

# REACH

*Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope*

*Aspiranet and Kern County Adoption Support Program*



Hello Spring!

Spring is a time of renewal, change, and rebirth. We clean our houses and clear our closets of winter clothes and items we no longer use. We prepare our gardens and yards for the coming summer months.

Spring is also the time to start preparing for what the family and kids want to do for the summer months. What vacations or activities is the family going to do for the summer? What about planning a bike trip, picnic at the park, or family Olympics at home for smaller events?

Get the kids involved in the planning. What activities do they want to participate in this summer? Have them research local events they can take part in. They can then share the information they learn with you to make final selections. There are summer sports, camps, and activities that might interest your children. (Some programs may also have received grants and funding to help cover costs, if needed, for some participants.)

Other fun activities could include craft days at home, such as painting rocks or making popsicles. Have a lemonade stand or sell oranges, lemons, or avocados that grow on the tree in the yard. What about a water day in the backyard? Or join local activities like Farmer's Markets, holiday events, and parades.

With a little spring planning, it could be a great summer for everyone. Did you also know that planning and making schedules is a tool used in Trauma Informed Parenting? Children from hard places do better when they know what to expect. Continue reading this newsletter to get more information on Trauma Informed Parenting. And don't forget to check out the last page of the newsletter for upcoming training and support group dates!

If you are interested in learning more about our REACH services call 661.323.1233.

The REACH Team

## Kern County Spring 2025

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## The Three R's

By: Fernando Aquino, MSW

*"Understanding the diverse forms of trauma is crucial.  
Abuse, neglect, and loss impact a child's development differently.  
Tailoring support to these specific experiences is essential for effective parenting."*

—Dr. Karyn Purvis

The Three R's, Regulate, Relate, Reason, developed by Dr. Bruce Perry, are techniques to help de-escalate dysregulated children. Using the tools, in the order in which they are listed, can help ease parenting challenges by understanding the needs underneath behaviors and teaching children positive behaviors.

Regulate should be utilized first - this not only for the child but also the parent. A dysregulated child can easily cause a parent to fall out of their resiliency zone. Take a breath and consider how we can provide a responsive approach to the situation. A child who is dysregulated is in their "fear brain," meaning they are in the "fight, flight, or freeze" response mode. Regulating a child can be no easy feat, requiring parents to remain curious as to what external factors may be impacting a child but also identifying what calms them down. Some ideas include breathing exercises or physical movements that help control the breathing. Once the child's

breathing has normalized and the child is moving towards a state of calm, we can then move on.

Relate refers to how we are attuning to the child's needs. Children with trauma often make a mountain out of a molehill, so how can we better equip ourselves to meet these needs? Attunement or relating is where parents can show empathy and compassion. For example, saying "I know the playground is so much fun and I wish you could stay too."

Reason is done when your child is calm and back within their resiliency zone. In this stage, the parent can now discuss the dysregulation occurrence and relate to the changes they wish to see - a healthier response. This step can also utilize learning through books, play, role playing, and compromises.

Sources: [Trauma-Informed Parenting: Your Complete Guide](#); [Dr. Bruce Perry's Concept of Regulate, Relate, and Reason](#)



## Tips for Being a Trauma-Informed Parent

Adapted from the Aspiranet Record

The following are tips that may seem rather obvious and simple but can go a long way in the healing process for children and youth who have experienced trauma. Not all children or youth will respond the same way to these types of interventions. Often it will require repeated and consistent attempts before seeing signs of trust developing and healing beginning to occur.

**Be consistent:** Children and youth who have experienced trauma are often very sensitive to changes. Even simple changes in daily schedules, transitions, and new situations can be scary, upsetting, or cause anxiety. This can include events and activities that many children would view as “fun,” such as birthday parties, sleepovers, holidays, family trips, and the beginning and end of the school year.

**Be predictable:** Inform children and youth about upcoming changes or transitions a few days or even weeks in advance, depending on the child. Keep a calendar in a central location where they can see upcoming appointments, trips, activities, etc., and where any changes can also be written in the calendar and easily seen by all. Stay in tune with your child's reactions, and if too much advance notice adds to anxiety, ask them or gauge how far in advance upcoming changes need to be communicated.

**Be present & just listen:** One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to take time to stop, sit with your child(ren), and just listen. By being quiet and present, children and youth will often begin to show and tell you about what is really going on with them. It seems so simple, yet in the busy adult world, we all know it can sometimes be difficult to let go, put the “to-do” list aside, and relax into a quiet moment with your child. But your child will notice and with time, will sense you are there for them.

