

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis • Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and Kern County Adoption Support Program



Hello, REACH families!

We are well into 2021 and the REACH team is hopeful that you and your families are doing well! We at REACH are looking forward to putting winter behind us and are embracing the idea of spring, traditionally a time for renewal and growth. We are hopeful that this newsletter provides you with an opportunity for growth in your parenting knowledge and skills.

Due to COVID-19 contact restrictions, REACH has continued to provide services remotely. However, we have not let COVID-19 slow our progress in providing support and education to families! We have continued with our monthly support group in a virtual format and have added another monthly support group, Parent Café (see page 5 for additional details). We are excited about the new format of our groups and how we have been able to grow the size of our groups to allow for additional support, learning, and discussion for parents.

This spring, we are also providing a virtual three-part parenting series, Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent, through the Bakersfield College Foster Kinship Care Education (FKCE) program. We have offered this training ongoing and it has been well received by both parents and professionals (see page 5 for additional details). We hope to see some of you there with us on Zoom!

This quarter, the REACH newsletter continues our series on the Five Protective Factors, with this newsletter focusing on Parental Resiliency. We are hopeful you can use the included information to build your resiliency as a parent. Please don't hesitate to contact the REACH team with any questions or needs you may have!

Sincerely,

The REACH team

**Kern County
Spring 2021**

Inside This Issue

1. Greetings
2. Resiliency in Parenting
3. Activity & Book Review
4. Book Review continued
5. Calendar Events & Support Groups
6. REACH Services

Your REACH Support Team

Emma Ruiz

Resource Family Program Director
eruiz@aspiranet.org

Carrie Ontiveros

Adoption Supervisor
contiveros@aspiranet.org

Patti Kasper

REACH Social Worker
pkasper@aspiranet.org

Yaneth Arceo

REACH Social Worker
yarceo@aspiranet.org
1001 Tower Way, Ste. 250
Bakersfield, CA 93309
Ph: (661) 323-1233
Fax: (661) 323-8090

Resiliency in Parenting

by Marsha Baker, MSW

Let's face it. Parenting can be stressful. The everyday challenges that come along with parenting children can be downright overwhelming at times. How well that stress is managed is determined by a parent's capacity for resilience. Parental Resilience is one of the five protective factors for creating a strong family. Resilience is the ability to recover or "bounce back" from the adversities that emerge in every family. Parents with resilience can move forward, even when things are not going well. It can be characterized by 3 things: Finding ways to solve problems, building and sustaining trusting relationships, and knowing how to seek help when needed.

The ability to solve problems requires flexibility, sometimes creativity, and always persistence. We know that all problems are not equal and some have easier solutions than others. Some challenges, like parenting a child with a history of trauma, will require more inner strength than perhaps finding someone to watch your child while you go to work. When a parent is faced with a life stressor or multiple stressors at one time, like lack of finances, health issues, and behavior issues with children, etc., the problems can appear to be insurmountable. However, resilience has very little to do with the problems you are facing, and everything to do with how you manage them. Every time a parent is faced with a challenging situation and finds a healthy way to cope, their resilience is being strengthened. This gives parents confidence and the ability to face the next challenge with a little more tenacity.

Having strong relationships strengthens our ability to be resilient when faced with parental challenges. Building and sustaining trusting relationships require attention and intention. We have to be intentional about the attention we give to the relationships in our lives. Forming strong attachments with our children, other family members, and friends require that we give of ourselves and allow them to give unto us. These relationships not only provide support and give us a purpose to continue to move forward during times of stress, but it also allows parents to model resilience for their children. Demonstrating resilience has a positive impact on parenting and children learn how to manage stress and solve problems more effectively.

Sometimes, to solve a problem, you have to know when it is time to seek help. We all need help sometimes. There is no way you can do it all, all the time, without

some assistance. Seeking help can be very hard for some people who view it as a weakness or a flaw. In actuality, the ability to acknowledge when you need help requires strength and can be very empowering for a parent. It may be as simple as applying for unemployment when you lose your job, or it can be as complicated as seeking help with parenting when you have tried everything that you know to do. Regardless of the issue, whether it is related to parenting, finances, mental health, substance abuse, etc., knowing when to call in reinforcements and accept help will build upon your resilience and ability to overcome hardships.

We know that stress is an inevitable part of parenting. Parental resilience is essential in managing that stress more effectively, which in turn will produce more positive outcomes and teach your children what to do in times of adversity.

