence that much harder to cope with.

How did I mange to survive this emotional turmoil with my sanity intact? I believe several factors came together which enabled me to land on my feet. To begin with, my parents did love me-- that goes without saying. They offered their support, to the best of their ability. They effectively raised me to believe in myself, to fight injustice, and to stand up for my convictions. I will always be grateful for the love and guidance they have given me as my parents.

Beyond this, I began on my own to connect with significant members of the black community. For example, I started a correspondence with a black social worker whose name I learned from an article on transracial adoption in which we were both quoted. When I finally met her in person, I was immediately impressed with her warmth and her maternal concern. We had begun our correspondence with me questioning her about what I then saw as the "racism" of the National Association of Black Social Workers' position condemning transracial adoption. When I began to understand her point of view, part of me was relieved to realize that there was a group of people sincerely concerned about my welfare, and my pain, who were extending to me a welcome into the black community as one of their own. This was highly significant for me, to realize that black people did accept me and want me to be part of "their" community. I had grown up with the story that the social workers considered me "too light" to be adopted by a black family, and "too dark" for a white one. Which left me feeling like I didn't belong anywhere, except with a liberal, colorblind family that "rose above" racial designations.

Through my studies at college, I continued to grow in consciousness and understanding of the roots of racism, cultural imperialism, and white responsibility for racism. At the same time, I got the expected payoff from my decision to attend a public institution rather than a small, elite, "preppy" college. I had made this decision against the advice of my high school guidance counselor and friends, in the hope that I would gain exposure to a wider diversity of students at a state university, and apparently, it worked. I got to know other middle class black students as real people who were not that different from me. I began to appreciate the variety of ways of being black, recognizing in the black community the same variations, class distinctions, and lifestyle choices I was familiar with in white society. Yet all was not smooth sailing, by any means. I felt nervous and anxious around my new black friends and peers. I was self-conscious about sounding or acting "too white." I felt scrutinized for having white girlfriends, and continued to fret over being rejected and not being taken seriously as an equal. *(article continued on next page)*

Naturally, when my parents would come to visit, I was self-conscious about being seen with them. I worried about being seen too often, or in the "wrong" places, with my white friends. I was very aware of feeling caught between two cultures, of having to tread the line between two worlds. Fortunately, in my multicultural education courses, I was learning new language to describe the experience of biculturality. More and more, I was identifying with black culture as an African American. I was lucky to meet other biracial individuals who were clear about their own identities as African Americans. And I also met black students who struck me as even more confused than me about their affiliations and allegiances. I finally came to understand that there isn't only one way of being black, that there was no mystique I had to measure up to. I came to believe that I could live however I wanted to live and still be accepted as a member of the black community. I enjoyed that feeling of belonging. I liked hearing my African American friends affirm me with teasing phrases like, "Man, you a nigga just like the rest of us."

While this was going on, my consciousness expanded to incorporate the related issues of oppression and resistance of Indians, Latinos, Asians, and women of all cultures. Then, when I went to teach in a Pueblo school in northern New Mexico for a semester, I had an amazing, revelatory experience. For the first time, I was aware of being in the majority; everyone had brown skin and dark hair like me! It was the first time I felt I could let my guard down and not have to anticipate the next racial insult or attack. I enjoyed the peace of not having to think about race all the time. As with my black friends at college, I was pleased with the warm reception given me by the Chicano and Indian people I met. I had never felt so automatically welcomed in any white community I'd lived in. I had the sense now that most people around me were kind, generous, and trustworthy, people whom I could count on if I needed help. This contrasted sharply with my experience of white people that only a few could be trusted and relied upon in that manner. I revelled in the camaraderie, the shared spirit of resistance to cultural domination, the pride we took in our respective heritages. I loved it all, and decided to stay on and teach in New Mexico for the next two years.

Again, I experienced the same warm, welcoming feelings and acceptance living in the Navajo Nation. While there, I also met white people who were more or less comfortable with their minority status, and who seemed less uptight and more down to earth than many of the people I'd grown up with. Finally, after teaching Navajo children for two years, I decided I was ready to move to a black community, and challenge myself to life and work in a so-called ghetto. I ended up getting a job teaching in Compton, near Watts, in Los Angeles. Once more, I was immediately accepted and made to feel welcome-- I don't know why I should have been surprised, at this point! I found that I was accorded a certain respect from my peers, for being well educated and for my commitment to teaching black and brown children in the public schools.

You can imagine the culture shock I experienced whenever I visited my family and friends from what felt like "my other life" back east. I do want to say, I will always love my adoptive family. And I also love, in a different way, my people. I have found that I need-- indeed, that I cannot live without-- the acceptance and friendship and inspiration of people of color. Truly, as Nikki Giovanni says, "Black love is black wealth." I choose to no longer be poor.

(article continued on next page)

I hope by now it is clear why I choose to identify so strongly with African Americans, in particular, and with people of color in general. It is a natural, logical and emotional identification, and one that I wish for all transracially adopted young people. I don't know if I have adequately conveyed the pain and frustration I lived through before arriving at a deeper sense of my cultural identity and a new consciousness. If I could, I would spare every child of color my feelings of isolation and despair. This is the reason behind my commitment to finding same-race homes for children of color, whenever possible. Please don't misunderstand-- it's not about hatred or segregation. Rather, it's about self-love and belonging, peoplehood and healing acceptance in the face of all-pervasive racism. It's about doing what needs to be done to eradicate racism, which is the subject of the next part of my talk.

I am grateful for what I have been given by being adopted. I received a great start to a life as an independent, self-sufficient black man. Now, living on my own, raising my own black son, no longer buffered by white middle class supports, I must make my way in a hostile, racist society drawing on all the resources at my disposal. For the most part, those resources are found in the black community and in other communities of color.

For more articles and information from Dr. Raible, you can visit his website at: www.johnraible.wordpress.com or contact him at:

John Raible, Ed.D.
Asst. Professor, Diversity & Curriculum Studies
Dept. of Teaching, Learning, & Teacher Education
25 Henzlik Hall
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588-0355
Office Phone: 402-472-6490

You can find more articles by Dr. Raible and other adult transracial adoptees at:
New York States' Citizens Coalition For Children, Inc.
410 East Upland Road - Ithaca, NY 14850 - 607-272-0034
www.nysccc.org and then choose the link: Transracial & Transcultural Adoption & Foster Care Resources

40 Ways to Increase Bi-Culturalism in Transracial Families

Many transracial families can benefit from incorporating the adopted child's culture of origin into their homes. For transracial families, it is often a matter of bi-culturalism versus assimilation. Does the adopted child assimilate into the dominant culture of the home environment, or does the home environment and resulting attitudes and lifestyle represent both the parent's culture and the child's culture of origin? Years of experience, both personal and professional suggest the latter. To increase the bi-culturalism of the transracial family, the following list of 40 items will serve as a guide.

1) Choose a multicultural babysitter or respite provider
2) Choose a multicultural faith environment
3) Choose a multicultural physician
4) Choose a multicultural dentist
5) Choose to adopt a multicultural vacation location
6) Choose a multicultural grocery shopping environment that also has traditional cultural food
7) Choose multicultural daycare and schools
8) Choose a multicultural mentor for your child
9) Choose a multicultural mentor for the parent
10) Choose to live in a multicultural neighborhood
11) Choose a regular multicultural entertainment venue
12) Choose multicultural artwork i.e. pictures, statues (preferably from the child's culture of origin)
13) Choose multicultural reading material, books, magazines, and poetry, donate multicultural books to libraries and request libraries to purchase books or videos of color
14) Choose multicultural toys that reflect the child's race and ethnicity (dolls, superheroes, cartoon figures, lunch boxes etc.)
15) Choose multicultural restaurants as family favorites
16) Choose to cook multicultural foods as a usual menu item
17) Choose to highlight multicultural inventors, teachers, community members, or choose a favorite actor or actress of color and extol their virtues as the desired standard
18) Choose multicultural music and musicians as our family favorites i.e. Fred Hammond (gospel), Gloria Estephan (Latin sound)
19) Choose multicultural movies to own or rent i.e. Black Cinderella, The Wiz, Cosby Show etc.
20) Choose multicultural cartoons, TV shows
21) Choose to engage in multicultural guided activities and extol the virtues of people of color during the news, newspaper, TV or movie watching
22) Choose multicultural clothing and traditional dress
23) Choose to attend multicultural celebrations, community events, and celebrate multicultural holidays
24) Choose multicultural hair salon, barber and hairstyles
25) Choose to join multicultural professional associations, i.e. Latino Chamber of Commerce, Black Social Workers Association, book clubs
26) Choose multicultural community centers or health clubs to join or frequent
27) Choose multicultural camps, community ed., Awanas, cub scouts, girl scouts troops
28) Choose multicultural friends and families whose house you go to for dinner and hang out with (vacation together, camping, long-term close relationships)
29) Choose to create or join multicultural play groups, support groups or playgrounds
30) Choose multicultural people to join your family as *extended* or *honorary family* members to play the role of auntie, uncle, cousin or grandparents

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40 Ways to Increase Bi-Culturalism in Transracial Families

(continued)

31) Choose a multicultural place of employment that has people of color in leadership positions, and as co-workers
32) Choose multicultural issues or causes identified by a community of color to join, fight or advocate for
33) Choose multicultural agencies, events, and environments to volunteer for
34) Choose to learn a language, preferably the native, traditional language of the child
35) Choose a multicultural hobby or interest; learn the traditional artwork, dance or practices of the child's culture of origin.
36) Choose a multicultural class at a university, serf the net, read books, become a life long learner of multiculturalism
37) Choose multicultural holiday cards, stationery, commercial products, request these at stores
38) Choose to volunteer at your child's school to celebrate ethnic history months, i.e. volunteer to read multicultural books, tell stories, give multicultural posters
39) Choose to educate family members, friends, school and community about the value of multiculturalism
40) Choose to recognize the added value that living a bi-cultural life has for each family member

Inviting Me to the Party

By Jae Ran Kim, MSW, LGSW

This past Friday was our school's annual Fall Picnic. Last spring I wrote about being snubbed from a "Mom's Night Out" event in which several moms from my kid's school organized an evening of socializing.

When I spoke to my co-worker, who had first informed me of this event, she was saddened and as upset as I was about how "Mary" passed over the moms of color when handing out invitations. She admitted she hadn't looked around to see how many moms of color were at this party, but related that she often thought about why more parents of color didn't participate in the PTO or on other school committees. We had a lengthy discussion about inclusiveness and how organizations can recruit and retain families of color.

The conversation about "inclusiveness" made me think more about how sometimes we people of color are used as pawns for "diversity." Just having an invitation alone isn't enough to entice me to participate or volunteer in a group or club or committee. Schools, churches, parent groups, social networking groups, writing groups – I've attended countless "groups" that ask me, as typically the lone or one of the lone people of color – what "they" can do to attract more people like "me."

So here are just a few suggestions:

- Don't just put up a flyer and expect me to come. If I know the group is not diverse, I need a personal invitation and a reason why my participation is requested.
- Take time to find out what my issues and concerns are. The only way to find that out is to ask.
- Don't ask your one token friend of color/community what the issues in their community are and take that as the gospel truth. One person does not a community make.
- If I volunteer an idea, suggestion, or my time, take me seriously.
- Don't expect me to be the spokesperson for my community.
- Investigate whether there are barriers or obstacles written into the foundation of your organization that prevent a more diverse membership.
- Don't expect us to do all the work socially. You need to step outside your comfort zone and build relationships with us. It's not always about us having to make relationships with you. That means, come on our turf once in a while.
- We can smell insincerity a mile away. If you're inviting us just so you can have some "numbers" to report, we won't stay.
- If you invite us and we don't come, don't just write us off. Take the time to find out why we didn't come. And if it really matters to you, you'll address those reasons.

Racism and Discrimination – Fostering Racial Coping Skills

For white parents who become transracial parents, it usually doesn't take very long to experience racial bias and discrimination as a family. You will experience the racism that minorities experience, and it may be unfamiliar, and sometimes unexpected, territory for your family. One Des Moines area foster parent commented on how surprised and angry she was to be followed around stores while shopping with her African American daughter. This happened on several occasions when they were out shopping together, an experience she had not had with her white children.

To help your child understand racism, prepare for it, and handle it, it is important to educate yourself about the history of racism. It is also necessary to understand the dynamics of white privilege as it has impacted your own life and what that means for the life of your children.

As discussed on pages 7-8, a good resource for understanding white privilege is the book "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh. According to McIntosh, when you benefit from white privilege, you don't have to think about it. You are in the majority. It can easily be taken for granted.

Although racism today is usually less aggressive and more subtle than in the past, it still exists. Here are some suggestions to help you and your family prepare for and handle discrimination.

Developing Racial Coping Skills:

One of the most important factors in preparing your child to deal with racism is to instill strong self-esteem in your child. When children have a positive view of themselves and their accomplishments, they can more easily move forward from hurtful outside comments of racism. They can compare racist comments to what they know about themselves and dismiss them as untrue more easily.

According to Dana Williams in the free and downloadable publication "Beyond the Golden Rule: A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice," there are helpful parenting tips to combat discrimination depending on the developmental age of children. The following is reprinted with permission from www.tolerance.org. Visit this site to download this free e-book or to access more publications for parents, children and educators.

5 TIPS: THE PRESCHOOL YEARS

BE HONEST: Don't encourage children not to "see" color or tell children we are all the same. Rather, discuss differences openly and highlight diversity by choosing picture books, toys, games and videos that feature diverse characters in positive, non-stereotypical roles.

EMBRACE CURIOSITY: Be careful not to ignore or discourage your youngster's questions about differences among people, even if the questions make you uncomfortable. Not being open to such questions sends the message that difference is negative.

