

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and Tulare County Adoption Support Program



Happy Spring, REACH Families!

The REACH Team is ready to welcome the warmer days of spring and put those cold winter days behind us! We are hoping for a nice, long spring before the hot summer days begin!

Spring is often considered a time of renewal and with that in mind, we have refreshed our REACH Adoption Preparation Training, which is now underway. For those of you who have not attended this free virtual training series, it is a nine-week series designed to strengthen families built through foster, kinship, and adoption. Each session focuses on a different topic and provides the knowledge, practical tools, and resources needed to support families in their permanency and adoption journeys. We are currently about halfway through the series and if you have not yet joined in, please consider doing so! These trainings are on Monday evenings through Zoom and registration can be completed [here](#). REACH also continues to offer three support groups each month. One group is held in a hybrid format, with both an in-person and virtual option. The other two groups are held in a virtual format. We would love to have you join us for one or all! Please see the calendar page of this newsletter for additional information and dates for our trainings and events.

REACH is offering a four-part training series this spring on TBRI®, Trust Based Relational Intervention. This series is designed to meet the basic relationship and developmental needs of children and youth from “hard places,” as well as the needs of the adults who seek to help them heal, learn, and grow. Training sessions will be in person April through June. REACH is also offering a Teen Talk Group for youth ages 15-17, twice per month, through June. For more information on the trainings and the Teen Talk Group please contact your REACH Social Worker.

This quarter the REACH newsletter focuses on Attachment, a term many resource and adoptive families are familiar with due to the prevalence of attachment disorders in children who have experienced trauma. Attachment disorders are trauma-related wounds that can develop in young children who have difficulty creating emotional attachments due to a history of neglect and abuse. We have put together information to support you in your connection to your child, including two articles, attachment-focused activities, and a book review. We hope you find this information helpful in your parenting!

“The truth is, you cannot love yourself unless you have been loved and are loved. The capacity to love cannot be built in isolation.”

—Bruce D. Perry,

The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog:

And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook

Sincerely,

The REACH Team

Tulare County
Spring 2023

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NEED HELP? Is your child exhibiting any of the following behaviors?

- Frequent running away
- Sexualized behavior
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Aggressive/assaultive behavior
- Oppositional/defiant behavior
- Self-injurious behavior
- Substance use disorder
- Fire starter
- Minor criminal behavior
- School behavior/truancy problems
- Beyond control of parents and or primary care adults
- Mild Developmental disorder not recognized by a Regional Center
- One or more hospitalizations in a Mental Health facility

If so, we can help! The REACH program can connect adoptive and guardianship families to services that can help. Some of the services available to your family include Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) and Tulare County Wraparound. TBS is an intensive one-to-one behavioral mental health service. The service is available to parents/caregivers of children/youth who experience serious emotional challenges. Tulare County Wraparound provides high-risk youth and their families an alternative to residential care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy promoting the reestablishment of at risk youth and families into community support systems.



TBRI®'s Connecting Principle

By Fernando Aquino, MSW

“When you connect to the heart of a child, anything is possible.” —Dr. Karyn Purvis

Curated by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross, TBRI®, or Trust-Based Relational Intervention, is designed to meet the needs of vulnerable children. TBRI® incorporates the principles of Connecting, Empowering, and Correcting to identify and break down “fear-based behaviors.” This model is utilized to aid in healing relational trauma through practical skills and tools.

Attachment is seen in healthy children as having their own “secure base” for exploring the world and their surroundings. Children from hard places lack this secure base. This makes the idea of “felt safety” critical when we can understand that children may be safe in their environment, but still need to feel safe emotionally and mentally. Children need a connection with healthy and safe adults to build secure attachments. This will lead to children becoming healthy, well-functioning adults.

TBRI®'s Connecting principle includes two strategies: engagement and mindful awareness. Mindful awareness focuses on a parent's awareness of their own attachment style, emotional state, and emotional availability. This can be a challenge as parents must reflect on their history and what they bring to the relationship with their child. Mindful awareness also includes self-awareness of triggers and limits, and being able to center yourself back to responsive parenting.