Sources: Be Strong Families®

<https://www.bestrongfamilies.org/>

Center for Family Strengthening

<https://cfssl.org/five-protective-factors/>

Activity: Ways to Build Parental Resilience

By Jade Yang, MSW

Parental resilience is how a parent manages the everyday challenges and stressors of life while caring for children. Parents with resilience know how to seek help in times of need and have effective ways of managing their own emotions while responding to a stressor, which ultimately serves as a model of self-regulation and problem-solving for their children. Parental resilience is not measured by a parent's ability to solve problems, but rather, by their inner strength to proactively nurture relationships and meet the needs of their family. There are many ways to build or increase your parental resilience:

- **Take care of yourself.** Engage in activities that bring you joy and that you find relaxing, even if it is only for brief moments throughout your day. It is equally important to know when you need a

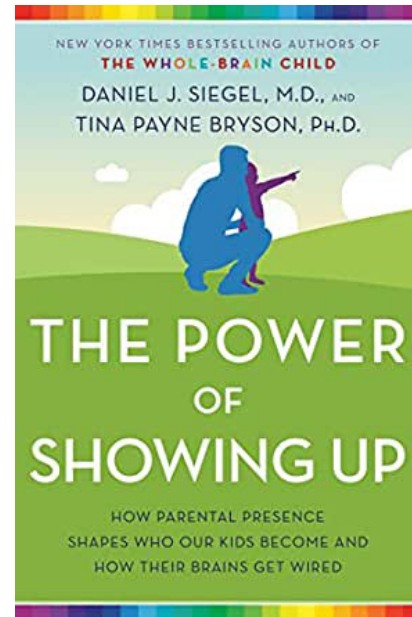
break and to permit yourself to take breaks. Before parents can care for anyone else, they must start by caring for themselves.

- **Accept change and uncertainty.** Change and uncertainty are a normal part of life and are unavoidable. Often our stress lies in unrealistic expectations and fighting things that are beyond our control. Actively engage in differentiating between the things you can control and the things you cannot.
- **Establish structure and family routines in your home.** The structure provides a sense of security and comfort when children and families know what to expect. When a crisis arises, structure can help to reduce the chaos or disorganization that often comes with it.
- **Make and maintain connections.** Seek out new relationships with others who understand your experience. Invest in your current relationships with close family members and friends who can support you in future times of need.
- **Be open to learning.** There is always room for growth as a parent and as an individual. This will require your willingness to change your perspectives, and keeping an open mind about learning new ways of parenting or looking for opportunities for personal development.

Book Review

By: Marva Bourne, DMFT, LMFT

The Power of Showing Up: How Parental Presence Shapes Who Our Kids Become and How Their Brains Get Wired by: Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.



Introduction

In this book, Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson answer the question, “*What’s the single most important thing I can do for my kids to help them succeed and feel at home in the world?*” It focuses less on what skills and abilities you want to build in your children but instead focuses on how you can build a better parent-child relationship. The first protective factor—Parental Resilience—is very obvious, as it focuses on building and sustaining relationships. This protective factor says, “No one can eliminate stress from parenting, but a parent’s capacity for resilience can affect how a parent deals with stress. Resilience is the ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges that emerge in every family’s life. It means finding a way to solve problems, *building and sustaining trusting relationships with your own child*, and knowing how to seek help when necessary.” The writers admit that parenting is a complex and challenging process and show that the answers to most questions on parenting depend on the age and stage of the child, thus highlighting the importance of another protective factor--Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development. The authors explain that most parents

Clip it & Post it:

Taking care of yourself is good for you and for your kids. You can't pour from an empty cup.

Be kind to yourself. No one is a perfect parent, and some days will be better than others.

Give your kids positive attention, share moments of joy and laughter, and help them explore their own feelings.

Structure is good, but so is flexibility!

Stay connected, and help your kids stay connected to the important people in your lives.

<https://www.beststrongfamilies.org/>

worry about whether or not they are doing enough for their kids. They stress that instead of worrying, “*Just show up.*” They claim, “Showing up means what it sounds like. It means being there for your kids. It means being physically present, as well as providing a quality of presence. Provide it when you’re meeting their needs; when you’re expressing your love to them; when you’re disciplining them; when you’re laughing together; even when you’re arguing with them. You don’t have to be perfect. You don’t have to read all the parenting bestsellers or sign your kids up for all the right enrichment activities. You don’t have to have a committed co-parent. You don’t even have to know exactly what you’re doing. Just show up.”

According to the authors, “showing up empowers the parent and builds resilience and strength in your child.” They claim that longitudinal research on child development demonstrates that one of the very best predictors for how any child turns out—in terms of happiness, social and emotional development, leadership skills, meaningful relationships, and even academics and career success—is whether they developed securely from having at least one person who showed up for them.