**Teach feelings:** An important message is that all feelings are OK to feel. Teach healthy ways to express and act when having different feelings. Explore how other people may feel and how they show their feelings. Talk about and share how you and other family members express feelings. Help them to share their feelings, as they may not know how. Try wondering out loud about feelings you sense your child may be experiencing, such as, “I’m wondering if you’re feeling sad about your mom on Mother’s Day” or “I wonder if you feel angry that I said ‘no’ to you earlier.”

**Model & teach appropriate interaction:** Children and youth who have experienced trauma often do not know how to interact well with others. For this reason, it is important to model appropriate behavior and recognize that your children are watching to see how you respond to different situations and people.

**Help children/youth to self-regulate:** Teach and remind children that they are safe and do not have to expect the worst. Provide reassurance of safety and calm interactions regularly. It can be helpful to observe your children at different times, in different situations, in order to learn how they respond. Be available to offer support, reassurance of safety, and intervention when needed.

**Understand behavior before giving consequences:** Remember behavior is communication. Ask yourself what is the child's behavior telling you? The more you learn and understand your child's behaviors and emotional responses, the better you'll be able to identify appropriate interventions and consequences, when necessary. For example, when a child hoards food, this behavior should not be viewed as “stealing;” rather, it is a common response to having been deprived of food previously. It is helpful to think about the message you want to give your child and use a consequence that supports the message. For example, giving a child a “time in,” rather than a “time out,” helps a child stop the behavior without feeling rejected or isolated from you as their parent.

**Have realistic expectations:** Recognize that due to the trauma, progress may be slow. It can be disappointing when despite your best efforts, it feels as though little is changing with your child. Keep in mind you are planting seeds; the consistent and nurturing care you provide does have an impact and does make a difference.

**Take care of yourself:** It is not possible to sustain caring for others without taking care of yourself. Take time to rest and take breaks. Use a babysitter for time with your partner, friends, or by yourself. Engage in activities and hobbies you enjoy and maintain a support network of others who provide you with caring support, including the REACH social worker.

Adapted from *Understanding and Healing the Traumatized Child: Resource Parent Workshop Handbook*

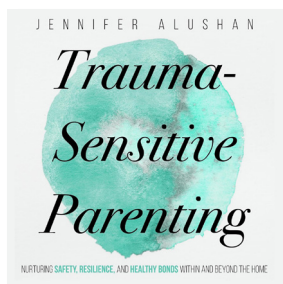


## Trauma-Sensitive Parenting: Nurturing Safety, Resilience, and Healthy Bonds Within and Beyond the Home

Written by: Jennifer Alushan

Book Review by: Griselda Santillan Mejia, MA

Jennifer Alushan, the author of *Trauma-Sensitive Parenting: Nurturing Safety, Resilience, and Healthy Bonds Within and Beyond the Home*, has a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Education and over 30 years of experience in the education field. She also has considerable training in trauma-sensitivity and is a mother of two children. Her book focuses on helping parents and caregivers learn skills they can use to begin soothing a child's troubles after crisis-inflicted life events. This book is written not only for parents but also for educators, coaches, and anyone whose role is to advocate in a child's life. Research has found that at least 70% of individuals experience trauma in their life before reaching adulthood. Those who have the opportunity to advocate for a child in a trauma-sensitive way have the opportunity to provide a safe place for them, emotionally. In the book, the author gives parents and caregivers information on why trauma-informed parenting matters and is important as well as how they can recognize and understand different types of traumas. Various methods are offered for parents and caregivers to help children



express their feelings and talk about their traumas. Most importantly, the author gives ideas on how a parent or caregiver can safely nurture a child who has experienced traumatic events. Additionally, there is information on ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) shared in the book. The author describes how those who work with children need to understand how much trauma a child has experienced to help guide their supports. There are also research studies shared in the book to help parents and caregivers understand ACEs. There are various tools offered to

help caring adults work with challenging behaviors displayed by traumatized children. Therapy tools and techniques are offered so that parents and caregivers can help kick-start the healing process. The book concludes with a focus on caregivers ensuring they are taking care of themselves so that they can better help the children for whom they are caring.

The author offers a full healing series, which includes the following books: *Trauma-Sensitive Parenting*, *Healing from Trauma Workbook*, *Healing After the Trauma Bond*, and *Shadow Work Guide for Couples*.



## Activity

By Tara Soria, MA

A valuable trauma-informed parenting activity for adoptive parents and their child is creating a Tree of Life. This activity helps to build trust, strengthen the parent/child connection, reinforce feelings of safety, and provides for open, nonjudgemental conversation. Perhaps most importantly, it helps children to recognize their own resilience.

