

Trauma Informed Assessment and Preparation Toolkit

Tools for Preparation and Assessment

**Presented to NYSCCC 23rd Annual Foster Parent and Adoption
Conference**

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**Presented by Jayne E. Schooler
International Foster Care and Adoption Educator**

1 Recognizing and Understanding your Expectations

Using the scale below, respond to the following statements that reflect your expectations by circling the number that you feel applies to you.



| | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1: True | 2: Often true | 3: Rarely true | 4: Not true |
|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|

1. Our/My ability to love and nurture will be enough.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

2. We/I will feel love and connection to this child immediately.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

3. This child will become a part of our/my family and learn how to function within our/my 'rules,' goals and ambitions.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

4. This child's needs will be just like those of the other children in our/my family.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true 5: N/A

5. My family/friends will respect our/my role as a parent and support us/me through the journey of fostering or adopting.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

6. Our/my child will see us as his/her family and forget their birth family and the past.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

7. Our/my child can grow and heal from their traumatic experience.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

8. I/we are able to provide a child with a stable, nurturing environment.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

9. We/I can do for this child what was not done for me.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

10. We/I will not do to this child what was done to me.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true

11. I/we will never feel any regrets or resentment about adopting or fostering a child with a traumatic past.

1: True for me/us 2: Often true 3: Rarely true 4: Not true



Identifying Your Circle of Support

Created By Heather Bench, Founder of New Family Tree
Dayton, Ohio

This exercise allows you to identify a person or multiple people who represent the traits of a support person in your life. Anyone who represents the following traits, list their name in the provided box.

The Rock A person(s) who will remain in your life during the difficult times and continue to love you unconditionally.

The Wise A person(s) who will always tell the truth even when it is not what you want to hear.

The Passenger A person(s) who will learn alongside of you.

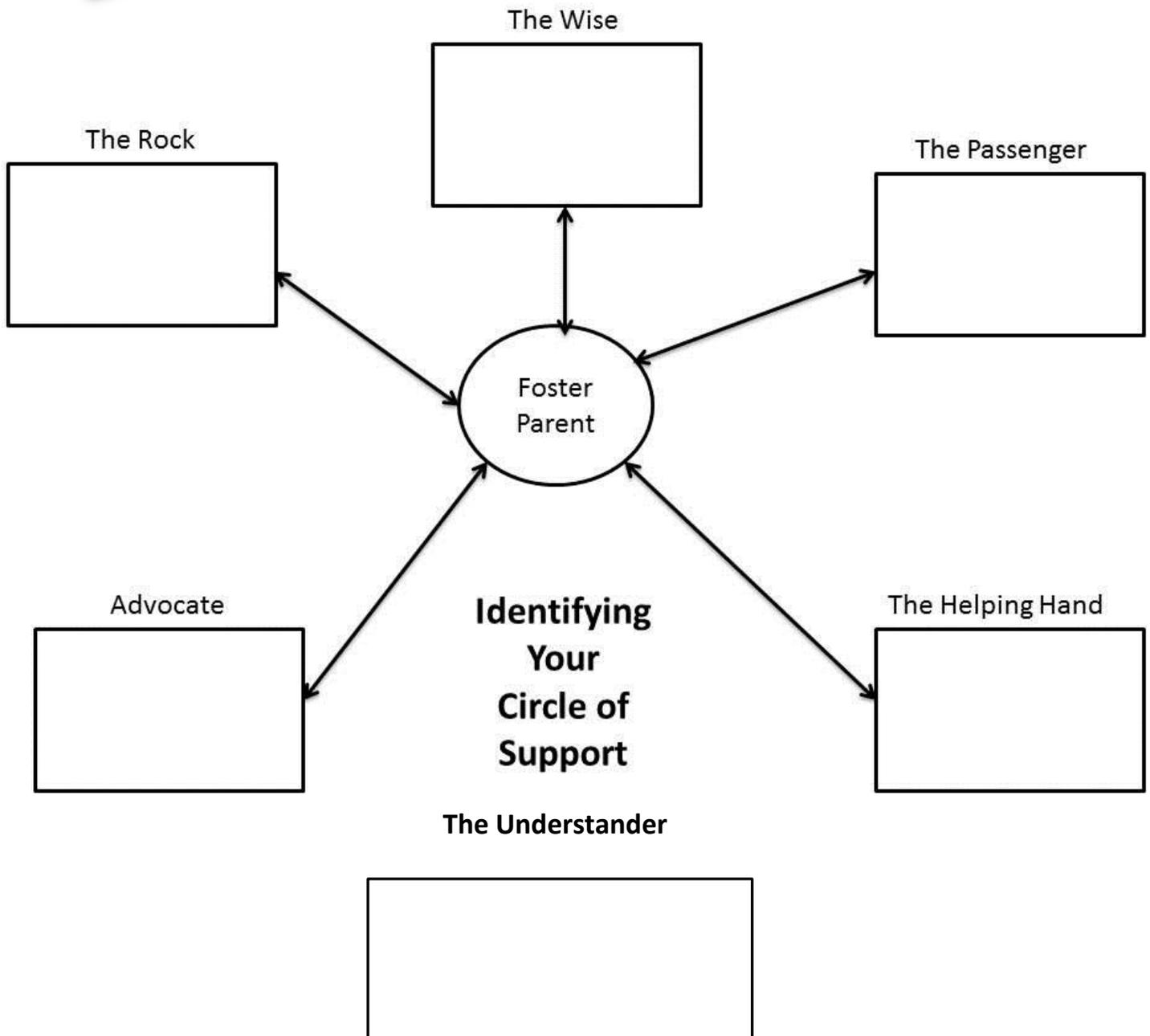
The Helping Hand A person(s) who understands and is aware when you may need a break and steps in to assist.

