

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis • Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and Kern County Adoption Support Program



Hello REACH families!

We hope you are enjoying the beauty of Kern County in springtime! Some things we are looking forward to this spring include two trainings the REACH team is providing through the Bakersfield College Foster & Kinship Care Education Program and our annual family event, which we have moved from August to May this year. The information on our two spring trainings, TBRI®: Connecting Principles and Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent, is located on page five of this newsletter. Stay tuned for information on our May family event as we will be providing information on that event as the date gets closer.

We would also like to remind our REACH community that REACH offers a monthly parent support group which includes dinner and childcare. We have a great core group of attendees but we would like to expand the group so that more families are benefitting from the support of other parents and the provided education. The group is the third Tuesday of each month, 6:30-8:00pm. Page five of this newsletter has details about dates and locations. We ask that you RSVP for attendance and childcare by 5:00pm the day before, to ensure we have sufficient food and childcare coverage. We hope to see more of you there soon!

As we mentioned in the Winter 2020 REACH newsletter, this year's newsletter theme is focusing on Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) and the TBRI® principles of Empowering, Connecting and Correcting. The Winter 2020 REACH newsletter provided an overview of TBRI® and our Spring newsletter focuses on Empowering principles. The TBRI® principles, as developed by Drs. Karyn Purvis and David Cross, were created to help children heal from past relationship-based traumas and to develop positive and healthy relationships and behaviors. The principle of Empowering focuses on ecology and physiology, which encompass felt-safety, predictability, transitions, safe touch, sensory input/physical activity, hydration and nutrition. The Connected Child, a book written by Drs. Purvis and Cross for parents of children with difficult histories and behavioral or emotional needs, addresses all three TBRI® principles and practical ways to implement them with your family. The Connected Child is available in our REACH library. Please consider checking it out to learn more about TBRI®.

Have a wonderful spring season!

Sincerely,

The REACH team

Kern County
Spring 2020

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Supporting Your Child's Brain Through Nutrition

By Carrie Ontiveros, MA

Most of us are aware that a balanced diet, including adequate hydration, is essential for a healthy body but did you know that good nutrition is also important for brain functioning? Healthy eating regulates blood sugar which enhances our ability to learn and regulate mood. On the other hand, a lack of nutrients can have a negative impact on the nervous system, resulting in behavioral and cognitive challenges. Children who have experienced abuse and neglect may not have had sufficient nutrition during those growth years and these early life experiences also impact brain development. Good nutrition can be a part of addressing the challenges resulting from this history.

Research has documented the negative health outcomes from the consumption of too much sugar and too many saturated fats (commonly known as “the bad fat,” found in some meats, high fat dairy products and certain oils). Research has also shown the benefits of consuming healthy foods and getting a sufficient amount of needed nutrients. According to the authors of “The Connected Child,” Karyn Purvis, PhD and David Cross, PhD, the Western diet typically lacks a sufficient amount of unsaturated fats (commonly known as “the good fat”) found in avocados, fatty fish, certain oils, nuts and seeds. Their research into nutrition has found that adding this missing nutrient to a child’s diet can have a positive impact on impulsivity, emotions and cognition as well as symptoms of anxiety. Drs. Purvis and Cross have also found that dietary supplements can assist in meeting some nutritional needs in a child.

The idea of changing your child’s diet may seem overwhelming and impossible. If so, start with one small change and make additional changes over time. Take a look at the Nutrition Tips below, which are included in “The Connected Child,” for additional ideas. As every child is unique and has unique needs, the noted suggestions will not apply to all children. Please consult with your child’s pediatrician or a nutritionist before making any significant changes to your child’s diet.

Nutrition Tips from The Connected Child

- Be sure your child has plenty of fluids to drink- especially water. Dehydration causes mental (cognitive) performance to deteriorate.
- Avoid giving your child caffeinated drinks. Caffeine affects brain chemistry- it increases mood swings, anxiety, and hyperactivity and it can promote dehydration.
- Counterbalance the high sugar load of sweet snacks, such as candy, fruit juice, or soda, by accompanying them with protein snacks, such as a handful of nuts.
- Use yogurt as a healthy snack. Yogurt with live cultures improves digestion and intestinal health. The intestines help produce the body’s supply of serotonin, a “feel-good” neurotransmitter. Probiotic supplements are a useful alternative for those who can’t tolerate milk products.
- Avoid deep-fried foods, including potato chips and French fries, which make the brain sluggish.
- Limit baked goods made with white flour and partially hydrogenated oil (most shortenings fall into this category), which also make the brain sluggish and have been linked to premature cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- It can be helpful to keep a food journal for a week, documenting the times your child has behavioral challenges and then recording the foods they ate recently (in the last five minutes to two hours). Many families have reported significant behavioral improvements when they eliminated or minimized certain foods from their child’s diet. Offenders frequently include gluten (in wheat and other foods), sugar, dairy, and items that are loaded with colorings or other additives.
- Chronic stress and fear disrupt a child’s ability to digest food and supplements efficiently. To be sure your child is getting maximum benefit, provide only multivitamins and fish oil tablets that are free from coloring and additives, and look for liquid mineral preparations, which are most easily absorbed by the body.