BROADEN CHOICES: Be careful not to promote stereotypical gender roles, suggesting that there are certain games, sports or activities that only girls can do or only boys can do.

FOSTER PRIDE: Talk to your child about your family heritage to encourage self-knowledge and a positive self-concept.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE: Widen your circle of friends and acquaintances to include people from different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.

5 TIPS: THE ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN YEARS

MODEL IT: Talking to your child about the importance of embracing difference and treating others with respect is essential, but it's not enough. Your actions, both subtle and overt, are what she will emulate.

ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCE: Rather than teaching children that we are all the same, acknowledge the many ways people are different, and emphasize some of the positive aspects of our differences – language diversity and various music and cooking styles, for example. Likewise, be honest about instances, historical and current, when people have been mistreated because of their differences. Encourage your child to talk about what makes him different, and discuss ways that may have helped or hurt him at times. After that, finding similarities becomes even more powerful, creating a sense of common ground.

CHALLENGE INTOLERANCE: If your child says or does something indicating bias or prejudice, don't meet the action with silence. Silence indicates acceptance, and a simple command – "Don't say that" – is not enough. First try to find the root of the action or comment: "What made you say that about Sam?" Then, explain why the action or comment was unacceptable.

SEIZE TEACHABLE MOMENTS: Look for everyday activities that can serve as spring-boards for discussion. School-age children respond better to lessons that involve real-life examples than to artificial or staged discussions about issues. For example, if you're watching TV together, talk about why certain groups often are portrayed in stereotypical roles.

EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE: Just as you should challenge your child's actions if they indicate bias or prejudice, it's important to praise him for behavior that shows respect and empathy for others. Catch your child treating people kindly, let her know you noticed, and discuss why it's a desirable behavior.

5 TIPS: THE TEEN YEARS

KEEP TALKING: Many believe the last thing teens are interested in is having a conversation with parents. But even if your teen doesn't initiate conversations about issues of difference, find ways to bring those topics up with them. Use current issues from the news, such as the immigration debate or same-sex marriage, as a springboard for discussion. Ask your teen what she thinks about the issues.

STAY INVOLVED: Messages about differences exist all around your teen: the Internet, songs, music videos, reality shows, ads and commercials, social cliques at school. Know the websites your teen enjoys visiting; take time to listen to or watch the music and shows they enjoy. Then discuss the messages they send. Ask your teen about the group or groups she most identifies with at school. Discuss the labels or stereotypes that are associated with such groups.

LIVE CONGRUENTLY: Discussing the importance of valuing difference is essential, but modeling this message is even more vital. Evaluate your own circle of friends or the beliefs you hold about certain groups of people. Do your actions match the values you discuss with your teen? Teens are more likely to be influenced by what you do than what you say, so it's important for your words and behaviors to be congruent.

BROADEN OPPORTUNITIES: It may be natural for teens to stick to groups they feel most comfortable with during the school day. These often are the people they identify as being most like themselves. Provide other opportunities for your teen to interact with peers from different backgrounds. Suggest volunteer, extracurricular, worship and work opportunities that will broaden your teen's social circle.

ENCOURAGE ACTIVISM: Promote ways for your teen to get involved in causes he cares about. No place for him to hang out with friends? Encourage him to get together with peers to lobby city officials for a teen social center or skate park. Upset about discriminatory treatment of teenagers by a storekeeper or business? Give your teen suggestions for writing a letter of complaint or planning a boycott. When young people know they have a voice in their community, they are empowered to help resolve issues of injustice.

HOW TO HANDLE DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Confront racism when it happens to your children; have a no tolerance policy for racism. Though you shouldn't fight their battles for them, you can help them know what to do when it happens to them. Let them know you are there for them to talk to when an incident happens. Acknowledge that you understand how hurt they are and that what happened to them was unfair. Let them know the remarks about them (or any other children of color or culture) are untrue and wrong. You can let your child know you will go to battle for them when they need you to. ***If the racism comes from another adult, it is imperative that you step in and address it.***

If discrimination happens, there are several things you can do as a parent.

- Talk to your child and validate that bad things like this do happen and they do hurt. Recognize their pain.
- Tell your child he or she doesn't deserve to be treated that way, noting how good of a person he or she is.
- Tell your child that nobody has the right to say these things, and that the person being hurtful doesn't really know the child.
- If it is an adult discriminating against your child, you will need to step in and address this for the child.
- If it is another child discriminating against your child, give your child phrases to say in these circumstances.

Avoid saying things like "He didn't mean that," or "You're being too sensitive." These statements are harmful and will create feelings of shame and invalidation, causing your child to feel confused and devalued. These answers will also create a mistrust in your relationship with your child, and he or she will most likely not seek you out to help in these situations in the future. Feelings of isolation and low self-esteem might follow.

There are many helpful resources on this topic available. See the last section of this booklet for more resources.

Teaching your child to respond to racism:

First of all, do not expect to have all of the answers. Because each situation is unique and every individual is unique, there is no standard way to teach your child to respond to racism. You can model for them how to respond to individual situations and this will teach them when to stand up against it and when to ignore it. Family members, peers, and neighbors are a different story, as these are frequent contacts of your child. Lean on your friends and mentors of color to help you address the situations as a parent and to offer advice to your child. You can also arm yourself with knowledge through resources listed in the back of this booklet.

It is important as a parent to gauge your child's reactions and feelings around the incidences. Intervene when harassment is more than a one-time thing with another peer. Go to the school and get teachers or administrators involved, or address the parents of the child involved. If an adult is targeting your child, you need to address it directly with that person.

Protecting your child's boundaries:

Some people will respond to racial differences with discomfort. They might comment on how beautiful the child is, while not commenting on other birth children. Or they might start touching the child's hair because it is different than their hair. It is important to intervene when this happens. You might consider saying:

- "Thank you I think that all children are beautiful."
- "Please do not touch my child's hair."
- "It makes me uncomfortable when people touch her hair."

How to handle family members who don't support your child's racial identity:

Family relations can be a tricky area; however, it is important that you have a no tolerance policy toward racism. Whether a person is aiming remarks at your child, at another culture or race, or gender, or other area, confront this. There are many ways to stand up to a person in such a situation. It is okay to say "Your remark is offensive. Please do not say such a thing again." Or "I know you wouldn't have said such an offensive statement deliberately; you must mean something else…" (This gives the person a chance to change what he or she has said). Allowing the person this opportunity to change their stance allows for their own growth. It can be a positive start toward change. Offering facts to counter such statements can also be helpful.

Most importantly, spend time with family and friends who are supportive of your transracial family.

ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS:

Some questions your child will be faced with center around being in foster care or having been adopted. Others may center around issues of race and culture. Below are some common questions with some potential answers to equip your child with, strengthening their sense of racial identity and self-esteem. In general, you should teach your child that he or she doesn't have to answer any of these questions if he or she isn't comfortable doing so. Their life story is for them to decide when to share, how much to share and with whom to share it. You can guide this conversation and prepare them for questions, allowing them to choose what to say.

More on boundaries:

Preparing your child to answer questions can help them form boundaries. If they have a history of abuse, boundaries are a confusing concept, and children in care can believe that they are "everybody's property" and without boundaries. The answers below can help children learn that their life story is private, as is their body; and they have the power to choose with whom to share their private story. This can also serve as a jumping off point to discuss the difference between privacy and secrecy in regard to their life story. Privacy is about respect for yourself and your story, where secrecy is about guilt and shame. Using the word "surprise" can replace "secret" in regards to Christmas presents or birthday presents.

When Children Are Asked Difficult Questions From Others:

"Where's your REAL mom?"

- "That's personal and I don't share that."
- "My parents love me very much."

"Why don't you look like your mother…or sister/brother?"

- "Everybody's unique, aren't they?"
- "Because not all families look alike."

"Why were you adopted? Didn't your mom want you?"

- "I am wanted by my family."
- "I am wanted and loved by more than one family."
- "My parents adopted me because they love me."

"Why are you in foster care?"

- If your child is comfortable answering this, he or she might say "I need to live where it's safe right now." They may also opt to walk away or say they don't feel comfortable answering that question.

"What does it feel like to be adopted?"

- "What does it feel like not to be adopted?"
- With close friends, and depending on your child's age, they may choose to be more open with their answer to this question.

"Do you miss your birth parents?"

- "I don't want to talk about that….So, have you read the book …?"
- "Yes, I miss them and I don't want to talk about it right now."

"Why do you have a new last name?"

- "Because I have a new last name since I was adopted."
- "Sometimes people change their names."

When Parents Are Asked Difficult Questions From Others:

Remember, you are role modeling responses for your child. If you respond out of anger your child may think this topic is shameful to talk about; therefore being a transracial adoptee is something to be embarrassed and ashamed of.

"Where did you get her?"

- If you have more than one child, consider answering to include all of your children, such as "She is from Korea; Anthony is from Des Moines; and…"
- It's always okay to say "This isn't the place to discuss that" or "That's personal" and change the subject or walk away.

"She is so lucky to have been adopted by you."

- "We are the lucky ones to have her in our lives. We love her so much."

"Do you have any children of your own?"

- "Just these four." (referring to your birth and adoptive children).

"Are they REAL brother and sister?"

- "We're really their parents and they are really brother and sister."
- "We're a real family…no imaginary family members here."

"How could his parents have abandoned such a sweet little boy?"

- "It was very difficult for his birthmother, but she couldn't take care of ANY babies so she chose to find a loving family for her baby."

"What do you know about her real parents?"

- "We're his real parents, since we are raising her."
- "I'm not comfortable sharing such personal information."

SKIN CARE & HAIR CARE

There are special cultural considerations in the areas of skin care, hair care and medical needs. This section will highlight some of these areas and provide resources for parents.

Hair Care for African American Children:
Caring for the hair of African American children is very different than caring for a Caucasian child's hair. Children feel better about themselves when they present themselves to the world in a well-groomed manner. Children notice each other's hair and it can be a source of pride. They deserve to feel beautiful and handsome to contribute to their sense of self and self-pride.

Though each child is unique, here is a general guide for caring for African American children:

- **Washing hair**: Water dries out the hair of African American children. Therefore, washing their hair once every week is sufficient, and in some cases this is even too often.
- **Moisturizing hair**: Special oils should be applied to the hair to help the hair maintain moisture.
- **Combing and brushing**: Though children may dislike this, their hair should be combed or brushed daily. This will help prevent matting. Consider using natural-bristle brushes rather than synthetic brushes which are harder.
- **Relaxers; Pressing and Straightening Hair**: Avoid using relaxers, which are chemicals that straighten the hair, unless done by a professional.
- **Products to use**: Special products for African American hair should be used for your child of color, as they tend to be re-moisturizing. Creams and oils can be applied daily to help hair stay healthy. Your child's hair should look shiny but not greasy.
- **Professional salons**: Consider taking your child to a professional salon that specializes in serving African Americans. You can learn how to do your child's hair, receive helpful tips, and access to hair products. Your child finds a natural connection to his or her culture and experiences being in the majority versus the minority. This can serve as an important cultural connection, where friendships and mentors are established. Your child will also receive the message that you care about their cultural identity and you value them as a member of their race.

HAIR CARE PRODUCTS:

Some hair care products that can be tried are: oils, lotions, conditioners, shampoos, and styling gels. Products like these need not cost a lot of money, and The Dollar Store will do for some things. Remember, hair care is not an exact science.

- **Oils:** Blue Magic; Bergamont, Softee Hair food, Du gro, Oil Sheen, Sulfur 8. African pride, Coconut oil.
- **Lotions:** Baby Oil and Lotions, Suave, Guarantee Dry Skin Lotion, Vitamin E Skin Cream. Fruit of the Earth E Skin Cream. Silk Elements Skin Cream.
- **Conditioners:** Lustrasilk Cholesterol, Parnevu Leave-in Conditioner, Queen Helene Placenta Cream Hair Conditioner. Manes & Hair, Crème of Nature, Motions.
- **Shampoos:** Motions, Crème of Nature Therapeutic T+Plus , Manes & Hair, Suave, Sulfur 8, Scurl, Silk Elements, Stay Soft , Du Gro.
- **Styling Gel:** Try to stay away from products with a high alcohol content. Strictly use African products for African hair.

SKIN CARE

by Dorothy Fouse, ADN, foster and adoptive parent, and IFAPA trainer.

People with darker skin pigmentation in their skin, are often more dry and the oils must be replaced daily.

- When oiling the skin, determine if the skin will need a heavy oil or a light oil. Remember when taking care of your skin, pores can become blocked, which sometimes leads to infection.
- Some oils that are commonly used among people of color are lotions with vitamin E that moisturize, Vaseline, Baby Oil, and Mineral Oil.

The skin must be assessed for break down as well as moisturizing needs.

- When people of color have dry skin, it tends to crack and bleed.
- Skin will appear ashy or powdery when needing to be moisturized.
- The hands, feet and areas of bony prominence may need extra attention.

In the summer, as well as in the winter, sunscreen needs to be applied to the skin.

- People of color burn just like anyone else. When going out in the summer or winter, apply sunscreen.
- People of color burn easily in the winter as well. Because of the dark skin, the sunlight from the snow reflects off of the snow to the dark skin and causes the skin to burn.
- Make sure when you are walking little ones that they too have a fair amount of sunscreen.

Nail beds and the pads of your hands and feet can serve as great indicators if a person of color is in trouble being oxygenated.

- Often times Europeans' skin turns blue or pale when they are in need of medical care.
- When people are cyanotic you can check under their tongue and their eyes to see if they are in trouble. But sometimes the mouth is as dark as the skin so it is hard to do that. Instead, look at the shaded areas, like the chest or the neck or legs to be an indicator. Those shaded places may shed some light on the problem.

