

## Assessing, and Preparing Adoptive and Foster Parents for the Journey Ahead

Loving and Living with a  
Traumatized Child

3/23/2012

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## TODAY'S GOAL

- To provide an overview of trauma informed assessment and preparation.
- The foundational material for this preparation model in part is from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's Trauma Toolkit and Resource Parenting Workshop [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

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## Building a Trauma Informed Agency for Foster and Adoptive Parents

- NCTSN's Resource Parenting Workshop
- Assessing and Preparing Families to Care for Children with a History of Trauma
- Building Trauma Competent Healing Parents (for workers)
- Becoming Trauma Competent Healing Parents (for families)
- Wounded Children, Healing Homes: Loving and Living with the Traumatized Child

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## The Overview of Today

- Introducing Their Role – Trauma Competent Healing Parent
- Introducing the Three Essential Tasks
- Introducing the Nine Essential Elements
- Tools for the Tasks
  - Addressing Expectations
  - Identifying Their Circle of Support
  - Behavioral Questions Based on the Essential Elements

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THE DOOR



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Let's Change Our  
Conversation...from the beginning

- Trauma – competent healing parent
- Compassionate parenting



What does that look like?

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## What is a Trauma-Competent Healing Parent?

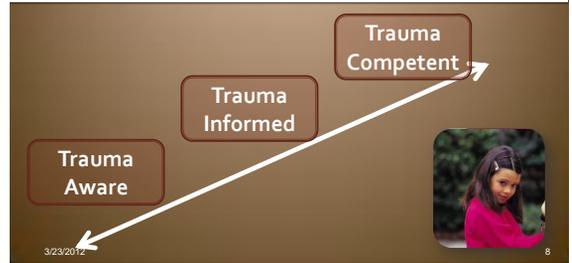
A trauma-competent healing parent is a compassionate parent ....

Who understands the life altering impact of trauma		Who can view life from the lens of a wounded child
Who knows when to ask for help	Who prepares for family transformation and the challenges	Who understands they will need to parent differently

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## The Growth Continuum for Trauma Competent Healing Parents



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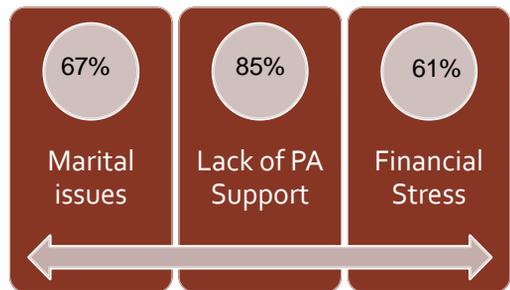
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## A Goldmine Find: Three Essential Tasks

		
Believe and validate your child's abuse and trauma history	Expand your window of tolerance of behaviors by...	Managing your own emotional responses

FOCAL POINT Research, Policy, and Practice in Children's Mental Health Winter 2007  
Focal Point, Vol. 21, No. 1

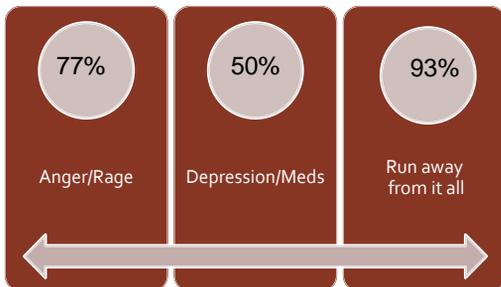
## Interesting Research



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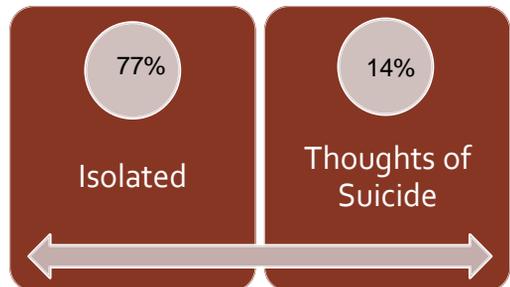
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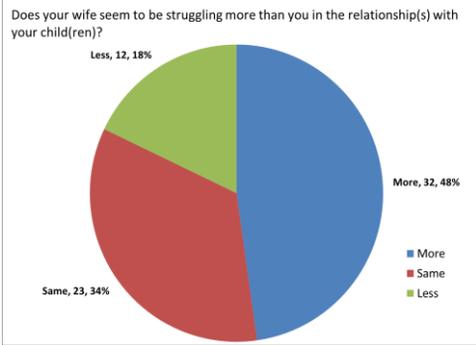
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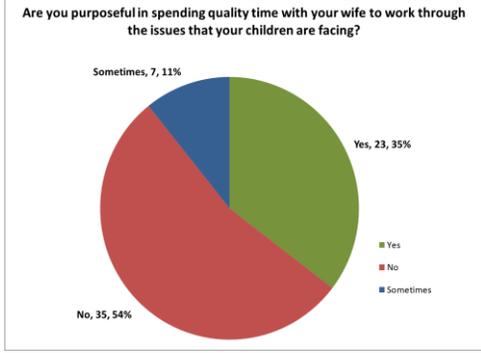
Review results from the questionnaire



