



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
August 2012



Helping Children in Care Build Trusting Relationships

By: Adoption Resources of Wisconsin - ARW/FCARC

Trust is defined as, "reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence," or "confident expectation of something; hope."

Imagine losing your home, your parents, your brothers and sisters, your friends, your school, your pet, your toys, and even your bed. Now imagine losing these things over and over again.

Many children in foster care have had these types of experiences. These losses that children experience are traumatic events, and they often have to relive these traumas. Maybe they were told by an adult, who they trusted, that "this is the last move," or "you're coming home to stay," only to have those promises broken for whatever reason. These are children whose lives have been turned upside down due to the trauma of abuse and/or neglect, followed by the trauma of being removed from their home - both of which are counter to how trust is defined.

Factors that Can Impact Trust

There are many reasons why children in care have a difficult time developing positive connections and establishing trusting relationships with others.

Following are some of the reasons why they may have difficulty forming trusting relationships.

Trauma is a significant factor impacting children's ability to trust - people, relationships, situations, and themselves. Trauma is defined as "an extremely distressing experience that causes severe emotional shock and may have long-lasting psychological effects."

Traumatic experiences such as physical and sexual abuse, neglect, separation from birth family, and multiple moves are all examples of trauma that children in care may have experienced.

Author and therapist Arleta James explains the effects of trauma well, "First and foremost, we must come to understand that trauma interrupts 'normal' child development. The child that is chronologically age 12, may really be functioning as a three- or four-year old.

She goes on to say, "In essence, all children have a *chronological age* and a *social and emotional age*. Usually, the two are in **accord**. However, institutionalization, neglect, abuse, etc. causes a **discord** between the two ages."

Ambiguous loss and Unresolved Grief. Children in care have experienced a lot of loss and separation from their homes, families, school, friends, and siblings - everything that was familiar and comforting to them. These are types of ambiguous losses and unresolved grief. Children in foster care often experience multiple moves and may not have time to grieve the loss of one family before they move to a new family. Or if they do have time, kids don't often get the chance to have those feelings validated or even named.

Lack of Control. Some children in care may feel that they lack control over what happens to them in their lives. They've had several adults dictate where they live, when they move, what school they go to, who they live with, without ever being asked what they want - all of which contributes to not being very trusting of adults.

Lack of Consistency. Another possible reason for their mistrust is that they have not had consistency in establishing healthy relationships with adults or anyone, and are unsure how to do that.

Fear is also a major contributing factor. Fear of the unknown. What if I

begin to trust them? What if I don't? What will happen? Will I have to go to another place? What if they reject me?

Divided Loyalties and Feeling Like They Have to Choose. Children in care are often experiencing divided loyalties between their foster families and their birth families. By establishing a relationship with you, they may feel they are being disloyal to their mom or dad. Or, that by connecting with you, they are rejecting their birth families.

They may feel their birth families do not want them to like their foster parents or vice versa. The desire to be with their birth families is very strong - not being with them feels like a piece is missing from them.

Children in care usually want to go home so desperately - to be with their mom, dad, and siblings. By getting close to their foster parent, they may feel they are telling themselves that they will not be going home.

Low Self Esteem. Some children in care have low self esteem and may not feel like they deserve love, respect, and a family who cares. They also may feel different because they are in foster care. They sometimes internalize the negative stigma associated with being involved in the child welfare system, such as that they are "bad" or have "bad parents." Children want to feel like they belong and don't want to feel different from their friends.

How Can I Build Trusting Relationships?

There are several ways that you can help begin to build a trusting relationship. Following are some ideas to help you start to build a connection and a relationship that your child can count on.

Acceptance. Accepting children for who they are, as well as accepting their birth families, goes a long way to building a meaningful relationship. Let them know they have value as a person in your family and they're a part of your family now, too.

Stability and consistency. Providing children with a stable, consistent environment will show them that they can know what to expect from day to day. Part of being able to trust is knowing that they can be confident in you to keep them safe.

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Prospective Foster Parents need to do Part 1 of the training on the following website:
<http://www.wcwts.wisc.edu/foster-parent-training>
We will then meet to discuss the learning points and to answer your questions.

Thursday,
August 16, 2012
6 - 8 PM

All Classes are held in the Brookfield Room G137 in the Human Services Center located at 500 Riverview Avenue.

