

**BUILDING FAMILIES
THROUGH ADOPTION**

Welcome Back!



ALASKA
center for
RESOURCE FAMILIES

**ZOOM
Chat!**

Post your
answer in
the chat
box

Question:

If you have a child in your home, with
one or two words, describe the
reason your child entered foster
care.



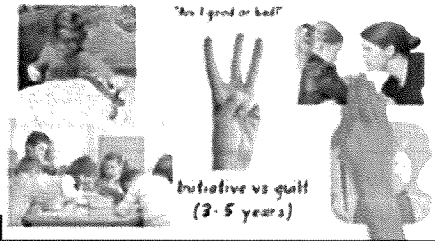
SESSION 3: TELLING THE STORY
UNDERSTANDING THE
DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF ADOPTION

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. To consider tasks related to adoption at each stage of development
2. To clarify your role as a parent in helping children navigate these adoption tasks successfully
3. To consider the adoption tasks of the parents
4. To gain knowledge and skills of how to talk to children about adoption and other tough topics

REVIEW OF THE ERICKSON'S STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Franks 2-Minute Review



ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT STAGE I



Infant to 18 months
Basic Trust vs. Mistrust

Adoption Task:
Adjustment to a new family, focusing on safety, trust and attachment.

**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 1**

Parent Tasks:

- Providing loving touch
- Encouraging eye contact
- Follow feeding schedule based on baby's cues
- Rocking, walking, dancing with child
- Read stories

**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 2**



18 Months to 3 Years

Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

Adoption Task:

Recovering from trauma, beginning to learn their adoption story.

**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 2**

Parent Tasks:

- Helping with emotion self-regulation
- Using adoption language
- Encouraging questions
- Gathering information
- Culturally appropriate dolls/toys/books/art/music

**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 3**

Preschooler 3 to 6 Years

Initiative vs. Guilt

Adoption Tasks:

Wants more information about adoption and birth parents, recognizes differences, cultural pride...



**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 3**

Parent Tasks:

- Create "Life Book" with child
- Encouraging questions and answering honestly
- Reassuring child the s/he will not lose adoptive family
- Teaching and modeling cultural pride
- Openness regarding race, culture, and ethnicity

**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 4**



6 to 11 years

Industry vs. Inferiority

Adoption Tasks:

Developing the what and why of adoption. Coping with differences. Loss and grief. Fear of being taken away again.

**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 4**

Parent Tasks:

- Allow child to control telling his/her story outside of the family
- Help child accept birth parents' limitations without blaming
- Inviting child to discuss questions or feelings
- Preparing child to navigate two cultures at once

**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 5**

12 to 18 years

Identity vs. Role Confusion

Adoption Tasks:

Identity- as adoptee and possibly racial or cultural. Curiosity about birth family identity. Adoption loss.

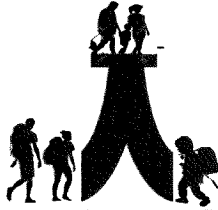


**ADOPTION TASKS ACROSS DEVELOPMENT
STAGE 5**

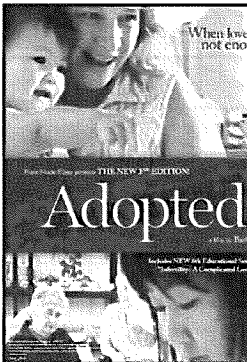
Parent Tasks:

- Allowing youth to exercise control whenever possible
- Supporting need to know his/her history pre-adoption/guardianship
- Accepting interest in birth family as part of their identity
- Recognizing fears about independence

YOURS, THEIRS, AND OURS
HELPING YOUR CHILD TELL THEIR STORY



The Child's Story
(Also known as the
Adoption Narrative)



**A CHILD'S STORY
STARTS WITH
BIRTHPARENTS**

PARENTS' ADOPTION TASKS

- Validating child's connection to both adoptive family and birth family.
- Letting child know you are not threatened or angry about questions regarding birth family or history.
- Deal with fears and insecurities about birth family.
- Recognize gaps in the child's development.
- Match your tasks to the child's stage and not necessarily their age.

**TELLING THE STORY: LANGUAGE MATTERS
GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Speak the truth in gentleness and kindness.

Always ask yourself what is the truth of the matter.

This is an ongoing conversation throughout the lifespan.

Speak to the child's emotion not chronological age.

Give time to process and follow their lead.

Stop to help youth regulate as needed.

ACTIVITY

TALKING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF – CHOOSE YOUR WORDS

Mara's Story:

Mara was placed with the Jacobson family when she was five years old. Mara's real mother was a homeless, drug addict who often prostituted herself and Mara for money. Mara's father is in jail for assault. Mara was filthy, covered in scars and bruises when the state took her away. Mara's siblings were also taken away and put in foster homes. Being so troubled and disturbed, no relative wanted them. They could not be placed together due to aggressive and sexualized behavior. Mara had three placements prior to the Jacobson's due to her extreme aggression.

