

Training Tracks

Quarterly Newsletter July, August & September 2008

ACRF provides support and training for foster, adoptive, guardian and relative caretakers in Alaska



ACCESS TO COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

In the past, children adopted from foster care as teens were required to list their adoptive parent's income on Federal Financial Assistance forms. Since the parent's income factored into scholarship eligibility, many adopted children were no longer eligible for federally funded college scholarships. A new federal law removed this financial disincentive to adopting teens from foster care. The Fostering Adoption to Further Students Achievement Act will make it possible for teens in foster care to be adopted without losing access to college financial aid. Under this new law, youth who are adopted from foster care at any point after their thirteenth birthday will not have to include their parents' income in the calculations for determining their need for financial aid.

This act will go into effect in July 2009, to apply for the 2009-2010 school year. The provision will apply to youth even for adoptions that were finalized before the law was passed in 2007. For more information on this law, please visit:

http://voice-for-adoption.org/assembled/advocacy_updates.html.

Celebrating Adoption Wall of Fame



If you have recently finalized an adoption ACRF would like to hear from you! Would you consider sending us a picture of your adoption day or adoptive family with a few words of wisdom and encouragement for those still working through the process? Please send or email pictures to bursel@nwresource.org or mail them Attention Brenda Ursel, Alaska Center for Resource Families, 840 K Street, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501.



Movie Corner

Martian Boy, is the true story of a lonely widower who adopts a child who has been abandoned so often that he's unable to get close to humans. Dogs, yes - humans no. The boy claims he is from Mars, and some of his behaviors are weird enough that his father begins to wonder if he really might have taken on an alien life form.

At its heart, this is a movie about how love can transform the lives of both people in a relationship. No killing, no car crashes, no evil dolls taking over the world in this movie -- just a sweet tale of a man and his boy trying to make things work out against the odds.

Released in 2007, Martian Boy is now available at most video stores and from NetFlix. It stars John Cusack as the science fiction writer who adopts the boy, his real life sister Joan Cusack as his movie sister, Bobby Coleman as the son, and Amanda Peet, Anjelica Huston, Oliver Platt and Sophie Okonedo.)

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If you live outside of these local offices call toll-free
1-800-478-7307

Attachment Patterns in Abused and Neglected Children

By Brenda Ursel, M.A.

Attachment problems have been called the “foundation of all mental illness”. Why? Because we are neurobiologically designed for relationships. Children are born with the desire to connect and relate to others and when that need is broken, interrupted or ignored, it has devastating results. Attachment issues permeate every aspect of a child’s life. Social/behavioral, cognitive and emotional development, the development of cause and effect thinking, the development of a conscience, the ability to engage in reciprocal relationships, and the child’s ability to accept responsibility all are impacted by early attachment experiences. (Keck 1999).

A New Twist on Old News

A child born into a family where their cries and needs are anticipated and met with loving kindness will have a different perception of people and the world than a child whose cries of distress are ignored or result in abuse.

In reviewing attachment resources, I came across an author who gave me a new understanding of how I look at attachment, abuse and neglect. Gregory Keck makes a subtle, yet significant distinction as to the lessons learned by an abused vs. neglected child and how those lessons shape how a child will relate to others. Understanding the impact of these early lessons can help parents interpret their child’s behavior in the context of the function it served to help that child survive in a chaotic, unpredictable or violent environment.

Lessons from Healthy Attachment

Normal, healthy infants, when faced with a need such as hunger, express their need by crying. They will continue to cry, increasing volume and intensity until a loving parent comes to tend to their need and ease their pain. This process is referred to as the attachment cycle and repeats itself thousands of times in the first few years of life. The outcome is that a child learns that he can trust adults to meet his needs and that the world is a kind place. This process builds the foundation for every other task of human life (Keck 1999).