Skin must be washed daily—while hair is washed often only once per week.

- Sometimes people get this information mixed up or turned around. But we, too, must be washed daily.

Scarring may occur more pronounced for people of color.

- Often times the darker the skin, the more prone you are to scarring.
- When large amounts of skin form, this is known as scarring.

Dorothy Fouse, foster parent, IFAPA trainer, and nurse, has a passion for training foster and adoptive parents on the care of children of color. She welcomes phone calls from parents on hair care, skin care, and cultural heritage. Ms. Fouse can be reached at: 563-388-0359 or 563-505-9845. Ms. Fouse offers trainings on these topics through IFAPA. Check out www.ifapa.org to find her next trainings!

SKIN CONDITIONS and CHILDREN OF COLOR

Below is a list of some of the skin conditions specific to children of color. Being aware of these conditions can help you identify them if they present themselves in your children.

Acne Keloidalis
Raised pimple-like circles, usually at the nape of the neck.

Café-Au-Lait-Spot
Flat, light tan birth marks with distinct edges. If there are several of these spots and they are larger than a quarter, it may indicate a genetic disorder called neurofibromatosis.

Coining
Small red circles or zebra-looking red stripes on an Asian child's body, sometimes forming a symmetric, linear pattern. Sometimes these resemble cigarette burns. Coining is a common healing practice in the Asian community, but can result in burns and allegations of abuse.

Dermatosis Papulsa Nigra
Dark, small, smooth bumps most commonly found on African Americans. These usually appear on the face and neck.

Infantile Ocropustulosis
Puss-filled bumps usually on the palms, soles of feet, fingers, and toes of African American infants (2-10 months).

Keloids
Mass of shiny and raised scar tissue. It usually grows beyond the boundary of the injury that caused the scar. African Americans and Hispanics are 16% more likely to develop keloids.

Mongolian Spots
Often mistaken for bruises, Mongolian Spots are flat birthmarks with usually indistinct edges. They are most common on the lower back and buttocks, but can be found on a child's legs, back, sides and shoulders. These are very common in Native Americans, African Americans, Asians and Hispanics.

Nevus of Ota and Nevus of Ito
These bluish lesions usually appear near the eye area of the face, but can also appear on the face, shoulders, neck and upper arms. They are more common in African American and Asian females.

Pityriasis Alba
Scaly bumps of lighter pigmentation. These usually occur in patches around the cheeks, forehead, neck and shoulders. These can occur in all races.

Vitilego
Patchy loss of color in the skin. Sometimes these patches are smooth, milk-white spots on various parts of the body.

GENERAL TRANSRACIAL RESOURCES:

Robert O'Connor, MSW, LGSW, teacher, trainer, therapist and consultant
http://www.transracialadoptiontraining.com/
Phone: 612-702-4809 / E-mail: robert_oconnor_@msn.com
Address: 400 Mary Lane South Maplewood, MN 55119

Jae Ran Kim, MSW, LGSW, social worker, writer and teacher
Jae Ran blogs at the following websites:
http://www.antiracistparent.com/author/jae-ran/
http://harlowmonkey.typepad.com/

Dorothy "Dottie" Fouse, ADN, foster/adoptive parent, trainer
Dottie welcomes questions from parents on culture, skin and hair care
1-563-388-0359

Richard and Linda Harrell, IFAPA Cultural Liaisons
Call: 866-537-8189 or 515-285-0315
E-mail: richlynnifapa@live.com
Richard and Linda welcome your questions about transracial parenting.

ONLINE HELP is only a click away….
Ask the Experts! Michelle Johnson, MSW, and John Raible, EdD are both adult transracial adoptees and professionals in the field. You can e-mail questions about transracial or transcultural adoption or foster care, and one of the experts will give you an answer. All questions and answers are posted on the website, anonymously. www.nysccc.org/T-Rarts/askme.html

Websites to Find Transracial Books:

For an extensive list of multicultural books, go to:
Pact, An Adoption Alliance: www.pacgtadopt.org
Perspectives Press: www.perspectivespress.com
Tapestry Books: www.tapestrybooks.com

Free E-Books:

Beyond the Golden Rule: A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice -free, downloadable at: http://www.tolerance.org/parents/index.jsp

How to Be an Anti-Racist Parent: Real-Life Parents Share Real-Life Tips (free e-book by by Carmen Van Kerckhove at the following website:
http://www.antiracistparent.com/2007/06/20/free-e-book-how-to-be-an-anti-racist-parent/

Responding to Hate At School: A Guide for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators published by Teaching Tolerance – free e-book at www.teachingtolerance.org

Speak Up! Responding to Everyday Bigotry (free e-book) at http://www.tolerance.org/speakup/

Transracial Books:

40 Ways to Raise A Nonracist Child by Barbara Mathias & Mary Ann French

101 Ways to Combat Prejudice by Barnes and Noble and the Anti-Defamation League
This can be found at: www.adl.org/prejudice

Are Those Kids Yours? American Families with Children Adopted From Other Countries by Cheri Register

Beyond Good Intentions: by Cheri Register

Black Baby White Hands: A View From the Crib by Jaiya John

Black Children White Parents: Putting the Pieces Together by Tonya Moore

Cultural Bedtime Stories:
Cultural Bedtime Stories for Interracial Adoptive/Foster Families
http://adoption.about.com/od/parenting/a/bedtimestories.htm

Christmas Crafts from Around the World by Judy Ann Sadler

Daughter of the Ganges by Asha Miro

Dim Sum, Bagels and Grits: A Sourcebook for Multicultural Families by Myra Alperson

Different and Wonderful: Raising Black Children in a Race-Conscious Society by Darlene & Derek Hopson

Does Anybody Else Look Like Me?; A Parent's Guide to Raising Multiracial Children by Donna Jackson Nakazawa

Fade: My Journeys in Multiracial America By Elliott Lewis

Happy to Be Nappy by Bell Hooks

Hate Hurts: How Children Learn and Unlearn Prejudice by Caryl Stern-LaRosa and Ellen Hofhaimer Bettman

I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Biracial Children in a Race-Conscious World by Marguerite Wright

In Their Own Voices by Rita Simon & Rhonda Roorda

In Their Parents' Voices: Reflections on Raising Transracial Adoptees by Rita Simon & Rhonda

Roorda

Transracial Books:

Inside Transracial Adoption by Gail Steinberg and Beth Hall.

It's All Good Hair: The Guide to Styling and Grooming Black Children's Hair by Michele Collinson

Kids Talk Hair by Pamela Ferell

Kinki Kreations by Jenna Renee Williams and Maida Cassandra Odom

Mixed: My Life in Black & White by Angela Nissel

Mixed: An Anthology of Short Fiction on the Multiracial Experience by Chandra Prasad

No Lye: The African American Women's Guide to Natural Hair Care by Tulani Kinard

Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption by Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin.

Preventing Youth Hate Crime: A Manual for Schools and Communities
(free pamphlet) by the US Department of Education: www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS

Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender and Kinship (Nation of Newcomers) by Sara Dorow.

Transracial Adoption and Foster Care by Joseph Crumbley

Transracial Adoptions: An Adoptive Mother's Documentary of Racism, Injustice by Joann Lang

Wavy, Curly, Kinky: The African American Child's Hair Care Guide by Deborah Lilly

We're Different, We're the Same (Picturebook) by Bobbi Kates

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? By Beverly Daniel Tatum

Ya Tibya Lublu: Recipes of Love for Orphans of Eastern Europe
http://www.arkangels.org/?q=node/3 (home site: www.arkangels.org)

Yellow: Race in America beyond Black and White by Frank Wu

The Professor's Daughter: A Black & White Family by Emily Raboteau

Soul-To-Soul: A Black Russian Jewish Woman's Search for Her Roots By Yelena Khanga.

A Wealth of Family: An Adopted Son's International Quest for Heritage, Reunion, and Enrichment (Family Success) by Thomas Brooks

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack by Peggy McIntosh

Videos:

Visible Differences: A DVD looking at transracial adoption with clarity and compassion. Can be purchased at www.pactadopt.org.

Struggle for Identity: Issues in Transracial Adoption
Order at www.photosynthesisproductions.com/store.cfm
This award-winning video is a starkly realistic account of the transracial adoption experience. Narrated by young adults who were adopted as children, this documentary examines the effects of transracial adoption on individuals, families, and society.

Struggle for Identity: Issues in Transracial Adoption – A Conversation 10 Years Later
Order at www.photosynthesisproductions.com/store.cfm
Conversation 10 Years Later is a captivating follow-up to the original video. John and Michelle, two members of the original cast, return to reflect on their experiences a decade after the first film. With candor and passion, they discuss their lifelong journeys as transracial adoptees. The two explore issues of racism, the visible and public nature of transracial adoption, loyalty and attachment, transracialization and creating multicultural families, as seen through the lens of their personal experience and professional training.

Outside Looking In: Transracial Adoption in America.
Narrated by an African American man who was adopted by a white family as a child, this film examines the importance of nurturing racial identity in transracially adopted children. To purchase this video, go to: itvs@itvs.org

Thunderhead: A Children's Hair Care Video for Parents by Pamela Farrell (available at www.pactadopt.org)

Toys and Dolls:

Real Kidz is a website where bi-racial dolls can be purchased and resources found: www.molloytoy.com/

Dolls Like Me is a website of multicultural toys and dolls. Visit: www.dollslikeme.com/

Organizations & Internet Resources:

Multicultural Education Through Miniatures
www.coedu.usf.edu/Culture/index.htm
Multicultural Education through Miniatures includes photos, maps, stories, and games of handmade dolls and puppets from many different countries around the world. A great resource to increase global awareness and learn about other cultures.

Organizations & Internet Resources:

Alaafia Kids Company
Alaafia Kids is a website with dolls, books, music, crafts, resources, newsletters, clothes and toys with multicultural themes. The website address is: www.alaafiakids.com.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
The ADL is dedicated to combating hate crime and promoting intergroup cooperation and understanding.
823 United Nations Plaza - New York, NY 10017
212-885-7800 - www.adl.org

The Association of Multiethnic Americans (AMEA)
This nationwide organization of local multiracial / multiethnic groups is incorporated as a nonprofit public benefit organization. AMEA promotes a positive awareness of multiculturalism through advocacy, education and collaboration on behalf of the multiethnic, multiracial and transracial adoption community. For more information, go to www.ameasite.org

Biracial Family Network, BFN
The Biracial Family Network (BFN) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation organized to help eliminate prejudice and discrimination by assisting individuals and families of diverse ethnic ancestry to improve the quality of their intercultural relationships via education and social activities. For access to newsletters, support and resources for transracial families, visit: www.bfnchicago.org

A Birth Project
Academic research, creative expression and general examination and support of transracial/ international adoptee life and experience. http://birthproject.wordpress.com/

Bridge Communications, Inc.
This is an organization dedicated to educating and sharing information with individuals and families who are living the multicultural/multiracial experience. Through classes, both virtual and on-site, participants learn hands-on strategies for building strong self-esteem and a positive racial identity in themselves and their children. In addition, Bridge leads panel and discussion groups for multi-racial adults and children. Our trainers facilitate diversity training seminars for school students and staff, social service agencies and community organizations. http://www.bridgecommunications.org

Center for the Study of Biracial Children – CSBC
The CSBC offers advocacy, training, educational resources and workshops committed to multiethnic issues. A resource for researching and exploring the complexities of biracial and multiethnic children. http://csbchome.org

Evan B. Donaldson Institute is a national not-for-profit organization devoted to improving adoption policy and practice. www.adoptioninstitute.org

Family Diversity Projects
Family Diversity Projects has created award-winning travel rental exhibits, including "Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families" & "In Our Family: Portraits of All Kinds of Families," that tour communities nationwide and internationally. Educating people of all ages to recognize, support, and celebrate the full range of diversity; exhibits are designed to help reduce prejudice, stereotyping, and harassment of all people who are perceived to be "different" from the "norm." Family Diversity Projects also provides speakers on diversity and workshop leaders for conference and exhibit venues. http://www.familydiv.org

iCelebrateDiversity.com
This site offers articles, resources, gifts, and education for multicultural families. iCelebrateDiversity.com also has an extensive resource area listing many local, regional and national organizations, as well as, online resources for the multicultural family or kindred spirit! The website address is: www.iCelebrateDiversity.com.

Interracial Family Pride
iPride's mission is to cultivate positive identity formation in children who are of more than one racial or ethnic heritage and/or who have been transracially adopted. IPride strives to create a more inclusive and equitable society by educating ourselves, our children, and our communities, about multiethnic families, mixed heritage identity and transracial adoptee experiences. www.ipride.org

Interracial Voice
Interracial Voice (IV) is an independent, information-oriented, networking news journal, serving the mixed-race/interracial community in cyberspace. Their website address is: ww.interracialvoice.com

Many Shades of You at www.manyshadesofyou.com/index.html
This sites compiles lists of books, toys, gifts, and resources that reflect your entire circle of family and friends.