Engagement includes skills you can do with your child to develop a sense of felt safety and connection. This can include: behavior matching, instead of standing over the child, sit on the floor with them; or utilizing eye contact, connecting with the child through acknowledgment of eye color and providing a warm familiar face. Healthy touch techniques allow for boundary setting, which can come in handy if a child has experienced harmful touch in the past. Parents can be mindful of safe touch and ask for permission to hold their child's hand or arm. Connection is critical in healing relational trauma and rebuilding attachment for children. Connection can lead to understanding our children better and decrease the need for correcting when it comes to challenging behaviors.

Engagement Strategies:

- Eye contact
- Getting to child's level
- Full attention when speaking to child
- Tone of voice
- Playful engagement
- Healthy touch
- Behavioral matching



Kids, Trauma, and School

By Katia Hawkins, BSW, MS

Often, adopted children have suffered from ongoing abuse or neglect and chronic trauma. These experiences affect the way they act in the classroom. They can frequently become good at hiding their pain, and the pain instead reflects as misbehavior or even ADHD. Trauma may teach kids not to trust adults, so they struggle to connect with teachers, refusing to ask for help or being jumpy or distracted. Those with more severe behaviors of acting out seem to be punished more quickly by the schools. As a parent, you can advocate for your child and help them by naming the feeling you see them expressing. If you use the wrong feeling to name what they are experiencing, the child may correct you; it's okay to be incorrect. Advocate and communicate.

Remember, these children likely didn't have an adult to soothe them and teach them self-regulation when they were very young, so they may not know how to calm themselves. Parents and teachers can work together to help the child learn coping skills. It's common for traumatized children to have "glass half empty" personalities. Often, they are waiting for the worst, mentally preparing, living their lives on "red," and being hypervigilant. They will need your help to see they are good kids who deserve to do well and deserve to be loved.

So how do we help our teachers better understand, support, and teach our children? Start by helping the teacher identify the symptoms of trauma, which may

manifest as behaviors. Create a plan between yourself, the teacher, and the child. Work as a team to help the child feel safe and to speak up when they need help. You can create a plan that addresses the most common obstacles to learning that traumatized children experience:

- Trouble Forming Relationships with Teachers—How to show and teach the child that I, as the adult, am safe? How do I provide a safe place for them?
- Poor Self-Regulation—We are not born with self-regulation skills; we are taught. How do we help the child learn coping skills so they can be effective self-regulators?
- Negative Thinking—Practice positive talk. How can we say that positively?
- Hypervigilance—How do I create a safe space? Can I make a "safe corner" where the child can retreat when overwhelmed and hypervigilant?
- Executive Function Challenges—For the child who has difficulties with memory, paying attention, and planning. How do we address these functions, so the child does not feel like a failure? Can we do a checklist? Where do we tape the checklist?

To learn more about how you can help your child with mental health struggles or learning challenges, please visit www.childmind.org.



Attachment Activities

By Tara Soria, M.A.

Playing together is one of the most effective tools for building strong relationships with your child. Through play, children learn to trust others and feel safe. By making a conscious effort to incorporate humor and play into your daily interactions with your children, you can improve the quality of your relationships and connect on a deeper level. Here are a few ideas on how to have fun while connecting with your child and maybe even create some family rituals to enjoy for years to come:

- ♥ Enjoy a hot cocoa party in front of the fireplace before bedtime
- ♥ Create a family secret handshake, fist bump, or “I love you” sign
- ♥ Read a silly book together and share some laughs
- ♥ Pack a picnic dinner for your living room and eat on the floor
- ♥ Play a game as a family (“Pie Face!” by Hasbro is fun for all ages)
- ♥ Make up a song with your child’s name in it or find a song that honors them and can be “their song”
- ♥ Squirt a whipped cream mustache on their face for dessert
- ♥ Host a dance party in your living room complete with songs you love and an inexpensive disco ball
- ♥ Put on a family talent show
- ♥ Celebrate “unofficial holidays” that are meaningful or humorous to your family (examples: Grilled Cheese Day is on April 12, Talk Like Yoda Day is on May 21)
- ♥ Create family artwork, such as colorful handprints, and hang the masterpiece on a wall in your home
- ♥ Using a long roll of butcher paper, have your child lie on the paper, and trace their outline. Your child can then fill in their outline with crayons, markers, and craft supplies- or for older children they might want to write their thoughts, hopes, questions, and dreams within their outline.