Attachment Patterns in Abused and Neglected Children *Lessons from Abusive Attachment*

For abused children, the attachment cycle is unpredictable at best. An abused child cries out to express their need, but they do not receive comfort and gratification, but physical pain. Imagine the conflict and confusion of a young child who is drawn to the very person who is the source of their

terror and pain. Instead of learning to trust adults, the child learns he has the power to elicit others to anger and abuse and begins to trust in his ability to control others. Eventually he loses his fear and becomes numb to the pain. An abused child has learned he has the power to affect a response from others, but, it is the wrong response. As he gets older, he continues to get his needs met by seeking to control through manipulation, aggression, violence, lying or intimidation. His lack of trust prevents him from identifying with others and he does not develop compassion, empathy, or love, any of the qualities necessary for making and sustaining healthy relationships.

Lessons from Neglect

While the abused child has learned to control others to get his needs met, a neglected child has learned a different lesson.

In neglect, the bonding cycle is never completed. A neglected infant will express his need, cry and scream to the point of physical exhaustion, all to no avail. No one answers his cry or attends to his needs. The child is left to gratify his own needs, learning self reliance in the process. This lesson greatly interferes with the child’s desire and capacity to trust and depend on others, especially parents. This child may be aloof, resistant to authority and make few to no demands on others. He seems to be content with little to nothing and will take or steal what he thinks he needs.

While securely attached children will seek out a parent for comfort and help, a neglected child retreats into himself to soothe his own pain. They may hit themselves, go into a fetal position, head bang, disassociate, suck on their hands, rock, hide or pull their hair; anything to calm their fear, pain and anxiety. Many have learned not to cry. One child adopted from China developed an ear infection. His parents did not realize it until pus was dripping from his ears. The child NEVER cried.

A Secure Base

Securely attached children have what John Bowlby refers to as a “secure base”. These children are free to explore their world, because they know they have a parent base to return to when they are scared or insecure. If you have ever watched a baby crawling in a new environment, they are constantly looking back to their parents for reassurance that it is okay to proceed. Children naturally look to their parent’s response to see if they are okay or if they should be crying. Abused and neglected children have never had this experience.

One of our greatest tasks as parents is to become a “base” for our children. We need to repeatedly demonstrate our ability to love, protect and care for our child. Sounds easy

Attachment Patterns in Abused and Neglected Children continued...

enough but it is not. Our children have never learned to trust adults. In their minds they are fighting us for their very lives. They are determined to prove that you are no different than every other adult who has hurt, lied and betrayed them. They will resist and fight for control at every turn, often exhausting parents in the process.

A Hard Road to Travel, But Worth the Trip

Mistrust, self reliance and fear are the core issues for both abused and neglected children. These issues cripple the child's ability to receive love, provision and protection you have given them. Breaking through their wall of self reliance and fear is no easy task, it doesn't happen overnight, but there is hope.

One of the greatest moments in parenting my adopted child, was watching the transformation as my son's wall of self reliance and mistrust crumbled and he began to trust me as a source of protection and comfort.

Sitting on the bedroom floor reading bedtime stories, my son began to wrestle with his sister. In the tussle, he hit the small of his back on the corner of the toy box. Pain and shock washed over his face. His first instinct was to run away, and hit himself as that was how he had learned to cope with pain. I gently intervened, blocking his escape while extending my arms to him. He melted in my arms and allowed himself to be held and comforted by me for the first time since he was placed with me almost a year prior.

Often, the greatest victory comes from the ashes of despair. Helping children heal from traumatic beginnings is not easy and can challenge you to the limits of your patience and parenting ability. Don't try to manage it alone. Get help and support from other parents or professionals who understand what you are going through. It is a difficult road to travel, but well worth the trip. ■

This article was taken largely from "Adopting the Hurt Child" by Gregory Keck and Regina Kupecky, and "Trauma, Brain and Relationships, Helping Children Heal" from the Santa Barbara Graduate Institute.



Here is what one family has to say about their OCS social worker...

"I have a caseworker from OCS, Sarah Wood, who is an impeccable employee. She is always available and answers all questions within the next business day. Thank you Sarah for all your hard work!"

Sarah, your hard work and dedication to Alaska's families is greatly appreciated and we are proud to recognize you as our first ever ACRF Home Town Hero!