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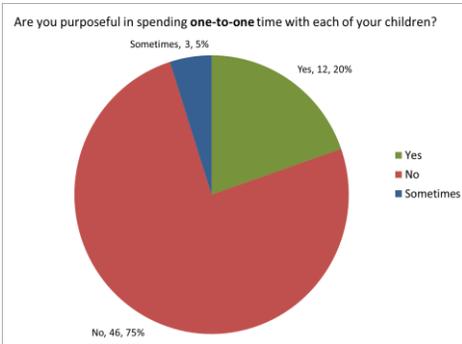
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Review results from the questionnaire



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Definition of trauma informed care

- "Trauma informed care" involves the provision of care that, borrowing from the field of cultural competence, is "trauma competent."
- Trauma informed care must begin with the provision of safety, both physical and emotional, by adult caregivers to the traumatized child. There are four areas in need of understanding regarding trauma informed care: 1) understanding trauma, 2) understanding the survivor (the child), 3) understanding services, and 4) understanding the service relationship.

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Definition of trauma informed assessment and preparation (TIAP)

- The goal of "trauma informed assessment and preparation" is to evaluate, educate and equip "trauma competent" foster and adoptive parents who understand...
  - impact of childhood trauma,
  - the unique needs of the survivor/child,
  - the impact on the family
  - the demands of relationship
  - the services needed

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What is Trauma Informed Assessment and Preparation?

- It begins with the adoption assessor who....
- Understands the impact of trauma on a child's behavior, development, relationships, and survival strategies
  - Can effectively communicate this information to a prospective adoptive family

- Can integrate that understanding into planning for the child and family



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## What is Trauma Informed Assessment and Preparation?

It continues with the adoption assessor who....

- Helps parents to evaluate the impact of their own trauma history on their current relationships
- Helps parents identify their own vulnerabilities
- Helps parents examine their potential child's trauma history and how that will impact them

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## Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Assessment and Preparation

The adoption assessor helps the resource family to address their competency, life experience and training needs for the following essentials elements:

1. The family's need to understand the impact of trauma has on a child.
2. The family's understanding of the need to maximize the child's sense of safety.
3. The family's ability to help the child to understand and manage overwhelming emotions.
4. The family's ability to help child to understand and modify overwhelming behaviors.
5. The family's ability to respect and support, promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child.
6. The family's ability to 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.

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From the National Child Traumatic Stress Network Trauma Toolkit

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## Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Assessment and Preparation

7. The family's ability to be an advocate for a child/ has willingness to coordinate services with other agencies/advocate for a child.
8. The family's ability promote and support trauma informed focus assessment and treatment for a child
9. The parent's ability to take care of himself/herself and has willingness, ability and understanding in evaluating their own personal response to the child's behavior and unique needs:

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## TOOL ONE EXPECTATIONS

**The Power of Unmet Expectations: Avoiding Shattered Assumptions**

Using the continuum below, respond to the following statements with a check:

1 = True for me    3 = somewhat true    5 = Not true



1. **Our love will be enough.**  
1 = True for me    3 = somewhat true    5 = Not true
2. **We (I) will feel love and connection to this child quickly.**  
1 = True for me    3 = somewhat true    5 = Not true
3. **This child will step into our family system and easily learn how to function within our "rules," goals, and ambitions.**  
1 = True for me    3 = somewhat true    5 = Not true

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## Helping Families Identify their Circle of Support

My Family	My Support Person
I want them to be grandparents	I want them to listen to me talk about the hard and ugly things
I want them to love my children as grandparents	I want them to tell me the truth about myself

CAN THEY BE ONE IN THE SAME?

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## CIRCLE OF SUPPORT



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# TOOL TWO Circle of Support



**Identifying Your Circle of Support**  
Created By Heather Bench, Founder of New Family Tree

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**

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# TOOL THREE TIAP QUESTIONS

**Trauma Informed Assessment Preparation and Assessment Behavioral Questions.**

Minimize the child's sense of shame:

- Tell us about a time when you didn't feel safe/what did that feel like?
- Describe what emotional safety means to you. What does that look like in your home?
- Discuss different types of safety: physical, emotional. Give examples.
- How has your specifically grown a child's sense of safety? (Give examples – schedule, routine...)
- Tell us a time when you felt safe in representing your feelings. Was there a time you didn't feel safe representing 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 remember someone and could not ask anyone else for help. What was the result of that situation? Did you have someone available to you?
- Tell us how you feel about your involvement in your child's life and what steps did you take to improve safety and security?
- How has your involvement in a child who has needs or wants?
- Tell us about a time that you comforted a child who was frightened and scared.

**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 gathered information regarding child sexual abuse?
  - b. Tell me about your comfort level and experience talking about sexuality and abuse.
  - c. It's hard to have a chat 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 discuss 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 respond to 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.

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