The Understander A person who truly “gets it” – who understands the complex layers of parenting a child who has experienced trauma and that parenting this child is different.

Advocate A person(s) who will always stand up for you and continue to support you.



Identifying Your Circle of Support



3 Trauma Informed Assessment Preparation and Assessment Behavioral Questions.

1. Recognize the impact of trauma has on a child.

- Do you know anyone who has experienced early childhood trauma?
- If so, how have you observed the impact of that trauma on that person (either still a child or now an adult?)

2. Help the child feel safe by maximizing the child's sense of safety:

- Tell me about a time when you didn't feel safe what did that feel like?
- Describe what emotional/psychological safety means to you. What does that look like in your home?
- Discuss different types of safety- physical, emotional. Give examples.
- How have you specifically given a child a sense of safety? Give examples – schedule, routine...
- Tell me a time when you felt safe in expressing your feelings. Was there ever a time you didn't feel safe in expressing how you feel?
- Take the words "safe" and "safety" and replace with "secure" and "security" – what does that look like to you.
- Describe for me a time that you turned to someone and could/could not express your thoughts/feelings...what were the results of that interaction? Did you have someone available to you?
- Can you think of a time when your environment was unsafe or felt unsafe and what steps did you take to improve safety and security?
- How have you comforted a child who felt unsafe or scared?
- Tell me about a time that you comforted a child who was frightened and scared.

3. Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotions:

- When was the last time you saw a child who was emotionally upset? What was that child experiencing? How did it make you feel? What did you do to help the child? ... etc.
- Tell me about a time you dealt with a child that was having a temper tantrum?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you helped adult /child through an emotional experience and what was the outcome?

- Have you ever dealt with someone that went into a rage rather than verbally expressing themselves?
- When you view children who are misbehaving, (like in the grocery store) what are your thoughts/statements about that? Realizing you will be parenting children with behavior issues, what has been your experience or exposure to children with difficult behaviors?
- Share a time where you experienced a dramatic change in your life. How did you feel? Who did you turn to?
- Have you ever been emotionally overwhelmed and what did you do to resolve that. What was the presenting issue that overwhelmed you?
- What do you see when your spouse/child is overwhelmed? How do you respond?
- Give me an example of a time you have used actions or behaviors to help someone express an emotional without words?
- Tell me about an event that caused you intense emotions (fear, anger). In what ways did that emotion affect your ability to function?

4. Help child to understand and modify behaviors/and understand the impact of trauma and subsequent changes in the child's behavior, development, and relationships

- What has been your experience in knowing or caring for a child that has been through significant trauma? What did you observe and understand how this trauma impacted the child's growth and development?
- Describe a traumatic time in your life or your family origin. How did you handle it?
- Describe the worst childhood experience. How did it affect your family and peer relationships, school performance, etc?
- Tell me a time when you sought help from a professional (therapist, teacher, etc.)? What was that experience like for you?
- Describe a time when someone you cared about lost their job, was in an accident, went through a divorce, etc. What changes did you see in them?
- Tell me about a time when you were hurt or disappointed by someone. How did it change your relationship?

5. Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child:

- Tell me about a time when you were supportive of a child's need for a relationship with someone that you didn't particularly care for.

- Who do you keep in touch with even though the thought of being with them causes you stress?
- Were you ever separated from your parents or significant caregiver? If so, what did you need?
- Tell me about the ending of a significant relationship in your life? How has this affected you and your other relationships?
- What did you need after that person's death or permanent absence from your family?

6. Help the child develop a strength based understanding of his/her life story and to make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences

- Have you ever had the experience of talking with a child about the difficult issues of his past? If so, what did it feel like to you?
- Has a child/adult ever disclosed information about earlier life trauma to you? What did you do? How did you feel and respond? What was the relationship like after the disclosure?
- What are some situations about which you have difficulty discussing with another adult/child? (i.e. Sexual abuse)
- Describe a traumatic event in your own life. How did you communicate what happened to you and to whom? How did you deal with it? How did your parents help you through the trauma?
- Where did you find support? Was someone available to talk one-on-one? Did you feel safe with that person?
- Do certain things/ people/circumstances make you uncomfortable? Why? How do you respond?
- Describe an event from your own childhood that could be considered traumatic. What actions did adults take that either minimized or increased the trauma?
- Choose a memory from your childhood that you perceived differently from others around you? Or differently now that you are an adult.
- Take two minutes to describe life events that have shaped who you are today.

7. Be an advocate for a child/ has willingness to coordinate services with other agencies/advocate for a child

- Tell me about experiences you have had in coordinating medical, mental health or educational services for a family member.

- What were some of the barriers you encountered and how did you navigate through them?
- What are some key things you learned from the experiences of coordinating services for a family member?

8. Promote and support trauma informed focus assessment and treatment for a child

- Can you tell me about a time when you have had to work with professional – mental health or medical professional that required you to participate in the treatment
- What was that like? How did that impact your schedule and the rest of your responsibilities?

9. Takes care of himself/herself and has willingness, ability and understanding in evaluating their own personal response to the child's behavior and unique needs:

- Tell me about a time that you felt you made a parenting mistake. What was it? How did you respond at that time and what would you do differently?
- Give me an example of a time someone criticized your parenting, who was younger than you or may not have parenting experience? How did you respond?
- Tell me about a time you felt rejected? How did you deal with it and respond?
- Tell me about a time when you were with a child whose negative behavior was unexpected in public. How did you feel? How did you intervene with the child/ how do you feel you handled it? Is there anything you would now do differently?
- Tell me a time when you caused your parents embarrassment? How did they deal with it? How do you feel about how your parents dealt with it? What would you have like for them to do?
- How would you handle a child disclosing sexual abuse to you for the 1st time?
- Tell me scenario when you've had to be aware of your non-verbal responses so you don't offend someone.
- Use the Self-Care Assessment Form
- Go over the Circle of Support

Parenting Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused

What questions would you ask to assess their knowledge, skill or experience?

1. Acknowledge the reality of their child's abuse experience.

- a. Tell me how you have explored information related to child sexual abuse?
- b. Tell me about your comfort level and experience talking about sexuality and abuse.
- c. It's hard to help a child talk about painful stuff, how do you think you might talk with your child about their abuse? Have you ever had to talk to a child about sexual abuse?
- d. Have you ever had a child disclose sexual abuse to you? What was your relationship with that child? What was that like for you? How did it make you feel?
- e. How did that impact your relationship with that child?
- f. Have you ever seen a child sexually acting out? How did you respond/address this issue and how did it make you feel? Have you known anyone that has been sexually abused? How did you help/support them? How effective was it?
- g. Tell me about a time that you have had to help a child deal with another traumatic experience you have never had.
- h. Talk about a hypothetical abuse experience...give three examples of times in a child's life when feelings about the abuse may resurface? Follow with... Talk about a traumatic event experienced and at what times in your life do feelings about it come back up?