If there is a foster parent, adoptive family, social worker or individual who has gone above and beyond in advocating and helping your family, please tell us about it! We would love to hear from you. Email a short paragraph about your "Hero" to bursel@nwresource.org. All winners receive a certificate and a \$10 coffee card.

Attachment Patterns in Abused and Neglected Children

1.0 Hour Training Credit Questionnaire

If you read the above entitled article and want foster parent training credit applied to your training requirement, fill out the following questionnaire and FAX it to 1-907-479-9666, mail to ACRF, 815 Second AVE STE 101, Fairbanks, AK 99701 or email to acrf@nwresource.org.

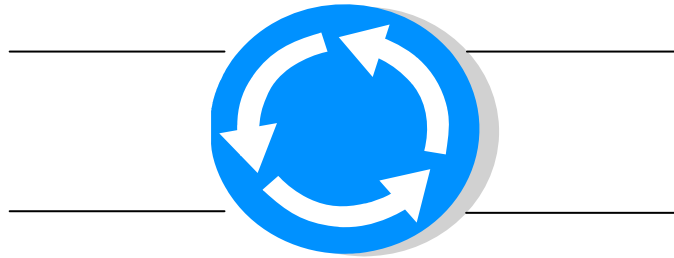
Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Provider#: _____

1. Name three (3) areas of development effected by early attachment experiences.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

2. Fill in the blanks for a healthy attachment cycle:



3. Name two (2) ways an abused child has learned to get their needs met:

- a) _____
- b) _____

4. In the attachment cycle an abused child receives _____ instead of comfort and gratification to satisfy their need.

5. Name three (3) strategies a neglected child learns to comfort themselves.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

6. Parents need to repeatedly demonstrate their ability to love, protect and care for a child.

- ____ a. TRUE
- ____ b. FALSE

7. What are the three (3) core issues common to both abused and neglected children?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ACRF services are made possible through a grant from the State of Alaska Office of Children's Services. Training/Support Groups are an opportunity for ADULT communication, partnership and empowerment, we cannot accommodate children. Auxiliary aids can be made available to persons with disabilities that are attending ACRF training. Please request these services at least 48 hours prior to training by calling 1-800-478-7307. Not all trainings listed are ACRF Trainings.

CORE TRAINING FOR RESOURCE FAMILIES – STATEWIDE

Core training is required for all new foster parents or for foster parents who have not taken this training. You must have had a home visit done before you can attend this required training. If you do not live in any of the following places call 1-800-478-7307 to receive a Core Workbook.

ANCHORAGE:

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16TH "ADOPTING THROUGH OCS" 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm. Trainers: Gail Stadig and Brenda Ursel.

AUGUST 14TH – SEPTEMBER 18TH This session will meet every Thursday for six weeks, from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm. Trainer: Tamara Keech.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25TH "ADOPTING THROUGH OCS" 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm. Trainers: Gail Stadig and Brenda Ursel.

Anchorage Core held in the OCS Conference Room, 323 E 4th Avenue. Call ACRF at 279-1799 to pre-register.

FAIRBANKS:

AUGUST 7TH AND AUGUST 9TH This session will meet Thursday, 8/7 from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm and Saturday, 8/9 from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. Trainer: Linden Staciokas.

Fairbanks Core held at ACRF, 815 Second Avenue, Suite 101. Call ACRF at 479-7307 to pre-register.

JUNEAU:

JULY 17TH AND JULY 19TH This session will meet Thursday, 7/17 from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm and Saturday, 7/19 from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, Lunch provided on Saturday. Trainer: Michelle Rogers.

SEPTEMBER 11TH AND SEPTEMBER 13TH This session will meet Thursday, 9/11 from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm and Saturday, 9/13 from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, Lunch provided on Saturday. Trainer: Michelle Rogers.

Juneau Core held at ACRF, 9109 Mendenhall Mall Road, Suite 6A. Call ACRF at 790-4246 to pre-register or email Michelle at mrogers@nwresource.org.