Maria P.P. Root
Practicing clinical psychologist focusing her efforts and skills on the multiethnic experience. Dr. Root provides resources and a scientific view of the complex issues of multiracial people. She is based in Seattle, Washington. Her website is: www.drmariaroot.com

MAVIN
The meaning of the word is "one who understands." This Seattle based non-profit exists for the benefit of the mixed race community. News, organizing meetings, a print magazine and an extensive program schedule for every level of the multiethnic population. http://www.mavin.net/

Mixed Heritage Center
The mixed Heritage Center (MHC) is a clearinghouse of information relevant to the lives of people who are multiracial, multiethnic, transracially adopted or otherwise affected by the intersection of race and culture. http://www.mixedheritagecenter.org/

Mixed Messages Productions
Mixed Messages Productions is a production company designed to bring together, encourage,

highlight, & showcase the work of artists in the Mixed Race Arts Program. www.mxdmessages.com

The Multiethnic Education Program
The ME Program provides educators and families culturally competent resources and strategies to ensure mixed heritage children thrive in our increasingly diverse society. See more about trainings and publications for the early childhood and school age communities at: www.multiethniceducation.org

MultiRacial.com
Essays, forums, blogs and commentaries covering all aspects of the multiracial population. This is an information filled website for the perusal of the casual learner or deep intentioned interaction with a live cyber-based community. http://www.multiracial.com/

MultiRacial Sky at www.multiracialsky.com

The Multiracial Family Center
Offers an educational program through which multiracial and transracial families can come together to help children learn positive racial identity and cultural competence.
www.multiracialfamilycenter.org

National Association for Multicultural Education, NAME
NAME's main objective is to give educators of preschoolers to upper level students support and knowledge for teaching their multiethnic pupils. Founded by a university professor, information available to any member includes lesson plans and a teaching video. www.nameorg.org

Rainbow Kids: The Voice for Adoption: www.rainbowkids.com
The Internet's central location for Adoption Information, International Adoptions, Special Needs Adoption, Adoption Articles and Waiting Child Photolistings.

Swirl
Community building, education, and action. Swirl serves the whole nation through mixed-race community chapters with events for individuals and families. Chapter activities include: Monthly dine-outs, book clubs, film screenings, discussions, panels, museum outings, family events, volunteer activities, and advocacy opportunities. www.swirlinc.org

Tolerance.org
Online destination for people interested in dismantling bigotry and valuing diversity within oneself, at home, at school, at work or within the community. Site offers daily new, guidebooks for all ages, resources, downloadable public service announcements and games for young children.
www.tolerance.org

CULTURAL CAMPS:

Camp Kupugani - "Kupugani" is a Zulu concept meaning "to raise oneself up." This multicultural residential summer camp focuses on diversity and communications skills in a fun atmosphere.
www.campkupugani.com - 6903 W. White Eagle Rd., Leaf River, IL 61047 - 866-471-4616

CULTURAL CAMPS:

Destiny Art Center - Exists to end isolation, prejudice and violence in the lives of youth. Providers of dance, martial arts, conflict resolution, self-defense, and youth leadership classes and workshops.
Address: 1000 42nd Street - Oakland, CA 94608
Phone (510)597-1619 - E-mail info@destinyarts.org - Website: www.destinyarts.org/

Hands Around the World - An adoption support group whose focus is on culture for families who have been touched by cross-cultural adoption. Summer camps to explore birthland ethnic culture.
1417 East Miner Street • Arlington Heights, IL • 60004 • 1-847-255-8309
www.handsaroundtheworld.com

Fusion Program - The FUSION Program Summer Day Camp is open to all youth ages 7-12 with a particular focus on children who come from more than one cultural and/or racial community experience. FUSION offers a fun and supportive environment where youth can share, explore, and celebrate the richness and complexity of mixed heritage. http://www.fusionprogram.org/
FUSION - c/o iPride - PO Box 11811 - Berkeley, CA 94712

AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES:

Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans
http://www.iowa.gov/dhr/saa/index.html
The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans (ICSAA) is a state agency that exists to address the needs and concerns of Iowa's African-American citizens. Since it was established by the Iowa Legislature in 1989, the ICSAA has been a division of the Department of Human Rights and serves as an advocate for African-Americans in Iowa.

AfricanAmerican.com
The source for news, entertainment, sports, health, and information for the African American community. www.africanamerican.com

African American Yearbook
African-American Organizations, Publications, Radio Stations, Churches, and more
www.africanamericanyearbook.com

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa,
55 12th Ave SE - Cedar Rapids, IA 52401 - 877-526-1863 - www.blackiowa.org
They offer exhibits on the history of African and African Americans in the United States, with emphasis on Iowa. School tours and group tours are available. Available for rental is the spacious Aldeen Davis Celebration Hall. Educational sources include a reference library and historical collection/archives for research, plus the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) offering statewide program access. The Nikee Museum Store features exotic one-of-a-kind gifts for every taste

African American Web Connection www.aawc.com
Good selection of mostly popular web pages on topics such as art, authors, history, and other index sites; also includes annotated listings for online periodicals, resources for children, and a directory of

churches.

African-American Business Association of Des Moines, Iowa
http://www.aabaofdesmoines.org/index.html
The AABA's mission is to advocate and promote the development of African-American owned businesses with the goal of creating a firm economic base that support the self-determination and survival of the African-American community. Extensive list of African American owned businesses and other resources.

Black Voices
African American culture and community news at AOL Blackvoices. Family, health, and entertainment. www.blackvoices.com

Footsteps:Celebrating African American Heritage and Achievement
This online magazine celebrates the heritage of African Americans and explores their contributions to our culture. www.footstepsmagazine.com

National Black Child Development Institute
NBCDI's website includes information on membership, public policy, resources, and a calendar of upcoming events. www.nbcdi.org

Black American History: A website detailing the history of black people in the United States. www.africanaonline.com

Black Families Online: For complete information on websites listing products, services, and information aimed at Black families, the book Black Families Online by Stacey B. Montgomery can direct you to hundreds of online resources for Black parents, kids, educators, and anyone interested in multiculturalism. www.blackfamiliesonline.com

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):
The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. www.naacp.org/home/index.htm

ASIAN AMERICAN RESOURCES

Asian American Dreams book by Helen Zia

Asian Community Online (ACON)
This site provides links to various aspects of Asian culture, including Asian studies, advocacy, culture, education, health, sexuality, and women. www.acon.org

Asian Nation
Welcome to Asian-Nation, your one-stop information resource and overview of the historical, demographic, political, and cultural issues that make up today's diverse Asian American community. You can think of Asian-Nation as an online version of "Asian Americans 101."

www.asian-nation.org/index.shtml
The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC): NAPALC works to advance the legal and civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans through litigation, education and public policy. www.napalc.org

National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
This national organization seeks to educate and empower Korean American communities nationwide. www.nakasec.org

Mam Non Organization -- a Michigan-based group whose many activities serve the greater Vietnamese community, including providing public education on issues faced by Vietnamese-American families and transracial adoptees. www.mamnon.org

Suggested Reading:
Dim Sum, Bagels and Grits: A Sourcebook for Multicultural Families, by Myra Alperson
www.americanadoptions.com/adopt/transracial_adoption

History of Korean and Chinese Adoptions:
http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2000/firstpersonplural/historical/choice.html

The Transracial Korean Adoptee Nexus
www.kadnexus.wordpress.com

Asian American Net
Offers links to organizations of Asian descent in America. www.asianamerican.net

The Asian American Cybernauts offers Asian American Community Links at http://www.janet.org/~ebihara/aacyber_community.html

The Asians in America Directory is a growing list of organizations, associations, companies, agencies and other resources that serve the interests of the APA community.
www.asiansinamerica.org/directory/directory.html

Model Minority: A Guide to Asian American Empowerment
The mission of ModelMinority.com is to provide this scrutiny in every possible way, so as to educate, inform, provoke, and inspire movements by individuals and groups toward Asian American empowerment. Through ModelMinority.com, we intend to provide the Web's richest collection of research articles, commentaries, stories, poems, pictures, and other documents on the Asian American experience. http://modelminority.com

NATIVE AMERICAN RESOURCES

Native American Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories book by Rita Simon & Sarah Hernandez

Far From the Reservation: The Transracial Adoption of American Indian Children by David Fanshel

Indian Country Magazine at www.indiancountry.com

Tribal Scholarship website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/tribalscholars.pdf

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society: www.fncfcs.com

National Indian Child Welfare Association: www.nicwa.org

Native Web: This site contains over three thousand links to various aspects of Native American culture and history. www.nativeweb.org

National Indian Education Association (NIEA) provides workshops on bias against American Indians and works to ensure culturally accurate and appropriate curricula in schools.
NIEA - 700 N. Fairfax St, Suite 210 - Alexandria, VA 22314 - 703-838-2870

Native American Sites and the home of the American Indian Library Association Web Extensive information on history and culture, including extensive resources:
www.nativeculturelinks.com/indians.htmlb

The Culture of Native American Indian tribes
www.essortment.com/in/Culture.Native.American/index.htm

Information on various Native American Tribes, history, art, legends, and much more
http://www.thewildwest.org/interface/index.php?action=185

Encyclopedia Smithsonian – American Indian History and Culture
http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/History_and_Culture/AmericanIndian_History.htm

Index of Native American Resources on the internet:
www.hanksville.org/NAresources

"Adopting a Native American Child" (an internet article found on www.adoption.com) provides a historical overview of the Indian Child Welfare Act, the Indian Adoption Project, and several other relevant issues. www.adopting.adoption.com/child/adopting-a-native-american-child.html

WWW Virtual Library – American Indians
Virtual library of the Indian culture with an index of resources on the web, including culture, history, language, health, and art. www.hanksville.org/NAresources

HISPANIC RESOURCES

Interpreters
www.iowa.gov/dhr/la/Pages/Official%20Page.htm

Raising Nuestros Ninos: a book by Gloria Rodriguez

El Centro Latinoamericano – a Latino resource center for northeastern Iowa
500 E. 4th Street - Waterloo, IA 50703 - 319-287-6400

The HOLA Center
618 E. 18th Street - Des Moines, IA 50316 - Phone: 515-299-HOLA - www.holacenter.org
The HOLA Center is a one-stop shop in Des Moines, Iowa, that provides services in both Spanish and English to those in need. The HOLA Center has established important partnerships with providers, including neighborhood policing, legal assistance, health care, banking, and family counseling.

Southwest Iowa Latino Resource Center
http://www.exitovideos.com/partners.htm
This center is located in Red Oak, Iowa and provides the following services:
Translation/Interpretation * Access to WIC, Head Start, Health Services * Housing Assistance * Employment Assistance * Immigration Assistance * Monthly Public Health Vaccination Clinic * Parents as Teachers * Material Assistance * Referrals * Seminars & Conferences * Liaison to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes * Community Advisory Services * School sign-up & orientation

National Council of La Raza (NCLR): NCLR is dedicated to reducing poverty and discrimination and improving educational and professional opportunities for Hispanic Americans. www.nclr.org

Hispanic Educational Resources
828 Scott Ave - Des Moines, IA 50309 - (515) 282-6542 - www.herdm.com
Hispanic Educational Resources (HER) is derived from the first non-profit Latino community center in Des Moines. It began as the United Mexican-American Community Center (UMACC) in 1983, established by community leaders and volunteers. Today, HER serves over 200 families a day in one of three focus areas: The Xochipilli Children's Center, Family Services, and Outreach.
GOALS:

- Provide all services in English and Spanish
- Focus on educating and empowering the entire family: children, parents and teens
- Be a safe and healthy place for the community
- Not to discriminate against anyone, regardless of color, race, ethnicity, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, age, or any other distinguishing factor
- To treat everyone with respect and dignity

Latin American Network Information Center
www.lanic.utexas.edu

Enlaces América
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
http://www.enlacesamerica.org/

GOVERNMENT

Iowa Division Of Latino Affairs
John-Paul Chaisson-Cardenas MSW, Administrator
Department of Human Rights - Division of Latino Affairs
Lucas State Office Building - Des Moines, IA 50319
(515) 281-4080 or 1-877-330-3516 (toll free)
www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/la/index.htm

Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons
www.hhs.gov/ocr/lep/revisedlep.html
www.hhs.gov/ocr/lep/guidance-espanol.html en espanol

EDUCATION

New College-planning Web Resource Available For Hispanic Families
www.yesican.gov
www.yosipuedo.gov

HEALTH

The National Alliance For Hispanic Health
www.hispanichealth.org

Hispanic/Latino Portal For The Prevention Of Alcohol, Tobacco, And Other Drug Abuse
www.latino.prev.info/intro.html
www.latino.prev.info/intro-sp.html en espanol

Teen Pregnancy Prevention
www.teenpregnancy.org
www.teenpregnancy.org/hispanic/hisptip.htm

The National Information Center For Children And Youth With Disabilities
www.nichcy.org nichcy.org/spanish.htm en espanol

MISCELLANEOUS

Iowa's Latino Heritage Festival
www.latinoheritagefestival.org

Day Care – Bilingual Day Care Center
Xochipilli Children's Center (Des Moines, IA) – call 515-242-0225

Web Search Engine In Spanish
www.buscamundo.com

Web Translators
http://www.babelfish.com/Translations.html
The Spanish Electronic Librarian
www.sol-plus.net/bib.htm

EUROPEAN AMERICAN CHILDREN & FAMILIES

The Center for the Study of White American Culture supports cultural exploration and self-discovery among white Americans. It encourages a dialogue among all racial and cultural groups concerning the role of white American culture in the larger American society. The Center operates on the premise that knowledge of one's own racial background and culture is essential when learning how to related to people of other racial and cultural groups. A premise of this site is that the task of building genuine and authentic relationships across racial and cultural lines is crucial to the future well-being of America. www.euroamerican.org/

ARAB AMERICAN RESOURCES:

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC): The largest Arab American grassroots organization in the U.S., defends the rights of people of Arab descent and celebrates their rich cultural heritage. www.adc.org

Interpreters
www.iowa.gov/dhr/la/Pages/Official%20Page.htm

LANGUAGE

A Step-by-Step Guide to Raising Bilingual Children; an article by Christina Bosemark and links to other resources. http://adoption.about.com/od/parenting/ss/bilingualchild.htm

TOOLS TO HELP YOU ASSESS YOURSELF

Project Implicit's - Psychologists at Harvard, the University of Virginia and the University of Washington created "Project Implicit" to develop Hidden Bias Tests to measure unconscious bias. Take a test and see what may be lingering in your psyche. https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit

Hidden Bias: A Primer - About stereotypes and prejudices, about hidden bias, the affects of prejudice and stereotypes, what you can do about them. www.tolerance.org/hidden_bias/tutorials/index.html

Below the Surface: A Self-Assessment Guide for Anyone Considering Adoption Across Racial or Cultural Lines by Beth hall and Gail Steinberg.