Play and laughter perform an essential role in building strong, healthy parent-child relationships by bringing you closer together and building a positive bond. There are so many wonderful ways to create fond memories with your children that they will treasure for the rest of their lives!

Source: Family Exchange Center



Book Review:

Attachment Play: How to Solve Children's Behavior Problems with Play, Laughter, and Connection

By Aletha J. Solter, PH.D.

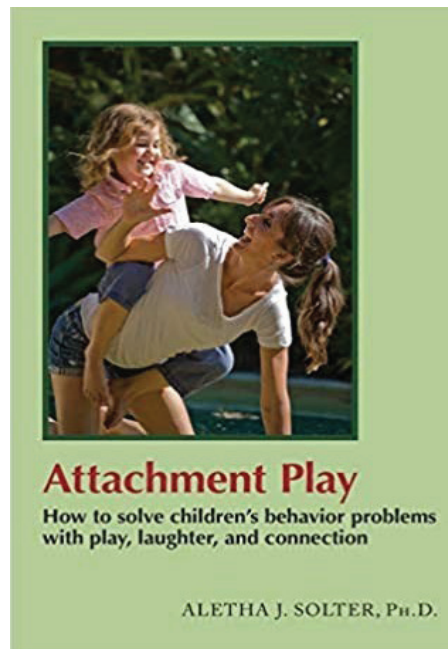
By Beth Hurlbert, LMFT

Attachment Play discusses the importance of attachment and play in addressing behaviors that children exhibit. The book takes a different look at changing behaviors by using play rather than a punitive or authoritarian approach. By using playful activities, you are reducing stress, strengthening attachment, and solving behaviors while laughing with your child.

There are nine forms of attachment play introduced: nondirective child-centered play, symbolic play with specific props or themes, contingency play, nonsense play, separation games, power-reversal games, regression games, activities with body contact, and cooperative games and activities. Each type of play has an example and a description of the play.

Using these nine types of attachment play, different behaviors are addressed by looking at the underlying cause and feelings. Then the book delves into how attachment play will explore those feelings differently, and let them be expressed and released positively. Behaviors

such as “bad” language, anger and aggression, lying, cheating, and doing homework are all explored with attachment play. Examples are given of how play is used for behaviors and specific forms of play are identified for each.



Attachment play can also be helpful to children when they are going through difficult times. Anxiety and stress can be reduced by using attachment play when facing parental divorce, natural disasters, and school challenges. Through play, children are supported by their parents and learn skills that will be beneficial to them throughout life.

If you are looking for a different way to parent, if you are not feeling productive in your parenting, or if your relationship with your child is stressed, this book may be for you. You can look up specific behaviors you are dealing with and get suggestions for fun ways to address them. Bring the laughter

and joy back into your relationship with your child while connecting with them and teaching them the life skills they need.

Support Groups and Events

April

- 3 Adoption Preparation Training**
6:00pm-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 10 Adoption Preparation Training**
6:00pm-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 14 TBRI® Overview**
9:00am-3:00pm- In Person
- 17 Adoption Preparation Training**
6:00pm-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 18 Support Group**
6:00pm-7:30pm - Hybrid
- 20 Parent Café**
10:00am-11:30am - ZOOM
- 24 Adoption Preparation Training**
6:00pm-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 25 Support Group in Spanish**
9:30am-11:30am - ZOOM

May

- 1 Adoption Preparation Training**
6:00pm-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 5 TBRI® Connecting Principles**
9:00am-3:00pm - In Person
- 10 Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent (Spanish)**
6:00pm-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 16 Parent Support Group**
6:00pm-7:30pm - Hybrid
- 18 Parent Café**
10:00am-11:30am - ZOOM
- 24 Parent Support Group in Spanish**
9:30am-11:30am - ZOOM
- 26 TBRI® Empowering Principles**
9:00am-3:00pm - In Person