MAT-SU:

EVENING CORE: AUGUST 28TH THRU OCTOBER 2ND This session will meet on Thursdays beginning 8/28 from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm for six weeks. Trainer: Betsy Woodin.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9TH "ADOPTING THROUGH OCS" 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm.

DAYTIME CORE: OCTOBER 13TH THRU NOVEMBER 17TH This session will meet on Mondays beginning 10/13 from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm for six weeks. Trainer: Betsy Woodin.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH "ADOPTING THROUGH OCS" 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.

Mat-Su Core held at ACRF, 5050 Dunbar Street, Suite A2 (off the Palmer-Wasilla Hwy in the Brentwood Plaza. Call Betsy at 376-4678 or email bwoodin@nwresource.org to pre-register.

ANCHORAGE ACRF ON-SITE TRAINING & COMMUNITY EVENTS

TUESDAY, JULY 15: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm	<u>RACE OF TIME</u> Trainer: Dennis Swain, OCS ICWA Coordinator. Lunch will be served. Held at OCS 323 E 4 th Avenue, Anchorage. Call 279-1799 to register.
SEPTEMBER 17 and 24: Wednesdays: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	<u>STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH ADOPTION</u> Trainer: Brenda Ursel. Held at ACRF, 840 K Street, Suite 101. Call 279-1799 to register.
SEPTEMBER 24 AND 25: Wednesday: Noon – 5:00 pm Thursday: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm	<u>FAMILY TO FAMILY CONVENING</u> Held at ChangePoint Church on Raspberry and Minnesota. Sponsored by the Office of Children's Services, Casey Family Programs, and ACRF. Watch for more information in the fall.
OCTOBER 1 and 8: Wednesdays: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	<u>STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH ADOPTION</u> Trainer: Brenda Ursel. Held at ACRF, 840 K Street, Suite 101. Call 279-1799 to register.

FAIRBANKS ACRF ON-SITE TRAINING & COMMUNITY EVENTS

MONDAY, JULY 21: 9:00 am – 4:30 pm	<u>COACHING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD</u> Presented by Dathan Rush, MA, CCC-SLP and M'Lisa Sheldon, PT, Ph.D. Authors of " <i>Coaching Colleagues and Families in Early Childhood Intervention.</i> " Held at Noel Wein Public Library Auditorium. \$10 donation appreciated. Call Jenny at 456-4003 to register.
SATURDAY, AUGUST 2: 10:00 am – Noon <i>Registration Deadline: July 15</i>	<u>INTERNET SMARTS FOR PUZZLED PARENTS</u> Presented by Linden Staciokas, MA. Held at ACRF, 815 Second Avenue, Suite 101. Call 479-7307 or email lstaciokas@nwresource.org to pre-register by July 15 th .
SEPTEMBER 25 AND 27: Thursday: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm Saturday: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm	<u>STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH ADOPTION</u> Trainer: Lisa Carr. Held at ACRF, 815 Second Avenue, Suite 101. Call 479-7307 to register. Refreshments provided but please bring your own lunch, as it will be a working lunch.

JUNEAU ACRF ON-SITE TRAINING

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm	<u>FASD 101: DISABILITIES OF DISCOVERY: INSIGHTS TO BRAIN-BASED DISORDERS</u> FASD 101 is a beginner's class on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) that focuses on FASD as a brain-based disorder. Held from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
	<u>THE DANGERS OF METHAMPHETAMINE TO CHILDREN</u> This training will focus on understanding the impact that methamphetamine use has on children. Held from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
	Held at ACRF, 9109 Mendenhall Mall Rd, Suite 6A. Pre-register by calling 790-4246 or email mrogers@nwresource.org .

MAT-SU ACRF ON-SITE & COMMUNITY EVENTS

You must pre-register to attend these classes as they will be cancelled without notice if no one pre-registers.