Please enter the building at door 6. Call Shari Rather at (262)548-7267 to register.

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Be a positive role model. By showing what your trusting relationships are, kids can begin to learn by your example. Children are always observing. Demonstrating healthy relationships can help them know how to begin to build them.

Make yourself available. By engaging kids in meaningful conversations about feelings and expectations, you can help them begin to feel comfortable coming to you about how they feel without fear or judgment or rejection. By simply giving your time and attention, you are showing children that you are there for them.

Space. Giving your children space and not trying to force a relationship shows that you're willing to let relationship between you grow at their comfort level. This can give them some control over their life and let them begin to trust themselves again.

Education and Training. Gaining a better understanding of the developmental and emotional level of your child in care can help you better respond to situations that may leave you feeling frustrated and may create a distance between the two of you.

Patience. Children will likely test your patience and may plan (intentionally or unintentionally) to sabotage the placement before risking the possibility of trusting you and liking you. It's a powerful defense mechanism, but your patience may help break through that barrier.

What Else Can I Do?

Self Care. Sometimes we're so focused on trying to help others, that we forget that it's okay to focus on ourselves, too. Make time to read, go on a date, take a bath, or whatever else you need for a break.

Be Patient. Things do not always happen as fast as you might like. So, be patient with your child in care and with yourself.

Continue to be consistent.

Seek help and feedback. Talk with your caseworker, respite providers, other foster parents, and any other helpful resources who may have insights and solutions for you.

Celebrate the small accomplishments and goals! Progress may not come in a huge package. Remember: you are making a difference in the life of your foster child.

Life experiences have taught many children in care not to trust. You are making a positive difference in the life of the child who is entrusted in your care.

Multiple Transitions: A Young Child's Point of View on Foster Care and Adoption

By Michael Trout. Excerpted from the Parent-Institute video

After a while, I had just lost too many people that I might have cared about. I had been with too many "parents" who really weren't, because they couldn't hold me tightly in their hearts at all.

None of you got how I was being changed by all these losses, (in my heart and in my behavior).

After a while, I began to get some pretty bad ideas about how things work.

I wasn't going to let anyone like me. Not even me.

And so, now, I won't let you imagine even for a minute that I like you. That I need you, desperately. That I might ever grow to trust you.

Are you ready to have me not believe you?

Are you ready for me to fight you for control?

Are you ready to hold me, and then hold me some more (when all the time I act like I don't want you to at all?)

Are you ready to really stay with me, through a battle that might last almost my whole growing up? Are you willing to feel as powerless as I do?

So have I told you anything that you wanted to know? Have I helped you to understand how we fell - all of us kids who feel into the world of foster care and adoption?



Lisa's Corner

Lisa Roberts
Manager of the Children and
Family Division

Hello everyone!

Wow...what a summer we've been having...huh? The lack of rain...the heat....I can't even remember the last time we had a summer this warm and dry. In this heat, I always worry about our kids and parents who take different medications that affect them in the heat. Many medications affect people's ability to regulate their body temperature and are therefore dangerous for those individuals to be out in these high temperatures. Other medications make a person more sensitive to the sun and therefore they burn easier. I know all of you have heard this information before and take all of the necessary precautions...but with a summer like this, it's worth repeating and encouraging each of you to be a conduit of information for others. Don't be afraid to educate kids and adults alike on the powerful and potentially dangerous effects of medication if proper precautions aren't taken.

I also want to share some information with you about changes happening at the State in regards to childcare and childcare reimbursement that will affect foster parents. Effective July 1, 2012, the state has enacted a rating system, called YoungStar...What is YoungStar?..."YoungStar is a program of the Department of Children and Families created to improve the quality of child care for Wisconsin children. YoungStar: Evaluates and rates the quality of care given by child care providers Helps parents choose the best child care for their kids Supports providers with tools and training to deliver high-quality early care Sets a consistent standard for child care quality"

YoungStar is a 5 Star quality rating and improvement system for child care and school-age care providers based on education, learning environment & curriculum, business & professional practices and the health and well-being of children.

YoungStar is intended to drive quality improvement in child care throughout the state of Wisconsin by supporting providers who want to improve, by creating financial incentives to deliver better services to children, and by giving parents meaningful information to select child care for their children.

