

CAN WE FIX THIS CHILD?

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SURVIVAL TOOL: REDUCE ANXIETY

- Create a structured and predictable environment through rituals & routines.
- Increase ability to experience and manage intense emotion in yourself and in your child.
- Respond to child's feelings and developmental age rather than to behaviors or chronological age.
- Use positive reinforcement to facilitate child's abilities to identify with and accept competencies rather than deficits.

SURVIVAL TOOL: QUESTION YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

- Don't assume that this child is intentionally trying to manipulate you, to bomb a placement or to fail. Acknowledge other real possibilities for this traumatized child's struggles and behaviors.
- Without positive and consistent internal life maps to guide them, traumatized children may act out impulsively instead of planning. They may show their needs and desires in their behaviors rather than through their words.

SURVIVAL TOOL: UNDERSTAND AND RECOGNIZE RE-ENACTMENT

- **What it is:** A defensive survival strategy to provoke parent to act out the original trauma drama of rejection, loss, abandonment, rage, abuse or terror.
- **Why:** To create an external environment of tension, chaos, fear and rejection that mirrors the child's internal state - things that feel normal to traumatized children.
- **What to do:** Parent refuses to participate in re-enacting trauma drama. Parent takes time out, calls in help, resources and support. Rules and boundaries are re-stated and remain in place, over and over again.

SURVIVAL SKILL: UNDERSTAND SPLITTING

- **What it is:** A defensive survival strategy to create conflict between adults who have authority over the child: parents, single parent and teacher, parent and child-care provider, parent and social worker, etc.
- **Why:** To gain power and control over the adults; to create chaos, fear and rage within important relationships; to create a Disruption Threat.
- **What to do:** The adults refuse to participate in splitting behaviors, focus on communication and support each other. The adult relationships are protected, supported and nurtured. The adults are in charge of the child, not the other way around.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY: UNDERSTAND THE DISRUPTION THREAT

- **What it is:** A defensive survival strategy to provoke a rejecting response from the adult: "Either she goes or I go."
- **Why:** To gain control over fears of more loss and abandonment through disruptive behaviors that create chronic chaos that can put the placement in jeopardy.
- **What to do:** Parent temporarily steps back emotionally from the parent role and into the caretaker role. Parent refuses to re-enact relationship disruption. Rules, boundaries and permanence are re-stated and remain in place, over and over again.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY: UNDERSTANDING LYING

- **What it is:** A defensive survival strategy to provoke struggles around power, trust and control by creating a false self.
- **Why:** Perfectionism, secrecy, disconnection = CONTROL. Traumatized children want control more than anything else.
- **What to do:** Parents are honest in their lives and relationships. Parents don't get stuck in moralizing and righteousness. Rules, boundaries, consequences and permanence are re-stated and remain in place, over and over again. Don't get caught in "Are you lying?" and trust your parenting instincts with this child.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY: UNDERSTANDING STEALING

- **What it is:** A defensive survival strategy to provoke struggles around power, trust and control. Taking what is wanted or needed rather than asking.
- **Why:** Secrecy, disconnection = CONTROL. "Asking" feels vulnerable and powerless to many traumatized children.
- **What to do:** Parents are honest in their lives and relationships and don't get stuck in moralizing and righteousness. Rules, boundaries, consequences and permanence are re-stated and remain in place, over and over again. Natural consequences work better than grounding or taking things or privileges away.