FIRST TUESDAY JULY-OCT Noon – 1:00 pm	You are invited to attend an on-site training that will function as a Rural Teleconference as well, see Rural Teleconference Training and Support below for topics. Held at ACRF, 5050 Dunbar Street, Suite A2 in the back of Brentwood Plaza on Palmer-Wasilla HWY. Call Betsy at 376-4678 or email bwoodin@nwresource.org to pre-register or if you have any questions.
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25: 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	<u>SENSORY INTEGRATION</u> Held at ACRF, 5050 Dunbar Street, Suite A2 in Wasilla. Call Betsy at 376-4678 or email bwoodin@nwresource.org to pre-register.
TUESDAY, AUGUST 26: 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm	<u>DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</u> Held at ACRF, 5050 Dunbar Street, Suite A2 in Wasilla. Call Betsy at 376-4678 or email bwoodin@nwresource.org to pre-register.
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24: Noon – 1:00 pm	<u>DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES</u> Held at ACRF, 5050 Dunbar Street, Suite A2 in Wasilla. Call Betsy at 376-4678 or email bwoodin@nwresource.org to pre-register.

RURAL TELECONFERENCE TRAINING AND SUPPORT

ACRF offers monthly teleconference training and support (schedule follows) to anyone living outside of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Wasilla or Palmer. Rural families may participate by dialing 1-866-348-8715, and then when asked, enter the code: 3721355#. If you phone in before the group leader, you will hear music, stay on the line! For more information contact Betsy at bwoodin@nwresource.org or call 1-800-478-7307.

*** If you live in WASILLA/PALMER you may attend the starred teleconferences at our onsite location at ACRF, 5050 Dunbar Street, Suite A2 in the back of Brentwood Plaza on the Palmer-Wasilla HWY. For more information call Betsy at 376-4678.

***TUESDAY, JULY 1ST from Noon – 1:00 pm: AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9TH from 7:00 – 8:00 pm: SUICIDE AND DEPRESSION

***TUESDAY, AUGUST 5TH from Noon – 1:00 pm: METH

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13TH from 7:00 – 8:00 pm: SUBSTANCE ABUSE

***TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2ND from Noon – 1:00 pm: ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH from 7:00 – 8:00 pm: MENTAL HEALTH

***TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7TH from Noon – 1:00 pm: SELF-ESTEEM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8TH from 7:00 – 8:00 pm: COMMUNICATING WITH TEENS

Upcoming On-Line Self-Study Courses

For complete instructions on how to earn credit visit www.acrf.org/education/featured.php. For more information about any of these courses, contact Aileen McInnis in Anchorage at 279-1799 or toll-free 1-866-478-7307.



JULY/AUGUST 2008:

The Amazing Brain and Human Development (3.0 Hours)

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008:

Positive Parenting for Foster Parents (2.0 Hours)

Treasured Mind!



Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights

Families Change is one of the few books I have found that addresses the delicate issue of termination of parental rights, foster care and adoption. This gentle but powerful story tackles hard truths in a way that brings comfort and understanding to children. The story applies to almost every scenario that occurs for children in out of home care, foster care, relative care, and adoption. This book is a treasure that will open the door to meaningful, healing discussions with your child and is available at Amazon.com or at the ACRF library.



**TID-BIT from the Desk of
Christy Lawton,
Child Welfare Administrator**

When a relative or foster parent is wondering about providers in town that accept Medicaid, you can refer them to call 1st Health Services' toll-free number (1-800-770-5650) to obtain a list of Alaska Medicaid Providers for their community.

New Materials Available from the ACRF Library



The following new materials are available. Visit or call your local ACRF office or email acrf@nwresource.org to order. Our Self-Study Catalog is also available online at www.acrf.org, if you do not have internet access call your local ACRF office or 1-800-478-7307 for your copy today!

Growing Up Online. Frontline, WGBH Educational Foundation, 2008. Closed Captioned. (DVD, Worth 1.0 Hour)

Challenging Behaviors in Young Children. Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky. (Self-Study Book, Worth 6.0 Hours)



GOOD NEWS...

Beginning July 1, there will be an increase in foster care rates. Look for the letter that is being sent out by Juneau to every foster parent, giving the exact amounts.

**Northwest Resource Associates
Alaska Center for Resource Families
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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