Source material: The Connected Child by Karyn Purvis, Ph.D., David Cross Ph.D., and Wendy Lyons Sunshine

Empowering Principles

By Linda Gutierrez

“Will all my love will be enough to heal my child?”

Parents may often ponder over this question *“Will all my love will be enough to heal my child?”* The question is not simple; it’s a profound question that may leave parents feeling overwhelmed and emotionally and physically drained.

As professionals and parents we teach children coping skills (i.e. “Take a deep breath,” “Count to 10,” “Go for a walk,” “Don’t forget to access your support system when you need help”). When children are feeling stressed, helpless, and frustrated, effective coping skills can help children regulate their emotions. From the perspective of a child who has encountered trauma, these feelings are often triggered by a child’s deep, primal fear. This fear can create a scary whirlwind which results in maladaptive (survival) behaviors.

However, as the adult or parent, we must be mindful that the child likely does not have the capacity to understand their behaviors are attributed to the fear and lack of feeling safe. The lack of “felt safety” often triggers maladaptive behaviors (i.e. lying, physical aggressiveness, stealing, defiance, etc.).

According to Dr. Karyn Purvis, founder of the TCU Institute of Child Development, children who have suffered childhood trauma, *“may not have a basic moral compass that tells them not to hurt other people because they never connected closely with another person”* (“The Connected Child,” Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, 2007, p. 28.) Therefore, in addition to being reassured with words, these children need repetitive reassurance that displays patience, love, boundaries, kind words, gestures, eye contact, etc. By helping a child feel safe, it will help them begin to reorganize their internal working model, allowing the child to begin developing trust, establish attachment, and begin the process of healing. This type of “therapeutic” parenting will require the parent to be present and tuned in to the child’s needs. Parents must look for any potential window of opportunity in which they can continue to provide the child with a sense of “felt safety,” in turn, helping the child develop a secure sense of self.

A secure attachment and bond is a life long journey that will continue to grow, thus enabling children to

begin the healing process and to develop their basic moral compass. All of a parent’s love, along with interventions that create a safe and secure sense of self for a child, can be enough to create a supportive and loving family system where a child can heal.

“Healing can’t be rushed, but you can help it progress dramatically- by giving your child the gift of feeling safe” (“The Connected Child,” Purvis, Cross, & Sunshine, 2007, p. 72)

Series Review: “The Day I Picked My Parents”

by Carrie Ontiveros, MA

The Day I Picked My Parents, a series by A&E, features Kidsave, a non-profit that works with older children in foster care who face challenges in finding families for placement and permanency. Season One of this



series, released in 2019, has five episodes which features youth, who for their own reasons, are searching for permanency. Each youth’s history of challenges is discussed and provides

insight into their desire for a forever family.

The Kidsave program is unique in that it allows the youth to make the choice of whether or not they are interested in pursuing a relationship with an interested potential parent or family. The series follows a total of ten youth, two per episode, as they meet families and decide if a family is a good fit for them and their needs. Each story features the perspectives of the potential parents and the youth. The Kidsave program allows these youth, who often have had very little say or choice in their foster care journey, to be the ones who decide their future. The series highlights heartwarming moments where the story follows the path we hope it will but also documents the real challenges of potential parents and youth and the resulting disappointments when things don’t go as planned. Please consider watching this series and tell a friend about it. It demonstrates the power of choice that all parents can learn from and, as the show documents, one never knows when they will be called to be a forever family!

The Day I Picked My Parents is available for livestreaming at <https://www.aetv.com/shows/the-day-i-picked-my-parents>.

Self-Regulation Skills are Empowering Skills!