Instructions:

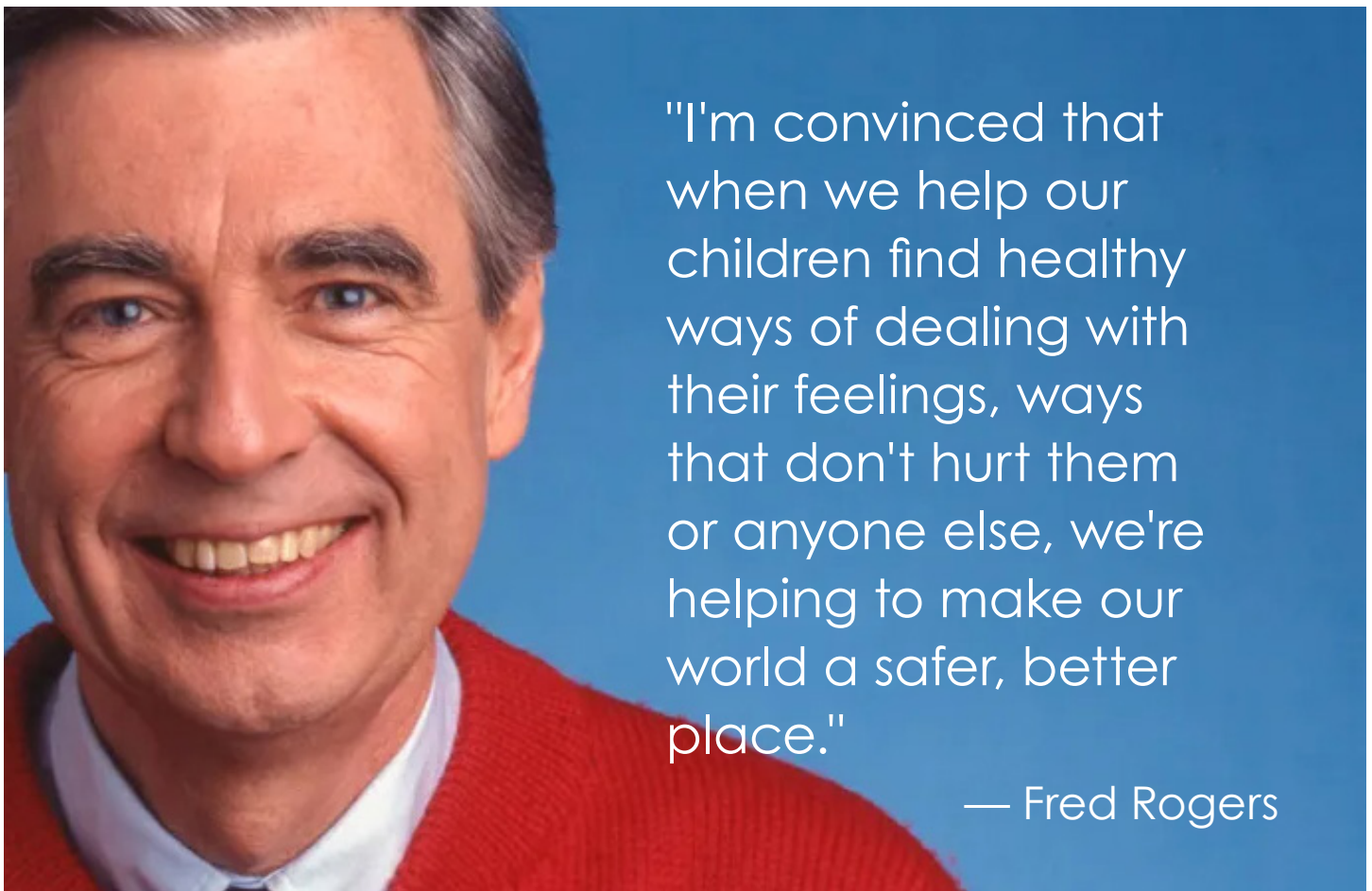
1. **Draw a Tree** Together, draw a large tree with roots, a trunk, and branches. You and your child can decide who will work on which parts.
2. **Roots (Foundation & Safety)** In the roots of the tree, write or draw things that make the child feel safe and grounded (i.e. a favorite stuffed animal or blanket, a family pet, a bedtime routine).
3. **Trunk (Support System & Strengths)** In the trunk, write the words or draw pictures or people and things that support the child. Some examples of people in their life might be family members, teachers, close friends, therapists, and other role

models. Also include examples of child's personal strengths, skills, and talents as part of the trunk.