Karl and Ava Jacobson took in Mara as an emergency placement, and she is thriving in their family. Karl and Ava have two of their own kids and they are excited to become Mara's adoptive parents.

ACTIVITY

TALKING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF – CHOOSE YOUR WORDS

Mara's Story:

Mara's real mother was a homeless, drug addict who often prostituted herself and Mara for money. Mara's father is in jail for assault. Mara was filthy, covered in scars and bruises when the state took her away. Mara's siblings were also taken away and put in foster homes. Being so troubled and disturbed, no relative wanted them. They could not be placed together due to aggressive and sexualized behavior. Mara had three placements prior to the Jacobson's due to her extreme aggression.

Karl and Ava Jacobson took in Mara as an emergency placement, and she is thriving in their family. Karl and Ava have two of their own kids and they are excited to become Mara's adoptive

ACTIVITY

Let's Try again: How might we explain this to 5 year old Mara in a gentle, yet truthful, developmentally appropriate way .

1. Mara's real mother was a homeless, drug addict who often prostituted herself and Mara for money.
2. Mara's father is in jail for assault.
3. Mara was filthy, covered in scars and bruises when the state took her away.
4. Being so troubled and disturbed, no relative wanted them. They could not be placed together due to aggressive and sexualized behavior.
5. Mara had three placements prior to the Jacobson's due to her extreme aggression.
6. Karl and Ava have two of their own kids and they are excited to become Mara's adoptive parents

ACTIVITY

Mara's Story: GROWING IN UNDERSTANDING

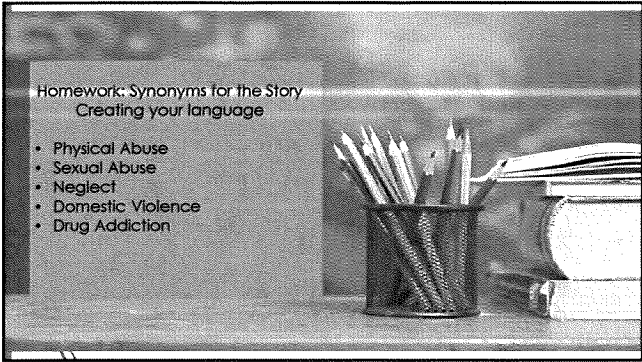
Mara your birth mother didn't have a place to live and struggled taking drugs that were bad for her. Sometimes the only way she knew how to get money was to let people do hurtful wrong things to her body and your body. Your birth father is in time out for grown-ups for hitting others and hopefully learning how to be safe with his anger. When your social worker first brought you to us, you hadn't had a bath for a long time and had many owies all over your body. Your brother and sister were also taken to foster families to care for them and keep them safe. All of you were so scared and hurt, you had so many big feelings. Each of you needed a safe, kind parent to help keep you safe and teach you how to be safe with yourselves and others. Mara, you were placed with three other families before coming to us, because they didn't understand the special way you needed to be cared for, before you came to us.....

Question: Anticipate

What kinds of questions might a child have as they get older?

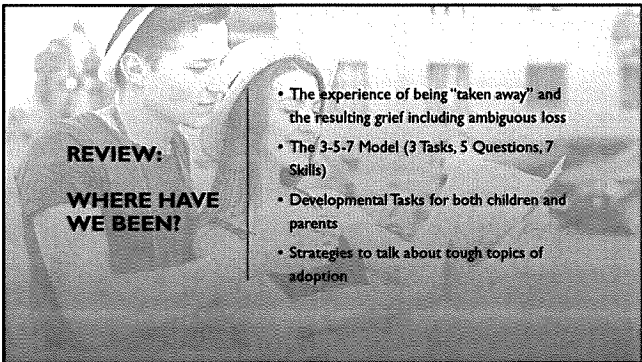


Mara's birth mother was a didn't have a place to live and struggled taking drugs that were bad for her. Sometimes the only way she knew how to get money was to let people do hurtful wrong things to her body and your body. Mara's father is in time out for grown-ups for hitting others. Mara, when your social worker first brought you to us, you hadn't had a bath for a long time and had many owies all over your body. Your brother and sister were also taken to foster families to care for them and keep them safe. All of you were so scared and hurt, you had so many big feelings. Each of you needed a safe, kind parent to help keep you safe and learn how to be with other kids without hurting others or being hurt. Mara you were placed with three other families before coming to us, because they didn't understand the special way you needed to be cared for.



Homework: Synonyms for the Story
Creating your language

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Domestic Violence
- Drug Addiction



REVIEW:
WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

- The experience of being "taken away" and the resulting grief including ambiguous loss
- The 3-5-7 Model (3 Tasks, 5 Questions, 7 Skills)
- Developmental Tasks for both children and parents
- Strategies to talk about tough topics of adoption