Important Foster Care and Adoption Websites/Resources

Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption: www.davethomasfoundation.org
National Adoption Center www.adopt.org
North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC): www.nacac.org
Foster Care and Adoptive Community www.fosterparents.com
Foster Parent College: www.fosterparentcollege.com
National Foster Parent Association: www.nfpainc.org
National Foster Care Coalition: www.nationalfostercare.org
New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children, Inc. : www.nysccc.org
Rainbow Kids: www.rainbowkids.com

Iowa Foster & Adoptive Parents Association
6864 NE 14th Street, Suite 5
Ankeny, IA 50023
800-277-8145
www.ifapa.org

Funded By:
Polk County Decategorization Grant

DHS-7024A-ENG 5-19

Safe Connected Healthy Well Family Community Independent Transition Support Education Future Success

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Adoption of Children in Foster Care

Adoption establishes a legal parent-child relationship between a child in foster care and their committed caregiver. Adoption is the preferred permanency option when reunification is not possible. As legal parents, adoptive parents are legally and financially responsible for their children.

General Adoption Process

For children in foster care, the legal adoption process begins with a child's permanency court hearing. After a court orders guardianship of a child to the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (department), or makes a child a ward of a tribe, a child's case manager recruits an adoptive family for them. By law, agencies must consider placement in a relative's home before considering placement in a non-relative home.

Once an adoptive family for a child has been identified, a placement agreement is signed by agency staff and prospective adoptive parents. For children under state guardianship, department staff must also sign placement agreements.

An adoption petition is filed with the court, and an adoption finalization hearing is scheduled. If the court is satisfied that adoption is in a child's best interests, it issues an adoption decree.

For More Information

Contact: Northstar.Benefits@state.mn.us

Northstar Adoption Assistance Benefits

Northstar Adoption Assistance is a benefit program that supports children with special needs after their adoption. Adoptive parents receive benefits on behalf of children. The following benefits may be available through Northstar Adoption Assistance:

- Monthly payment
- Medicaid
- Nonrecurring expense reimbursement, up to $2,000 per child
- Reimbursement for pre-approved home and vehicle modifications needed to accommodate a child's special needs.

Adoptive parents may decline benefits.

Benefit Agreement

A benefit agreement provides details about a child's benefits. It must be signed by the financially and legally responsible agency or agencies, prospective adoptive parents, and department staff prior to the court issuing a final decree of adoption.

A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS

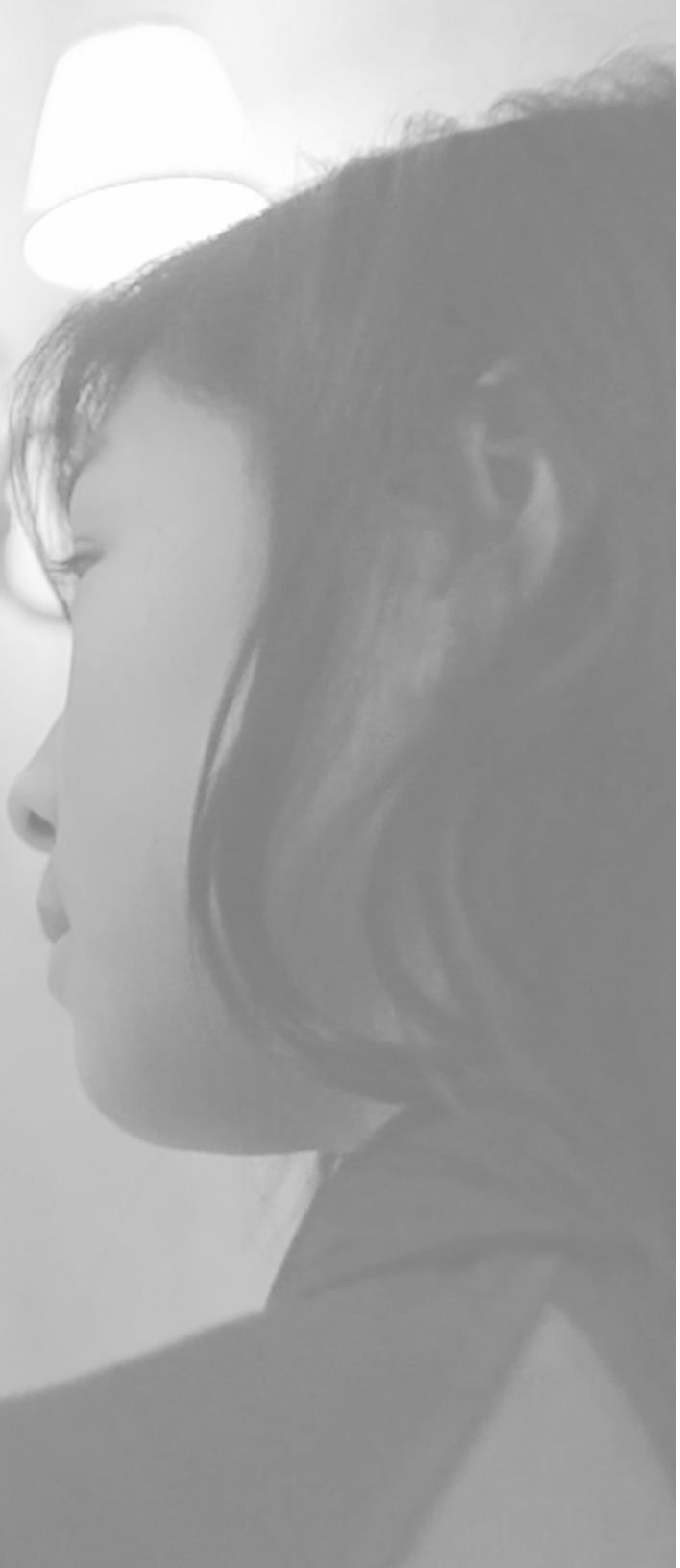
TO PREVENT CHILD TRAFFICKING

DEVELOPED BY

LOVE146

END CHILD TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

Love146 is an international human rights organization working to end child trafficking and exploitation through survivor care, prevention education, and strategic collaboration. We believe in the power of love and its ability to effect sustainable change. Love is the foundation of our motivation.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING CAN BE IDENTIFIED IN TWO CATEGORIES...

Sex trafficking

is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or solicitation of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, OR the person induced to perform such an act is under 18 years of age. (www.humantraffickinghotline.org)

Labor trafficking

is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (www.humantraffickinghotline.org)

FORCE, FRAUD, OR COERCION

According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, an indicator of force, fraud, OR coercion must be present to justify a case of human trafficking, with the exception of individuals under the age of 18 engaging in a commercial sex act.

Force is essentially physical harm or anything affecting the body such as rape, violence, kidnapping, transportation, malnutrition, etc.

Fraud is a false promise like a false job offer or a fraudulent romantic relationship.

Coercion includes (A) threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; (B) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or (C) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process. (22 USC § 7102(3))

MORE IMPORTANT TERMS

Consent

is giving permission for something to happen, or agreeing to do something. Being silent, or not directly saying the word "no," does not mean a person has given consent: consent means clearly communicating "yes" on your own terms.

REMINDER – *An individual under the age of 18 cannot "consent" to exchanging sex for something of value.*

Grooming

is preparing or training someone for a particular purpose or activity. Sometimes grooming for trafficking and exploitation can be masked in everyday conversations, and may latch onto individuals' normal needs and desires. Here are some examples of signs to look for in your youth or in your youth's friends:

- A new older boyfriend/girlfriend/friend
- Youth suddenly have a lot of new stuff, or they seem to have had a lot of money spent on them
- Appear secretive about who they are talking to or meeting

Becoming more and more isolated from their regular friends

Child Labor Exploitation

is a violation (repeated or willful) of child labor standards provided by the Department of Labor

- that jeopardizes their health, well-being or educational opportunities
- that causes the serious injury or death of a minor

REMINDER – *Youth can begin working before they turn 18 with restrictions on what jobs they can do and how many hours they can work. (www.youthrules.gov)*

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

is any activity that includes sexual abuse and/or exploitation of a child in exchange for something of value or for the financial benefit of any of the persons involved.

IMPORTANT– *The TVPA defines the commercial sexual exploitation of anyone under the age of 18 as human trafficking, regardless of whether a trafficker is involved.*

Sexting

Most young people now have a camera with them 24/7 on their phones. Sending and receiving naked "selfies" or "nudes" is a common practice for many teens, but can have significant negative consequences. The consequences of sexting can have lasting implications, including bullying, humiliation, expulsion from school, and legal repercussions.

Even if an adolescent is taking and sending sexually explicit material of themselves, they can be charged with the production and distribution of child pornography. This could lead to legal repercussions including being listed on the state sex offender registry. Although it is unlikely for a teenager to face charges in court for sexting, it is important for youth to be aware of the possibility.

Youth have significant potential for sexually explicit content exposure (both unwanted and sought-out) and the types of explicit content accessed includes extreme/deviant forms. Recent studies suggest that young people exposed to pornography may develop unrealistic ideas and expectations about sex.

Sextortion

According to Thorn, an organization dedicated to fighting online sexual exploitation, "Sextortion involves threats to expose a sexual image in order to make a person do something or for other reasons, such as revenge or humiliation. Perpetrators are often current, former or would-be romantic or sexual partners attempting to harass, embarrass and control victims." Given the easy distribution of sexually explicit pictures or videos online, sextortion has become a major struggle and a key component in the exploitation of youth. The impact of youth sextortion can be life changing. Talking with your adolescent and knowing where to get help is key. (www.wearethorn.org)

Runaway and Homeless Youth

Runaway and homeless youth are at very high risk for child trafficking and exploitation. Here are signs to look for if you think your youth is at risk of running away from home:

- Staying out later and later
- Pushing boundaries
- Newly developed rebellious behavior
- Secretive conversations
- Lying about whereabouts
- Out with friends longer and more frequently
- Accumulation of possessions or signs of packing

DISCUSSING VULNERABILITIES WITH YOUR YOUTH

Traffickers often look for vulnerabilities in youth to exploit, or take advantage of. Those vulnerabilities may be age, disconnected relationships with caregivers, depression, bullying, addiction, and more. In helping young people understand how they may be at risk for trafficking, we have to first help them understand the ways in which they are vulnerable. Using the following two case studies of different trafficking stories, try to identify the vulnerabilities that made Sarah and Leo at a greater risk for trafficking.

Try engaging the youth in your life about their perceived vulnerabilities, or risk factors for trafficking. Consider asking the following questions:

- What kind of vulnerabilities do you believe you experience?
- How could someone take advantage of your vulnerabilities?
- What would you do if you recognized someone was targeting your vulnerabilities?

CASE STUDY: SARAH

Her best friend introduced them. Things got serious quickly, and David asked Sarah to live with him after only a month. It felt like a big step and Sarah was nervous about it, but it made sense after having felt lonely for so long. She loved him. He said he would do anything for her, and she would do the same.

As soon as she moved in, David changed. He started telling Sarah she was stupid and she was lucky he was willing to take care of her. After a while, David started asking her to do favors for him, like having sex with his friends or people he knew. He told her they needed the money to pay the rent. Sarah didn't like it, but she loved him and believed it was her responsibility to help because of everything he did for her.

One day, they had a fight about whether or not she would work that night. It was so loud that the neighbors called the police. The officer spoke briefly with David and Sarah, and said he would file a report indicating a domestic dispute.

What Factors Put Sarah at Risk for Trafficking?

- Sarah is lonely and finds emotional support in David
- She may not have a strong understanding of healthy relationships
- She is experiencing pressure to move in
- She is emotionally abused by David
- She is financially dependent on him and doesn't have an independent source of income
- David is taking advantage of all of these vulnerabilities
- David's friends are taking advantage of all of these vulnerabilities

CASE STUDY: VINCENT

Vincent was 16 years old when his mom lost her job and started having a hard time taking care of Vincent and his sisters. Vincent wanted to help, so he dropped out of school and started doing odd jobs around town. His family had to move into a small apartment, and there wasn't really room for him, so he started sleeping on friends' couches. Sometimes he had to sleep on the street. He did find a drop-in center for homeless youth, and the people there were very nice.

One day Vincent told a volunteer at the center that he was excited because he had gotten a job and was moving to a different state. After asking some questions that Vincent didn't know how to answer, the volunteer told him that it sounded risky and that he should try to learn more before making a decision. But Vincent felt desperate and decided to take the risk.

Now Vincent works for a magazine sales crew but he makes very little money and often doesn't have enough to eat. Sometimes his boss doesn't pay him at all because he says Vincent owes him for his travel expenses. Vincent works very long days, and feels that his situation is worse than before. The managers are often mean. They say they will not help him get home if he quits. Vincent is confused and too embarrassed to ask his mom or anyone at the center for help.

What Factors Put Vincent at Risk for Trafficking?