June

- 15 Parent Café**
10:00am-11:30am - ZOOM
- 16 TBRI® Correcting Principles**
9:00am-3:00pm- In Person
- 27 Parent Support Group**
6:00pm-7:30pm - Hybrid
- 28 Parent Support Group in Spanish**
9:30am-11:30am - ZOOM

Teen Talk

An eight-session support group dedicated to exploring the many aspects teens face in relation to adoption, belonging, relationships and much more. Teen Talk is open to youth ages 15-17 who are in pre or post adoption/legal guardianship. Please contact Beth Hurlbert at bhurlbert@aspiranet.org for more information.

REACH Support Groups for Parents

REACH Parent Support Group – Hybrid

6:00pm-7:30pm

Designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced resource and adoptive parents. Training hours provided. The Adoption Support Group is offered on the third Tuesday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. To register, email Beth Hurlbert at bhurlbert@aspiranet.org.

Parent Café

10:00am-11:30am via Zoom

Based on the Five Protective Factors, Parent Cafe provides an opportunity for parents to explore their strengths and learn from each other's experiences. Training hours provided. Parent Café is offered on the third Thursday of each month, 10:00-11:30am via Zoom. To register for Parent Café, email Beth Hurlbert at bhurlbert@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you.

REACH Parent Support Group in Spanish

9:30am-11:30am via Zoom

Este grupo está diseñado para adultos que piensan en la adopción, padres que esperan colocación adoptiva, y padres de niños adoptados. Horas de entrenamiento impartidas. Los enlaces de Zoom y los recordatorios se enviarán mensualmente. El Grupo de Apoyo para Padres de REACH en Español se ven en el cuarto miércoles del mes. Para registrarse, comuníquese con Katia Hawkins at 559.741.7358 x4513 at khawkins@aspiranet.org y se le envió por correo electrónico un enlace a la reunión.

Adoption Preparation Training

Mondays, 6:00pm-8:00pm via Zoom

Aspiranet's REACH programs are pleased to offer Adoption Preparation Training, a free online training series to strengthen families built through foster, kinship care, and adoption and for the professionals who support them. Each session in this comprehensive series will be offered by adoption specialists and cover a wide variety of topics that help provide the knowledge, practical tools, and resources to help support the complex journey of permanency and adoption. This trauma-informed training series includes nine concise modules on topics relevant to the complexities and challenges that children and caregivers experience through the various stages of permanency and adoption. The remaining dates are:

April 3 Module 5: Correcting/Discipline

April 10 Module 6: Cultural Competency

April 17 Module 7: Birth Family

April 24 Module 8: Normative Adoption Issues/Stuck Spots

May 1 Module 9: Self-Care and Supports

The sessions are occurring on Monday evenings. It is not required that participants attend all sessions. Participants are free to attend sessions that are most relevant to their development. Register for these trainings [here](#).

College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Education Program

The College of Sequoias Foster and Kinship Care Education Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents, at no charge. For a complete list of classes visit <https://www.cos.edu/fostercare>. Register for classes with Nelly Yanez Gutierrez at nellyy@cos.edu. Classes are available in English and in Spanish. Please note childcare is not available.

FKCE: Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®)

April 14th, May 5th, May 26th, June 16th

9:00am-3:00pm - In Person - register [here](#)



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REACH and Tulare County Adoption Support Services

Resource: We provide 1) telephone support and referral to local services 2) referral to local adoption and guardianship related community training 3) linkage to local therapists with experience working with adoptive and guardianship families 4) lending library and website access 5) quarterly newsletters which include book reviews and relevant adoption related information.

Education: Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to permanency. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and guardianship and their impact on all members of the constellation.

Advocacy: We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive and guardianship families. We assist parents with advocating for the assistance needed in working with educational, legislative, and community partners to best meet their children's needs.

Crisis Intervention/Case Management: Participants are eligible to receive short-term therapeutic services, free of charge, by master's level social workers who are trained and experienced in permanency-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed. Spanish translation services are provided.

Hope: We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage, and Hope (RICH) to guide our work with families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive and guardianship families through access to our services.