Research shows that children "who participate in higher quality early childhood education programs demonstrate higher school readiness, lower subsequent participation in special education, less criminal activity, higher high school graduation rates, and higher lifetime wages. In terms of children's everyday experiences, children appear happier and more cognitively engaged in settings in which caregivers are interacting with them positively and in settings in which child: adult ratios are lower. There also is evidence of concurrent relations between child care quality and children's performance in other settings. Children who attend higher-quality child care settings (measured by caregiver behaviors, by physical facilities, by age-appropriate activities, and by structural and caregiver characteristics) display better cognitive, language, and social competencies on standardized tests and according to parents, teachers, and observers."

As a result, foster parents are asked to enroll foster children only in childcare setting holding a YoungStar rating of 3 or above. Reimbursement through the state will only be allowed in facilities holding ratings of 3 or above. If children are already in a facility with a lower rating, the state is requesting that foster parents locate another facility and begin to make a transition if at all possible.

DCF has created a new website to search for child care that includes information about YoungStar ratings as well as licensing and certification. The site is <http://childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov>.

Please make yourselves familiar with these new standards and expectations as they will certainly affect your childcare benefits. The DCF website has information as well as contact Shari or your worker and we will try to find the answers together.

Have a GREAT end to summer...and good luck getting ready for next school year!

Lisa

Foster Care Appreciation Event at the Milwaukee County Zoo July 18, 2012



2012 Foster Parent Appreciation Event

Thank you Jack Safro Toyota and all of our sponsors!



5 O'Clock Club of Pewaukee LTD
 Bartolotta Restaurant Group
 Big Picture Hair Salon - Brookfield
 Buffalo Wild Wings - Pewaukee
 Chili's - Oconomowoc
 Costco - Pewaukee
 Culver's - Brookfield
 DeMarini's - Menomonee Falls
 Denny's - Pewaukee
 The Dir-Jones Family
 Fuddruckers - Brookfield
 George Webb - Sussex
 Green Bay Packers

Hair Decisions and Oasis Spa - New Berlin
 King's Wok Hartland
 Marko's Pizza - Germantown
 Milwaukee Admirals
 Milwaukee Bucks

Odyssey Family Restaurant - Menomonee Falls
 Panera Bread
 Penelope's Restaurant - Elm Grove
 People's Park - Waukesha
 Pizza Guy - Wales
 Roaring Fork Restaurant Group (Qdoba)
 Rocky Rococo Corporate
 Seven Seas - Hartland
 Signature Salon and Spa - Waukesha

Taco Johns - Waukesha
 Target - Waukesha
 Union House - Genesee Depot
 Wal-Mart - Pewaukee
 Wal-Mart - Waukesha

A special thank you to Allie Pollett for creating the baskets for this event.



Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
 262-548-7212

Children's Mental Health Outreach
 262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
 Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentor
 Jen Barcus..... 262-542-2926
 David Mersfelder 262-542-2926
 Nikki Mertens..... 262-246-6180

Rebecca Hollister, Supervisor
 262-548-7271

Mary Alice Grosser, Supervisor
 Relative Licensing
 262-548-7272

Shari Rather, Foster Care
 Coordinator
 262-548-7267

Libby Sinclair
 Relative Licensing
 262-548-7277

June 2012 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
 38 Children

Treatment Foster Care:
 9 Children

Group Homes:
 9 Children

Residential Care Facilities:
 11 Children

Relative Placements:
 40 Children

Level 2 Foster Homes:
 120 Homes

Level 1 Foster Homes:
 32 Homes

Total Homes Assisting Other
 Counties
 17 Homes

**For Allegations of Abuse and
 Neglect Support, please call:**

FASPP
 Norma Schoenberg
 920-922-9627

Social Workers:

Jennifer Adler 262-548-7265

Bob Alioto 262-548-7262

Suzanne Arnold 262-548-7348

Kate Flansburg 262-896-6857

Laura Jahnke 262-548-7359

Maria Maurer 262-548-7345

Susan Peck 262-896-8574

Madeline Prange 262-548-7394

Janis Ramos 262-896-8069

Michael Reed 262-548-7347

Cindie Remshek 262-548-7639

Greg Rewolinski 262-548-7270

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Mark Sasso 262-548-7346

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

We Need You!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov

262-548-7267

Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov
 And follow the links to foster care.