- Vincent's age and unstable housing situation
- He is experiencing pressure to help his family and is forced to be independent
- He may be experiencing pressure to "be a man"
- His lack of social support and education
- He is in a new state and is away from family and friends
- He may be experiencing shame and is too embarrassed to ask for help

GENERATIONAL NORMS

Mainstream media (print, television, radio, etc.) uses sexual images and stereotypes to sell products. Often, these images include violence. Research has shown that these images can play a powerful role in shaping a youth's understanding of sex and violence.
The language of "pimps" and "pimping," for example, is commonly used in films and music to describe a wealthy man surrounded by women rather than a man who abuses women. To hear an example of a popular song that uses "pimp" language, listen to "P.I.M.P." by 50 Cent. Keep in mind that the language in this song is explicit.

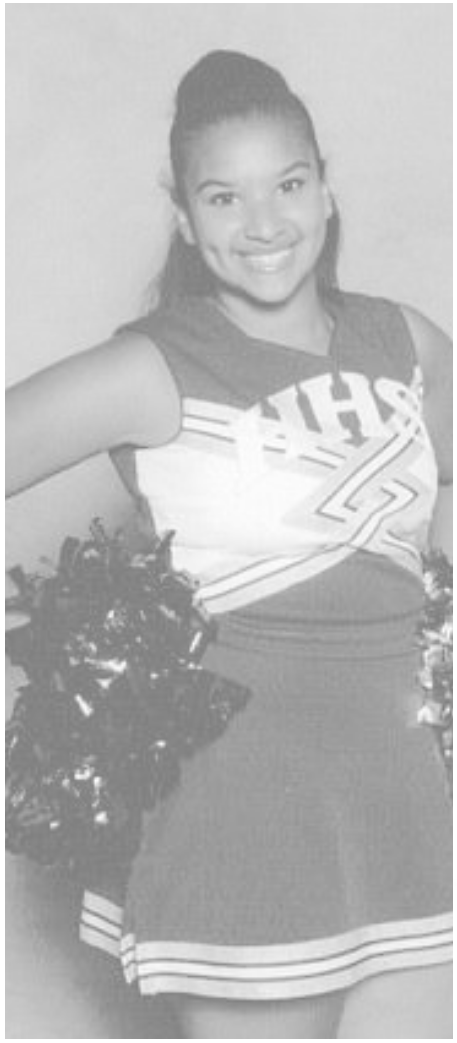
When you encounter an advertisement on TV or a song on the radio that portrays sexual violence or promotes positive, respectful behavior, encourage your youth to take a moment and ask:

- How do these images/words make you feel?
- What do these images/words tell you about women/men/sex?
- Why would the advertiser choose to use these images/words?

It is impossible to monitor all of the media that your youth is exposed to on a daily basis. By asking questions about the messages they receive, you can help develop a broader understanding of cultural norms and how we portray gender, sexuality, and violence.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Youth face different expectations and stereotypes based on gender. A young girl who has many sexual experiences may be called words like “slut” while an adolescent boy may be referred to as a “player.” Because of this double standard, young people who have been abused often feel ashamed to come forward and seek help. Many don’t recognize what happened to them as abuse until much later in life when they’re dealing with the after-effects of sexual abuse such as depression, anger management, and difficulty forming emotional bonds. They may even feel at fault. Challenging gender stereotypes with youth, especially around expectations surrounding sex, can help victims recognize abuse and seek help.



TRAFFICKER STEREOTYPES

When you hear the words “trafficker,” who do you picture in your head? A trafficker may look very different than the stereotypes we have created in our mind:

Montia Marie Parker *(pictured left)*

Montia, 18, was a high school senior on the cheerleading team who was charged for trafficking a teammate in Minnesota. Parker was convicted of creating an online ad for her teammate, taking her to see customers, and accepting money in exchange for sexual acts.

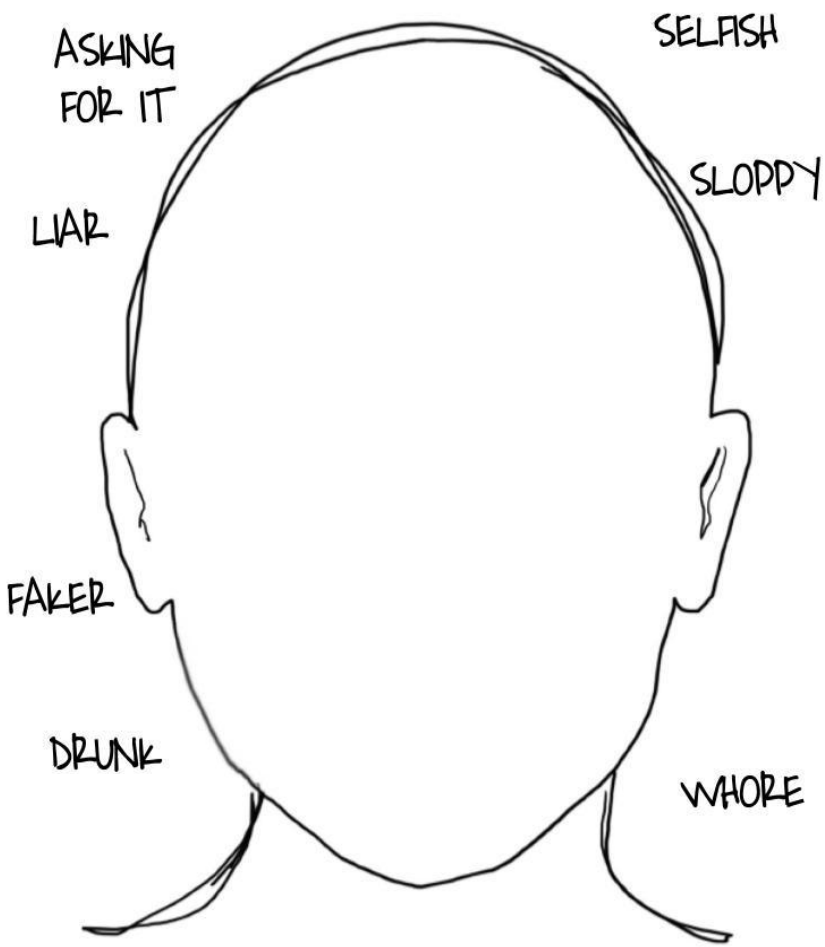
If you saw Montia walking down the street, you would not think of her as a potential trafficker. Dispelling myths about who may exploit someone else, and what a trafficker may look like, can help your adolescent better identify potential dangers and warning signs instead of forming impressions based on looks and stereotypes.

VICTIM BLAMING

Victim blaming occurs when the victim of a crime, or any wrongful act, is held entirely or partially responsible for the offenses committed against them. A common example of victim blaming is the phrase,

"Well, look at what they were wearing – they were practically asking for it."

Commenting on what the victim was wearing in this way suggests that the assault was their fault. Helping youth challenge victim-blaming language can help victims feel more comfortable disclosing information about their own abuse. This is an important step for healing and preventing future exploitation.



INSTAGRAM

SNAPCHAT

TIK TOK

HOUSEPARTY

YOUTUBE

WHATSAPP

TWITTER

HANGOUTS

ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

An exploitative relationship can develop over time. People gain trust by offering things that youth often crave, such as a listening ear, compliments, gifts, and promises of love. Relationships can be complicated, and when the interactions are happening online, it can be especially hard for youth to recognize risky situations.

Traffickers may engage in conversations online, through social media platforms or gaming consoles, with young people with the purpose of forming connections to learn more about them and take advantage of their vulnerabilities. These relationships may develop slowly over time, and they may make it more likely for youth to trust this person as a safe “friend,” and to even engage in risky behavior, such as sneaking out of their homes or meeting up with this person face to face.

FIND THE RED FLAGS

Read the following online conversation, and spot the red flags, or indicators that something does not feel right.

Alex15: ugh, my parents are being ridiculous. I wanted to go to this party tonight but they're telling me I can't go. It's so unfair.

JustJake17: that sucks, why'd they say no?

Alex15: they think im too young or whatever.

JustJake17: how old are you?

Alex15: 15

JustJake17: you don't seem 15. you're so mature for your age. They really shouldn't treat you like a kid

Alex15: that's something I love about you, you never treat me like im a baby..I feel like I can tell you anything and i've only known you for a few weeks

JustJake17: we understand each other

Alex15: exactly. I bet your parents aren't super strict like mine

JustJake17: they were when I was your age

Alex15: wait how old are you?

JustJake17: 26. something wrong? You don't trust me?

Alex15: no no, nothing like that, I was just curious

JustJake17: hey, I'm actually gonna be in your town soon. we can finally meet in person

Alex15: that would be awesome! Why are you coming out here?

JustJake17: work

Alex15: what do you do?

JustJake17: boring stuff, you wouldn't care. Where do you want to meet?

Alex15: you pick, I just want to see you!

They meet up to watch a movie and have pizza. The chats continue:

JustJake17: I cant wait to see you again

Alex15: I know, I had so much fun!

JustJake17: can you come over tonight? I need to see you again before I go

Alex15: what about my parents?

JustJake17: they won't have to know, I can pick you up at the end of your street, just sneak out once they're asleep.

Alex15: what time?

(continued on the next page...)

Alex & Jake agreed to meet at the hotel where he was staying. When Alex walked in the door, Alex was surprised that there were two other men in the room. Alex asked what was going on, and Jake said they were friends from town that just wanted to hang out. They started talking and someone offered Alex a drink. About an hour later Jake said that his friends had paid to have sex with Alex. Alex said no, but Jake said Alex would do it if Alex really cared about him.

Red Flags Recap:

We might imagine an "online predator" to be a creepy old man sitting at his computer pretending to be a young teen online. But studies and interviews with victims of exploitation have shown that more often than not, the abused minors were aware of the offender's age when they chatted online and thought of them as a romantic partner. They thought that they were in love, and in many cases met with the abuser on multiple occasions (Crimes Against Children Research Center, 2000).

IS YOUR YOUTH HAVING PROBLEMS ONLINE?

It is difficult for youth to talk about sexual concerns or sexual exploitation. Many feel they cannot tell anyone for fear of repercussions, consequences, or feelings of shame. Here are some signs a young person may be the target of sexual exploitation online:

- Spending increasing amounts of time on the Internet
- Becoming increasingly secretive — particularly around their use of technology
- Shutting the door and hiding what they have on screen when someone enters the room
- Not being able to talk openly about their activity online
- Appearing scared, secretive, or agitated when answering a cell phone
- Vague talk of a new friend, but offering no further information

SAFETY PLANNING

A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that can help youth avoid dangerous situations, and know how to react should they find themselves in one. Caregivers can play a significant role in helping youth understand potential dangers that they may not have anticipated, and to provide support for them to navigate those situations.

Some Practice With Safety Planning...

You met a nice person online, but they live a few hours away. They message you and say they're coming to your town for the day. They want you to meet them at the mall.

- If the request makes you uncomfortable, you don't have to respond. You could block the contact.
- If the person continues to try to make contact, tell a friend or a trusted adult.
- If you do want to meet this person, ask a trusted adult to go with you. It could be dangerous to meet someone for the first time alone or meet with someone without talking to an adult first.
- As a general rule, remember that you shouldn't disclose personal information, such as your phone number or where you live, to someone you've met online.

You texted suggestive pictures of yourself to your romantic partner. They shared the pictures with friends at school.

- If the picture was shared on a social media website such as Twitter or Facebook, report the image to the company immediately; social media companies have policies to protect children, and they may take it down.
- Tell a trusted adult. It might be embarrassing, but you deserve help and support. You may want to talk through about what disciplinary consequences you and the people who have shared the photo will face. (Text "HELP" to 233-733 for support from the Human Trafficking Hotline)
- If you feel comfortable, confront this person directly. Talk with a friend or a trusted adult to figure out what you want to say, and ask them to come with you if you want support.
- Do not continue to send them photos, even if they threaten you. Talk to a trusted adult for support, even if it's hard to tell them that you sent a picture at all.
- Although it can be tempting, remember it is impossible to control what someone will do with a picture you sent, and you could have your trust violated or get into trouble with law enforcement.

A girl you talk to at school tells you that her boyfriend is getting her into modeling, and he's taking her to meet agents in L.A. next week.

- If the situation seems suspicious, continue to engage the girl in conversation and find out more details about what's going on.
- Suggest she save the National Human Trafficking Hotline Number in her phone (888-3737-888) and tell her if she finds herself in a dangerous situation, she can call the number for help.
- Tell an adult about what you heard so that they can also follow up with her and make sure that she stays safe.

TALKING TO YOUR YOUTH

Would your youth feel comfortable coming to you about something that happened? Here are some things to consider when talking to your youth:

- Be non-judgmental when listening to your youth, and make sure to avoid shaming language
- Avoid beginning your conversation by saying your youth did something/said something wrong. "I" questions can be very helpful. For example, "I am concerned because...."
- Pay attention to your body language. Face your youth, make eye contact, show interest and empathy. Show understanding through words, nods, and facial expressions. Speak calmly.
- Pay attention to your youth's body language during and after their response to your question. Their body language should be congruent with what they are verbalizing.
- Label behavior, not the youth. For example, an "angry youth" is a "youth struggling with anger"
- Remember language matters. There is no such things as a youth "prostitute." That youth is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation — a victim of human trafficking.
- Ask your youth if anyone has touched them in ways that don't feel OK. Know that sexual abuse can produce a physical response that feels good to the victim, so asking your youth if someone is hurting them may not get the information that you are looking for.

Remember to Not...

- Dispute facts or comment on the youth's motivations. This will shut down communication.
- Expect the youth to recognize their situation as exploitative.
- React verbally or physically in a way that communicates disgust or disdain. Refrain from displaying a "shocked" face or talking about how "awful" the youth's experience was.
- Expect the youth to disclose all of the details of their abuse. Sometimes difficult information will need to be gathered in stages.