By Hortencia Casarez

Self-regulation skills allow children to manage their emotions, behaviors, and body movements when they're experiencing situations they feel are tough to handle. Self-regulation skills are empowering to your child because it allows them to manage their emotions, behaviors, and movements while maintaining focus and stabilizing their mind and body. One challenge faced by foster and adoptive parents is that children who have experienced trauma often have sensory processing issues, compromised executive functioning, or may have trouble handling information that comes in through one or more of their senses, often resulting in emotional meltdowns and/or behavioral outbursts. This is because when children find themselves in situations that cause some type of sensory overload, they can't self-regulate effectively. Good news is that no matter what may lie under the surface of your child's challenges with self-regulation, those skills can develop gradually and there are many (and fun) ways to help your child improve! Since children tend to learn faster and integrate information more effectively when the subject is interesting and fun, here are a few creative ideas to kick-start your child's empowering coping skills!

It's important to highlight that before designating an item as a coping tool or skill, have a conversation with your child regarding what self-regulation is, the importance of coping skills, and talk about which skills and items they feel would be effective with them. Empower the child to come up with self-regulation ideas and tools themselves. Then practice, practice, practice! Practice using the skills in advance with your child before they would be expected to use them effectively in the midst of a meltdown!

CALM DOWN TOOLBOX

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 physical container (such as cardboard box, storage bin, basket, paper-mache box from craft store, etc.)
- Personalized, safe, and age-appropriate items that your child enjoys such as play-doh, bubble wrap, art supplies, journal, legos, fidgets, small musical instrument, bubbles, pinwheel, squishy ball, word search, puzzle, book, loving letter from parent, glitter jar, aromatherapy



spray, photographs, stuffed animal, blanket, lavender eye pillow, water bottle, Rubix cube, jump rope, coping skills flash cards/checklist, etc.

TIP: Keep a calm down box at home, in the car, and at a relative's home

EASY CLOUD DOUGH (MOON SAND)

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 8 cups of flour
- 1 cup baby oil or melted coconut oil
- cookie-cutters, scoops, spoons, small toys, etc
- a container (like a plastic storage bin, litter bin from the dollar store, salad bowl, etc)
- gloves (especially if using food coloring)



Mix the flour and oil well, adjusting each ingredient until desired consistency. Allow child to use outdoors or on a well-covered area as the sand is messy fun. Store in air-tight container or zip-lock bag.

TIP: Add glitter and/or food coloring for added fun.

COPING CHART

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Poster board or paper
- Markers/Crayons/Stickers

Have a conversation with your child about the different coping categories (creative, breath, physical activity, brain distraction, emotional soothing, and relaxing). Make a list under each category of things or actions that may help empower the child to self-regulate. Ideas may include: journaling, creating art, building something, blowing bubbles, yoga, gardening, jumping on a trampoline, playing with favorite toy, counting, crying, talking with someone, listening to music, squishing something, aromatherapy, spending time with a pet, etc)



Support Groups & Events

April

- 21 TBRI® Connecting Principle: Connecting through play**
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
4900 California Ave, Suite 300-A,
Bakersfield, CA 93309
(Cal Twin Towers Buildings, Tower A)

May

- 19 TBRI® Empowering Principle: Share power**
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
4900 California Ave, Suite 300-A,
Bakersfield, CA 93309
(Cal Twin Towers Buildings, Tower A)

June

- 16 TBRI® Correcting Principle: Choices and compromises**
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
4900 California Ave, Suite 300-A,
Bakersfield, CA 93309
(Cal Twin Towers Buildings, Tower A)

Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®)-Connecting Principles

Friday, April 24th 9:00am-4:00pm

Kern County Department of Human Services -
Orientation Room
3711 Columbus St.
Bakersfield, CA 93306

Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. The TBRI® Connecting Principles include Engagement and Mindfulness strategies to meet attachment needs. Participants will learn to create connections that disarm fear, gain trust, and enhance learning, all the while developing the attachment relationship between caregiver and child.

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

REACH Parent Support Groups are designed for adults thinking about adoption, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced adoptive parents. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. Suggestions for topics are welcome. RSVP for childcare for toddlers and older children. Infants may join their parents.

*Please RSVP by 5:00pm the day before group to ensure adequate food and childcare services.

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

Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent- Three part series

June 15, June 17, June 22 6:00pm-9:00pm

BC SouthWest
Camino Media and Scarlet Oak Blvd.
Bakersfield, CA 93311

*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 times 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. Participants who complete this training will receive a free copy of the book "Wounded Children Healing Homes: How Traumatized Children Impact Adoptive and Foster Families" by Jayne Schooler.

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

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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.