4. **Branches & Leaves (Growth & Hopes)** On the branches, write or draw goals, dreams, or things the child looks forward to (i.e. learning a skill, trying a new hobby or sport, making a new friend, etc.).
5. **Decorate & Discuss** Allow the child to personalize the tree with drawings, stickers, and other embellishments- and encourage them to be creative and have fun! During and after the activity, talk about their choices and validate their feelings, providing emphasis on their strengths, and their safety with you.

If you are interested in doing this activity with your child, here is a simple reference list of materials to help get you started: a large sheet or paper or poster board; markers, crayons, colored pencils, paint; magazines for cutting out pictures (optional), stickers, glue and scissors.

Source: researchgate.net



"I'm convinced that when we help our children find healthy ways of dealing with their feelings, ways that don't hurt them or anyone else, we're helping to make our world a safer, better place."

— Fred Rogers



# REACH *Event*

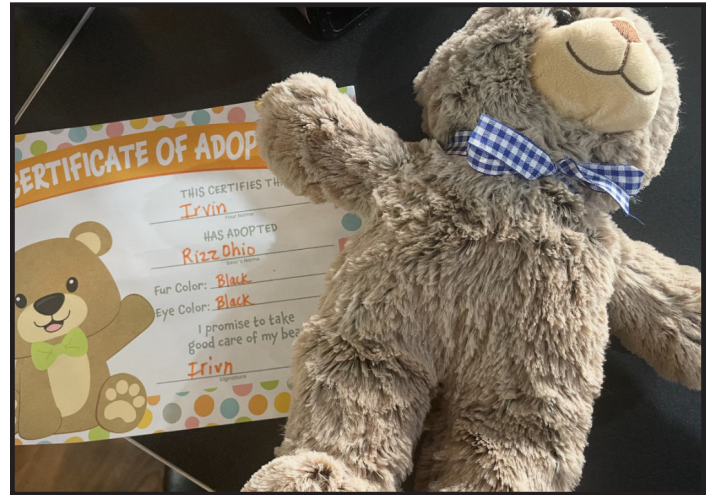
## H I G H L I G H T



By: Jade Vang, MSW

## Aspiranet Holiday Events

Every holiday season, Aspiranet programs host events to celebrate with resource and adoptive families. Our hope is to bring some holiday cheer to children and families during a time that can be both joyous and challenging. From gift-drives to photobooths, Aspiranet staff work tirelessly to ensure the events are a hit for families! This year, events included activities such as "Adopt-a-teddy-bear," skating, arcade games, food and meeting Santa! Here's what families had to say about our events:



"Enjoyed talking with other adoptive parents."

"Our family came together, and we enjoyed a night together."

"It allowed us to spend more time together."

"My children were able to play and enjoy themselves with other children just like them."

"Gives us a fun night together and helps create positivity towards adoption."



# Support Groups and Events

## April

### **3 Parenting Traumatized Children During the Teen Years**

6:00pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM

### **8 Parent Café**

6:30pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM

### **22 Support Group**

6:00pm – 7:30pm – In person

### **23 Support Group in Spanish**

9:30am – 11:30am – ZOOM

## May

### **13 Parent Café**

6:30pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM

### **27 Support Group**

6:00pm – 7:30pm – In person

### **28 Support Group in Spanish**

9:30am – 11:30am – ZOOM

## June

### **10 Parent Café**

6:30 pm – 8:00 pm – ZOOM

### **24 Support Group**

6:00pm – 8:00pm – In person

### **25 Support Group in Spanish**

9:30am – 11:30am – ZOOM

## Bakersfield College Foster & Kinship Care Program

Bakersfield College Foster and Kinship Care Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge. For a complete list of classes, visit the FKCE website at <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/community/fkce/training-schedules.html>

**Register for classes by calling the registration line 661.319.1836 or BC Program Manager at 661.395.4737**

## REACH Support Groups for Parents

### **REACH Parent Support Group**

**6:00pm – 7:30pm – In Person**

Designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, new and experienced resource and adoptive parents. Training hours provided. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. To register, email Katherine Frias at [kfrias@aspiranet.org](mailto:kfrias@aspiranet.org).

### **Parent Café**

**6:30pm – 8:00pm 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 second Tuesday of each month, 6:30pm – 8:00pm via Zoom. To register for Parent Café, email Katherine Frias at [kfrias@aspiranet.org](mailto:kfrias@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 Katherine Frias en [kfrias@aspiranet.org](mailto:kfrias@aspiranet.org) y se le enviara por correo electrónico un enlace a la reunión.

## Bakersfield Aspiranet

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### REACH and Kern County Adoption Support Services

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

**Education:** Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to adoption. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and the impact of adoption on all members of the **adoption constellation** (adoptive parents, adoptees, and birth family).

**Advocacy:** We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive families. We assist adoptive 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 adoption-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed.

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