Understand child abuse image laws

Images of child abuse (i.e., child pornography) are not protected under First Amendment rights and are illegal contraband under federal law. Section 2256 of Title 18, United States Code, defines "child pornography" as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor (someone under the age of 18). To report an incident involving the production, possession, distribution, or receipt of child pornography, file a report on the website for National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at www.cybertipline.com or call 1-800-843- 5678.

Understand statutory rape laws

If a minor under the age of consent has engaged in sexual activity with someone over 18, but it did not involve an exchange of money or goods, it is possible that the abuser can be charged for statutory rape. In cases of statutory rape, it's possible that the youth may see it as sexual/romantic relationship with an older person rather than abuse or exploitation. The legal consequences of a sexual relationship with a minor can depend on the age of consent, which varies from state to state. For more information about your state's laws, visit *www.age-of-consent.info/*

Know the resources available to you

Your youth or a friend of your youth may come to you for help with a topic that you feel unequipped to talk about. It is important to encourage youth to reach out for help. These resources are also available to you. Offer to call these hotlines with your youth; your role is important. Thank you for all you do!

Chipotle fined $1.3 million over thousands of child labor abuses

Wendy's whacked with $400,000 fine after 2,100 child labor violations

Wal-Mart Agrees to Pay Fine in Child Labor Cases

US Dept. of Labor uncovers child labor law violations at restaurant locations in Wisconsin

POOL COMPANY PAYS PENALTIES FOR CHILD LABOR VIOLATIONS FOLLOWING A U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR INVESTIGATION

KEEPING YOUNG WORKERS SAFE

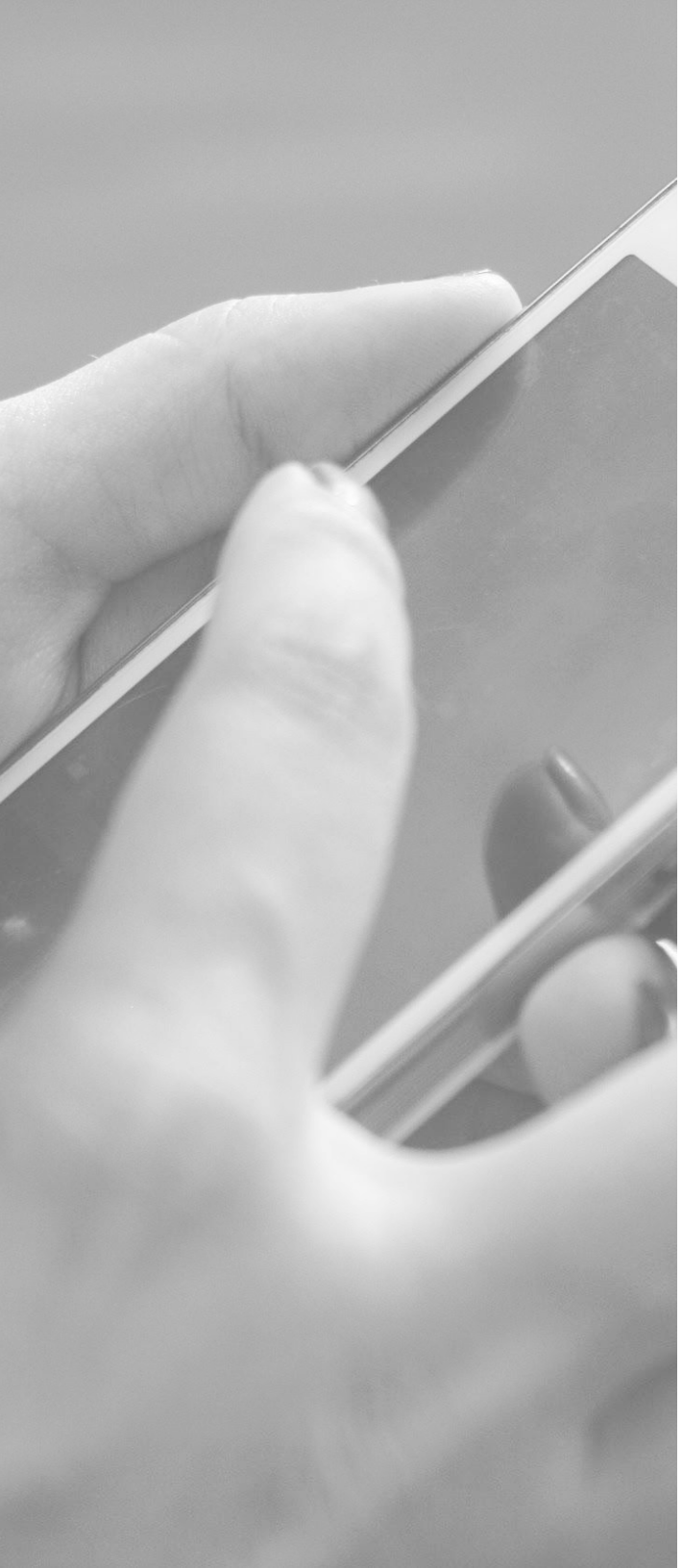
Child labor exploitation is more common than people think. Labor exploitation happens when a youth's workers' rights are violated and their wellbeing is jeopardized. It's important to teach young workers about their rights and normalize a healthy and safe work environment.

Youth can consent to begin working at a younger age, but there are restrictions regarding the type of work they can do and how many hours they can work:

- 13 or younger: baby-sit, deliver newspapers, or work as an actor or performer
- Ages 14-15: certain jobs permitted in such establishments as office work, grocery store, retail store, restaurant, movie theater, and amusement parks
- Age 16-17: Any job not declared hazardous
- Age 18: No restrictions

When youth know their workers' rights, they are better equipped to advocate for themselves, report abuse, and leave harmful situations. Learn more at www.youthrules.gov.

Note: Labor exploitation and labor trafficking are not the same. Child labor trafficking cases can include instances of child labor exploitation, but is only considered labor trafficking if an element of force, fraud, or coercion is present.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

Immediate Help

If you find out your youth has been sexually exploited or involved in commercial sex, or if you witness a situation of exploitation, or are told by a youth they are facing threats of immediate danger, ***call 911.***

If you suspect human trafficking, call ***The National Human Trafficking Hotline, 888-3737-888.*** The hotline is available to answer all calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Calls received by the hotline are always anonymous unless the caller chooses to provide the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) with his or her name. After receiving a tip, the NHTRC team conducts a thorough internal review process to determine appropriate next steps. If the call includes information about the exploitation of a youth, law enforcement will be notified and any information provided will be shared with law enforcement.

Become familiar with the laws in your state

The laws regarding human trafficking also vary state by state. While federal law defines any minor involved in commercial sex as a victim of human trafficking, each state varies in how human trafficking charges are handled. The State Map from Polaris shows a list of current state laws and service providers for human trafficking victims/survivors for each state. *www.polarisproject.org/state-map*

AVAILABLE ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

Net Nanny

Net Nanny shows you what your children do online and lets you identify information that is never to leave the computer, such as your home address or credit card numbers. You can manage the account from any computer with a web connection and a browser. *www.netnanny.com*

AVG Family Safety

AVG Family Safety software monitors chat rooms and social networking sites, filters websites based on age appropriate content, sends you to text/email reports on web usage, and allows you to set up unique accounts for every child. *www.avg.com/us-en/avg-family-safety*

WebWatcher

WebWatcher collects data about user activity on computers or mobile devices and creates detailed time tracking and activity reports that are available online. www.webwatcher.com

Love146's Online Safety Guide

This page, written to be a resource for teens, walks the reader through conversational red flags, safety guidelines to follow online, and advice for what to do if you feel uncomfortable. *www.love146.org/online-safety*

The Guideline

This 20-page guide from Fight the New Drug is for caregivers who want to address pornography with teenagers. The guide is based on the feedback that Fight the New Drug has received from thousands of teenagers and research on the effects of pornography. *www.store.fightthenewdrug.org/products/the-guideline-pdf*

HUMAN TRAFFICKING *(this includes youth who have been in "the life")*	The National Human Trafficking Resource Center: 1-888-3737-888 (Text "Be Free" 233733)
RUNAWAY	National Runaway Safeline: 1-800-786-2929
YOUTH WORKERS' RIGHTS	Department of Labor's (DOL) YouthRules!: www.youthrules.gov General DOL Wage and Hour Assistance: 1-866-4-USA-DOL
RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT	National Sexual Assault Hotline Rape Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): 1-800-656-4673
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
SUICIDE	Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
ALCOHOL AND DRUGS	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 1-800-662-4357
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH	American Pregnancy Helpline: 1-866-942-6466
LGBTQ	GLBT National Youth Talkline: 1-800-246-7743
POISON	National Capital Poison Center: 1-800-222-1222
GENERAL SUPPORT AND INFORMATION	Crisis Text Line: Text "LISTEN" to 741-741

LOVE LISTENS

It may be difficult to have these conversations with your youth, but your efforts to engage and connect will be invaluable, and go a long way towards building stronger relationships in their life.

Apps

With the explosion of the tech industry and the dramatic increase in internet availability around the world over the past few decades, "apps" have become rather ubiquitous. "Apps" (or applications), are essentially computer programs that are typically found on smartphones.[1]

We have apps that tell us what the weather is like anywhere in the world, apps that allow us to hitch a ride from a driver, apps that allow us to listen to our favorite music or watch our favorite shows, and apps that enable us to video chat with loved ones thousands of miles away. Most people can agree that apps have done a lot of wonderful things for our society. But, as with all technology, they possess the potential for danger.

Here are a few of the types of apps we have seen used by predators to attempt to groom and traffick vulnerable youth:

Microblogging Apps

HOW THEY WORK:

Microblogging apps are broadcast media that provide short and frequent posts. In comparison with traditional blogging, where longer, in-depth posts are released weekly or monthly, microblogging posts are more themed around "what I am doing right now" – also known as a "status update."

These are platforms on which users create a profile, bio, and, sometimes, a miniature empire online. These pages are frequently used as social media forums where users connect with friends. For platforms that use a central server (e.g. Twitter), all posts go through that server before posting. Posting photos and videos, instant messaging, group messaging, and building an individual profile are all features common to these apps.

Other microblogging apps focus more on visuals. Tumblr is an example of a microblogging site in which reposting, or "reblogging," is the main source of content. A user's "dashboard" is an updated page of recent posts from people or tags he/she follows. Due to the nature of these sites, posts are frequently very art-based. Signing up for a Tumblr page gives you the opportunity to create an aesthetic board specific to you. There are a larger number of photos, text posts, and graphics shared/reblogged; therefore users can choose the ambiance they want their page to exude.

Microblogging sites with an emphasis on visuals and creativity (i.e. Tumblr) are different from microblogging sites where the main source of sharing is text-based and socially motivated posts (i.e. Facebook, Twitter).

POTENTIAL RISKS:

Privacy is a major issue in the use of apps since users may inadvertently broadcast sensitive, personal information to anyone who views their public feed. Due to the short, casual nature of these frequent posts, private information can be shared without a second thought. Sites that use central servers can be hacked, and the original location of the post or tweet can be traced, putting that user at risk of being located. Though that requires that the hacker have a special skill set, it is not particularly uncommon.

Risks more specific to visual microblogging apps include the visual emphasis of the site. It is easier to target insecure teens based on the info on their pages, teens who are in search of a relationship, or teens who may be having a hard time at home, since these "visually oriented" sites are meant to provide a representation of their feelings. A number of visual microblogging sites are known to host a plethora of pornographic images. Larger sites have banned porn (Tumblr), but users indicate ban enforcement has been spotty. Tumblr has become known for its NSFW (not safe for work, or explicit) content; in recent years, however, enforcing this ban (since that content was a large part of Tumblr's appeal) caused Tumblr to lose 30% of its web traffic in only two months.

Examples: **Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, DeviantArt**

Photo and Video Sharing Apps

HOW THEY WORK:

These apps tend to center around the activity of snapping, editing, and posting photos and videos, which can be seen (and sometimes "liked") by users' friends or by the public (depending on their privacy settings).

Depending on which app is being used, these photos can remain available to view by the user's "followers" or the general public as long as the user does not delete them.

To find people with similar interests, users often place hashtags (such as "#horses") in the caption of their posted photo; this makes their photo searchable to other users with similar interests.

In some of these apps, users may "tag" the location in which they took the photo or video, which is often attached in an in-app map.

Image-sharing apps also usually have a "story" feature, which compiles posted photos or videos that can be viewed up to 24 hours after they're shared.

To communicate with others, users can either comment on someone's photo or send a private message using a direct message feature — sometimes both, depending on the app.

POTENTIAL RISKS:

What makes these apps dangerous is the trust that teens tend to put in the audience to whom they believe their information is being shown.

Traffickers can use these apps to glean information about a teen, which they can then use to relate to that teen in the grooming process.

For instance, a trafficker can learn where a teen likes to hang out, who their friends are, what their interests are, where they live, and more — all by viewing their pictures.

Unfortunately, teens can also become vulnerable to traffickers by over-sharing about their personal struggles or issues, especially if they use hashtags to express themselves.

For instance, traffickers can search #depressed or #sexy to find teens with vulnerabilities, and then reach out to them via direct message with sympathy or advice.

On some of these apps, images posted on stories seem to disappear after 24 hours, which gives teens a false sense of safety. Teens may then post more risky photos or opinions thinking they will disappear. Unfortunately, users can screenshot anything, and the app can also save any image posted — so in reality, the photo or video can potentially be available for much longer than 24 hours.