2. Help children ventilate feelings of rage, guilt, fear and sadness.

- a. Tell me about a time you helped a child work through guilt, fear, sadness. How did you assist the child with this? How did it work out?
- b. Tell me about a time you felt out of control emotionally. Describe how you processed these feelings and worked through the situation.
- c. Have you ever felt extreme anger about something? How did you deal with this anger?

3. Decrease and manage inappropriate sexual behaviors.

- a. Tell me about a time you saw someone demonstrating an inappropriate sexual behavior. How did you handle this? What was the outcome?
- b. Did you hear examples in training that felt realistic to you to do in your home?

- c. Tell me about a time someone made you feel uncomfortable sexually? How did you handle this? What was the outcome?
- d. Tell me about how sexual issues were discussed when you were growing up?
- e. Have you known anyone who has been sexually abused? How did you help them? How did talking about it make you feel?
- f. Give an example of an age appropriate behavior and how you have dealt with that? Follow up how can you tell when age appropriate behavior has gone to far?

4. Decrease other acting-out behaviors

- a. Tell me about a time you have had to calm a child in public? What did you do? How did it work out?
- b. Describe a time when you were physically stuck with a child that needed redirection. What did you do? How did that work out?
- c. Tell me about a time your child acted out inappropriately? How did you handle it?

5. Encourage recovery of capacity for attachment and appropriate intimacy.

- a. Tell me about a time you have met someone with whom you had boundary issues. How did you deal with that experience?
- b. Have you ever had the experience of a child being sexually or verbally inappropriate with you? What was that like? How did you respond?
- c. Give me an example of a time you have dealt with someone who had difficulty expressing appropriate intimacy. What type of emotions did you experience?
- d. Explain a time when you felt distant from your spouse or partner? How did it make you feel? How was it handled? And what was the result?
- e. Explain a time when one felt intimate and your spouse or partner didn't respond. How did that make you feel and how did you handle it?
- f. Tell me about a time when you felt uncomfortable around someone and how you dealt with it?
- g. Tell me about any activities that you have done in the past with a child to build relationships.

6. Improve self esteem.

- a. How do you define self-esteem?
- b. Do you know someone with low or poor self-esteem/ How do you know they have poor self-esteem?
- c. Can you tell me about a time that you tried to help someone who has been embarrassed or ashamed? Tell me the outcome of that?

d. Give me example of a time where someone you cared about felt guilty about something that wasn't their fault. How did you help them with that?

e. Tell me about a situation where you were feeling down and how you changed it? Is there an experience you've had with someone who was having difficulty with their self-esteem? How did you help them?

7. Improve social skills.

- a. What family activities do your family participant in? Have you ever had to deal with a child who was inappropriate at a social gathering? What did you do? How did it work out?
- b. When you are in the community, what are some of your family rules? When a child violates those rules, what do you do?
- c. Have you ever caught your children playing doctor or exploring body parts with other children? How did you handle it?
- d. Have you ever had to explain a healthy sexual relationship with a child? What do you think may be different when talking to a child who has been sexually abused?

8. Teach normal family rules and boundaries.

- a. Tell me about your family rules/boundaries around touching, dress in the home, open doors/shut doors (bedroom and bathroom).
- b. What are your rules around types of viewing on TV and Internet and music?
- c. Describe the expectations for privacy in your home.
- d. Tell me about a time when you felt your privacy was invaded? How did you address it? How did you feel about it? What was the result?
- e. Tell me about a time that someone close to you crossed a boundary with you or broke a family rule. How did you handle it? What was the result?
- f. Explains what it means to you and in what ways you have taught family boundaries and rules.
- g. What assistance might you need to accomplish this task as a foster/adoptive parent?

9. Face their own sexual abuse issues or that of a family member.

- a. Has anyone in your life violated your personal boundaries? What age did this happen? What was the length of time of the abuse?
- b. To whom did you disclose this abuse? What was the response?
- c. What did you need to heal from that experience? Did you get it and from whom?

- d. What kind of relationship did you have with the perpetrator? Are you okay with what happened to the perpetrator? Do you still have some level of contact with that person?
- e. When that occurred, did you develop a plan to keep yourself safe? Did someone help you? Was a plan put in place to keep you safe?

Skills developed by Castaldo, Debra, 1996, *Assessing Foster and Adoptive Families for Placement of Sexually Abused Children Practice Guidelines*, (Families International, Inc.: Milwaukee, WI) page 11