What Showing Up Looks Like: The Four S’s

As I read this book, I realized that predictable (not perfect) care for a child will lead to the best outcomes for that child and that predictable care supports healthy and empowering relationships. The authors encapsulate this “predictable” care into four S’s—helping kids feel:

- **Safe**—They feel protected and sheltered from harm.
- **Seen**—They know you care about them and pay attention to them.
- **Soothed**—They know you’ll be there for them when they’re hurting.
- **Secure**—They trust you to predictably help them feel “at home” in the world, then learn to help themselves feel safe, seen, and soothed.

Scientific Framework

There are two areas of research that are the foundation for this book. They are attachment science and interpersonal neurobiology (a combination of various fields of science on the study of the mind and mental thriving). The authors explain neuroplasticity, or the ability of the brain to adapt to new experiences and information, reorganizing itself and creating new

neural pathways. They demonstrate that your reliable presence in the lives of your children can significantly impact the physical architecture and connectivity in their brain, creating mental models and expectations about the way the world works. They emphasize that the experiences you provide in terms of your relationship with your child will mold the physical structure of her brain.

Attachment and Parenting

A large portion of the book explains in great, yet simplified detail, the relationship between our childhood attachment patterns and how this relates to how we parent. The authors help the reader make the connection between their childhood attachment patterns, parenting tendencies, and their child’s wired assumptions and how these interrelate. The reader gets a good understanding of his life, where things may have gone wrong, and develops insight and empathy. The authors claim, “Where abuse or neglect is present, something very wrong is going on in the parent in either what has been learned or what has become a strategy of relating to others, in which empathy and compassion are severely disengaged and how this affects our parenting abilities.” These statements build hope as we realize that “it’s never too late to reflect on what may have gone on in our own lives and then begin the repair process” allowing care for ourselves to emerge which would later translate in care for our children.

Summary

I find that the authors did an excellent job at breaking down the scientific material so that the average parent can understand the relationship between the brain, attachment, neuroplasticity and how this affects our children’s understanding and expectation of the world around them. The focus on predictable parenting, not perfect parenting, and how just showing up as parents can make a difference in the outcomes our children will experience is also a key point. My take away from this section of the book is that when parents consistently show up, their children’s minds come to expect that the world is a place that can be understood and meaningfully interacted with—even in times of trouble and pain. And that showing up creates in our children’s neural pathways that lead to selfhood, grit, strength, and resilience.

Support Groups & Events

Please note that our monthly support group has changed from the 3rd Tuesday of the month to the 4th Tuesday of the month, effective January 2021. The time of our groups has changed as well, to 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm.

April

- 1 Parent Cafe**
3:00 pm - 5:30 pm
- 27 Parent Support Group**
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

May

- 6 Parent Cafe**
3:00 pm - 5:30 pm
- 25 Parent Support Group**
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

June

- 3 Parent Cafe**
3:00 pm - 5:30 pm
- 22 Parent Support Group**
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Due to the impact of COVID-19, REACH Kern County continues to identify creative ways of bringing services to REACH families. We will continue to keep you informed of our services and provide information on trainings and events.

Parent/Professionals Training

Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent – Three-part series

via Zoom April 5, 12, and 19- 6:00 pm-9:00 pm

*Attendance at each training is not required, though encouraged, for optimal learning

When a child enters a foster/adoptive home with a history of drug exposure, abuse, neglect, and/or trauma, that child will greatly impact the family. Often the experience is nothing like what parents expect. This causes confusing emotions and parents may feel ill-equipped for the journey ahead. This workshop will support parents and caregivers of children who come from hard places with a practical how-to approach, specific tasks and skills.

Contact Bakersfield College Foster Kinship Care Education to register at (661)395-4991 or <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/FKCE/training-registration>

REACH Adoption Support Group for Parents

Friday, February 12th, 9:00am-4:00pm via Zoom

REACH Parent Support Groups are designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced resource and adoptive parents. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. Suggestions for topics are welcome. Due to restrictions on gatherings, support groups will be held virtually. To register for the virtual support groups, email Patti at pkasper@aspiranet.org or Yaneth Arceo at yarceo@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you.

Parent Café- The REACH program now has an additional online parent group called Parent Café, offered the first Thursday of each month, 3:00- 5:00 pm. Parent Café is based on the Five Protective Factors and provides an opportunity for parents to explore their strengths and learn from each other's experiences. To register for Parent Café, email Patti at pkasper@aspiranet.org or Yaneth Arceo at yarceo@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you. We hope to see you there!

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/FKCE/schedules#rfat>

Register for classes by calling the registration line

661-319-1836 or BC Program Manager at 661-395-4737



Bakersfield Aspiranet

1001 Tower Way, Ste. 250
Bakersfield, CA 93309
Phone: (661) 323-1233
Fax: (661) 323-8090

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Stockton, CA
PERMIT NO. 451



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.