Examples: **Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok**

WIFI-Based Messaging Apps

HOW THEY WORK:

These apps allow their users to "text" one another using WiFi instead of cellular data, enabling users to message any other user, regardless of geographical location, without additional fees and, sometimes, without the need to even exchange phone numbers, thus maintaining whatever level of anonymity the user desires.

Although originally designed for private individual and group messaging, most WiFi-based instant-messaging apps also have a public groups feature, comprised of public, themed "chat rooms." Users who interact with one another in public groups can typically send private messages to individual users, where they can chat via text or video message and send pictures, videos, and GIFs (animated pictures).

POTENTIAL RISKS:

This type of app is used by traffickers who target themed chat rooms in order to identify and meet teens who are vulnerable to trafficking.

Once a trafficker identifies an at-risk teen, it's easy to begin the grooming process, gleaning information about the teen's vulnerabilities, sending and receiving explicit pictures, etc.

These apps have also been used to buy, share, and trade images of child sexual exploitation (or ICSE, formerly known as "child pornography").[2]

Traffickers tend to gravitate toward communicating with their victims through WiFi-based messaging apps (rather than through traditional texting) due to these apps' anonymous nature, which makes it harder for law enforcement to track them — and which makes teens more comfortable with sharing personal information.

In addition, traffickers prefer this method of communication because it can be accessed on any device with WiFi connectivity, including tablets, laptops, even deactivated and "burner" cell phones.

Examples: **Kik, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Viber, GroupMe**

Dating Apps

HOW THEY WORK:

Although each dating app will advertise its own niche or way of operating, they all tend to work in a very similar manner: They allow users to review strangers' dating profiles, which tend to consist mostly of pictures, along with some basic information about their general location, age, height, education, occupation, etc.

Although some apps operate on a "like" or "dislike" basis, more and more apps are switching over to a swiping method, in which users swipe their device screen to the right if they're interested in getting to know the user whose profile they're viewing, and swipe left if they're not interested.

If two users have swiped right on or "liked" each other's profiles, they're matched and given the opportunity to chat with one another via a private messaging feature.

Although most dating apps are created for users 18 and older, age requirements are easy to bypass by simply entering the incorrect age when creating a profile.

POTENTIAL RISKS:

Even though these apps were originally designed for (and are still used for) finding a serious romantic partner, they have also become known to many as "hookup" apps.

Perhaps because of the appearance-based nature of the matching process, teens and adults have been known to use this type of app to find a casual sexual partner, or "friend with benefits."

Along with shaping modern dating culture as one where it is normal to "hook up" (or have sexual relations with a stranger), these dating apps are also a place where traffickers can find teens in search of love and/or physical affection.

Examples: **Yubo, Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, Tagged, Grindr, Plenty of Fish (or POF), Coffee Meets Bagel, Badoo, SKOUT, MeetMe**

Vault Apps

HOW THEY WORK:

These apps are designed to act as a secret virtual vault for media such as photos, notes, files, contacts, passwords, and internet browsing.

However, Vault apps often appear to have a different purpose than they actually do. For instance, many appear and function as a calculator, yet they're set up so that if a certain predetermined code is typed into the calculator keypad, the "vault" unlocks and the secret contents become accessible.

Even though users often must pay a small fee to use all of these features in an unlimited capacity, these apps typically have a free version where users may still store some photos, notes, contacts, etc.

POTENTIAL RISKS:

Although vault apps are not used to recruit teens into being trafficked, these apps still frequently appear in trafficking cases. When traffickers are first grooming a teen online, they often encourage the youth to get a vault app so their correspondence — the sexual images (photos and videos) they might have exchanged, and the pornography that they have been sent — can be kept secret from anyone who might access their phone.

Examples: **Fake Calculator, Calculator+, Secret Photo Vault, Private Photo Vault**

PLEASE REMEMBER:

1.These apps are not intrinsically bad. There are a lot of positive, fun reasons for youth to have most of these apps (with the exception of the dating and perhaps vault apps). Just because your children use these apps does not mean they are being groomed by a trafficker.

2.This is not an exhaustive list of the types of apps traffickers may use to groom and recruit youth. Users, both young and old, should use extreme caution while using any online or social networking app, as traffickers could use even the most innocent ones in a predatory manner.

3.For more information on potentially dangerous apps, you can find our "Apps to Watch For" research and resource at sharedhope.org/internetsafety.

1"WebWise – What Are Apps?" *BBC*, BBC, www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/guides/what-are-apps

2Fox-Brewster, Thomas. "This $1 Billion App Can't 'Kik' Its Huge Child Exploitation Problem." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 3 Aug. 2017, www.forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2017/08/03/kik-has-a-massive-child-abuse-problem/#53f0fc31a142

Tips for Monitoring Kids Online

If your chilldren are always on their phones or on the Internet, what can you do to keep them safe?

- **GET INTERNET SAFETY TIPS FROM PROFESSIONALS SUCH AS BARK.**[1] Start early, when they first begin using devices, and be sure they understand you are only protecting them, not robbing them of their fun.
- **IF THEY'RE ONLINE** make sure the computer they are using is in a shared space in your home where you can see what they're viewing/doing. Stay involved. Check their browsing history regularly.
- **TALK WITH YOUR KIDS!** Discuss with them safe social media practices, the dangers of starting a conversation with someone they don't know (or only *think* they know), and why sharing too much personal information can be dangerous. (They should be warned about sharing locations, daily schedules and routines, addresses, names of school/church/clubs, bus routes.)
- **CHECK THEIR MOBILE DEVICES AND LAPTOPS REGULARLY.** Establish guidelines about checking with you before loading new apps. Interact with them to get an explanation of any new apps they want to load and discuss how to use them safely.
- **BE AWARE OF PRIVACY SETTINGS AND CHECK THE SETTINGS ON THEIR DEVICES REGULARLY.** New apps are prolific so set regular calendar reminders for yourself to look at any electronic device your child uses that connects to the Internet. (Pay special attention to online or video games, social media, and apps for music, pictures, connecting, or sharing.)
- **DISCUSS BEDROOM ETIQUETTE IN YOUR HOME.** If visitors of the opposite sex aren't allowed into their room, then live chat with an online visitor should be treated in the same manner. Remind them that showing something to someone online is the same as inviting that stranger into their bedroom. *Would you go to the door and greet a guest in your underwear?* No, of course not. So don't FaceTime or send photos while wearing only underwear, or even pajamas.
- **DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILDREN TO HAVE DEVICES AT NIGHT,** which is essentially "leaving a front door open" while you're sleeping.
- **DISCUSS WITH YOUR CHILD THE TACTICS USED BY PREDATORS** and explain to them why it's safer if you collect electronic devices at bedtime and put them all on chargers in another room.

If you hear about kids sending inappropriate pictures to one another, recognize that this is <u>not</u> just a normal part of growing up. Teach your children that:

- **SEXTING IS VERY DANGEROUS,** because on the Internet those photos *never* go away.
- **YOU CAN NEVER KNOW WHO WILL SEE THAT PHOTO** so don't send something you don't want everyone to see.
- **YOU MAY LIKE THE BOY/GIRLFRIEND TODAY** but not like them next week. You don't want someone to have a photo of you that's very private.
- **UNDERAGE SEXTING IS ILLEGAL** and if you are caught, even though you are underage yourself, you could be charged with possession and distribution of child pornography.
- **IT'S NEVER APPROPRIATE** to send a photo of yourself unclothed, to anyone. *Ever.*

HELP THEM UNDERSTAND:

- That cute 15-year-old guy who reached out on Instagram may actually be a 37-year-old man wanting to meet you.
- The person who offers to help you win a game, and offers to share tips and give you free upgrades, etc., may not really be a nice person.
- If you don't know them in person — where they live/go to school — don't let them be your online "friend" because they could be anyone.
- A person may say they live in Panama and just want to get acquainted with an American teen, but you don't know who they really are.
- Ask your safe adult if you want to friend someone, and ask for the adult's oversight to be sure you stay safe.
- If anything makes you uncomfortable online:
  - immediately stop the conversation
  - exit the app but don't delete anything
  - tell your safe adult about the incident
  - the adult will investigate and alert the proper authorities if someone appears to be an online predator. (Clues that the person you're interacting with could be an online predator include asking for nude/compromising photos, requesting personal information, asking to meet with you, wanting to share a secret with you, asking you to keep a secret). Approaching a minor sexually is illegal, so the police will investigate.

As your children get older, they may resent your interference in their lives. How can you make them feel good about talking to you?

- **TALK OPENLY WITH YOUR KIDS**, in a non-judgmental way, especially about relationships and healthy boundaries.
- **TEACH THEM HOW TO RESPOND** to various threatening situations, including online threats.
- **TEACH THEM THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS LISTEN.** Put away your phone or set aside other distractions, make eye contact, and be present no matter what they want to talk about.
- **TEACH THEM NOT TO KEEP SECRETS** and to tell you immediately if someone tells them *not* to tell.
- **SHOW** them Shared Hope's *Chosen* documentary. Sometimes they will listen to someone else.
- **CREATE A "SAFE WORD"** that they can use on the phone with you if they're ever feeling unsafe (for instance: "I'm hungry for pepperoni pizza"). Let them know you'll immediately come pick them up without repercussions if they aren't where they were supposed to be. Always give them an out, and the confidence that you will be their ally.

  When you pick them up, don't be angry, but instead ask:
  - How can we make sure you're safe next time?
  - Tell me why you think this could have been dangerous (drugs or alcohol offered, no adults present, no one knew where I was).

INTERNET PROVIDER PARENTAL CONTROLS

You may make sure your kid's phone has privacy settings on. Is that enough?

- There are ways to hack into information that can easily bypass standard privacy settings.
- Research online sources like **netsmartz.org** for easy access to parental controls.
- Listen to the Shared Hope Internet Safety Video Series (**sharedhope.org/internetsafety).**
- Establish as a general rule for your child/teen that they never post anything they don't want everyone to see/know. Encourage them to think about who will know private information about you, like where you go and what you do, if you post this information.

SET UP A SAFE PASSWORD WITH YOUR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES [2]

If anyone ever tells them they're supposed to come with them ("Your mom has been hit by a car and she sent me to bring you to the hospital"), your child is to ask, "What is the password?" If that person doesn't provide it correctly, the child knows to run and yell for help and not to go with them, no matter who it is.

- Keep passwords very simple (for instance, the color blue), but change it periodically.
- Make it a special occasion when you create the password so they remember it, such as on Mom's birthday.
- Tell them this password is not to be shared with anyone but the immediate family. Assure them that you (the parent) will give it to anyone they send to pick them up.

MONITORING DEVICES

Monitoring your kids' online devices is a challenge. We understand how difficult it can be to keep up with today's ever-changing technology, along with doing just the requirements of everyday parenting and managing all of life's other responsibilities. But we know your child's safety is your first concern, so this resource is intended to give you easily understood tools and information to support your efforts.

To help you get started, here are some tips:

- Guard your kids at the location level. Keep internet devices out of the bedroom as much as possible. Have a bedtime "turn in" time when you have the devices lined up on a power strip charging in a different room.
- Talk to parents of friends where your kids spend time (it's worth the awkward conversation). Ask at school and church about wireless access points, and be sure you're satisfied with their answers about monitoring web activity, etc.
- Guard your router/network signal. Is it filtered? Do you worry about kids or babysitters surfing your WiFi for inappropriate content? **Check out these easy instructions how to filter your signal.**
- Guard the device. Predators can communicate with your children through iPhones, Chromebooks, MacBooks, iPads, and laptops. **Here is a simple go-to guide to monitor and filter all of these devices.** Although many parents don't realize it, predators can also communicate with children via Xbox/Playstation consoles. **Here is a simple guide to filter Xbox/Playstation consoles.**

MONITORING DEVICES (CONTINUED)

- Understand and monitor social media. Social media is an integral part of our children and teenagers' world. It's important for parents to understand the various platforms, how they work, and how to talk to your children about being smart when using social media. **Here is a handy overview document of various social media platforms.** You'll also find **this guide** helpful: Parenting the Internet Generation: A Blueprint for Teaching Digital Discernment. Instagram and Snapchat in particular are some of the most popular social media platforms.

  Check out **Instagram's Tips for Parents**

  and **ConnectSafely's Parent's Guide to Instagram.**

  For Snapchat, check out their Safety Center and **ConnectSafely's Parent's Guide to Snapchat.**

- At present, chat and web play features on gaming consoles can be turned on or off, but there is no parental control platform that will prevent a child from re-enabling these features once they've become reasonably savvy about navigating the software.

- The chat logs on games can be monitored, but the means by which they are recovered is far too complicated for the average parent.

- Still, you can take a number of measures[3] to protect your kids, including online protection tools and good old-fashioned monitoring. Parental control options vary by console.

We recommend internetmatters.org as a resource to accesses step-by-step instructions on how to set-up parental controls.

In short, devices need parental controls — period. Compare it to driving a car. You would prepare a child to get their driver's license before you handed over the keys to the car. You control access to the vehicle, practice with them, quiz them, and remain in control until you're ready to let them drive independently. But even then, you want to know where they are going, with whom, and when they will be back. Internet access is no different and can be just as dangerous as an unmonitored teen behind the wheel.

[1]https://www.bark.us

[2]Shared Hope International. "Women's Discussion Guide — Faith in Action Kit." *Shared Hope International*, 2016, sharedhope.org/product/faith-action-kit/

[3]https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/net-safety.html

[4]"Change Your Child's Xbox Privacy and Online Safety Settings." Support.microsoft.com, Microsoft, 14 Feb. 2019, support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/4026796/microsoft-account-change-childs-xbox-privacy-online-safety-settings