



PA

Pre-Service

Part 2

## Who the Parents Are Notes

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# PUSHING THE LIMIT

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Listed below are ten behaviors or situations that could occur with the children in your home.

On a scale from 1 to 10, rate these behaviors according to how challenging they would be for you to handle effectively, with 1 being the easiest, and 10 being the most difficult.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Running Away
- \_\_\_\_\_ Using foul language
- \_\_\_\_\_ Feces Smearing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Answering back
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stealing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hoarding and hiding food
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bed-wetting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fighting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Violating curfew
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sexual acting out

# Parenting and Positive Discipline Notes

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POLICY: Behavior Management/Discipline

POLICY #: 4:0

REFERENCE: 3700.36; 3700.63; 3680.21; 3680.21; 3680.43; DELACARE #103, #107, #171; COMAR 07.02.25.20

DATE: August, 1986; Rev. 10/90, 5/97, 11/01, 05/08; 11/12; 06/14

APPROVAL: COPY WITH SIGNATURE AVAILABLE IN OFFICE POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL  
President/Chief Executive Officer

According to the therapeutic approach employed by Children's Choice (Dr. William Glasser's "Choice Theory"), punishment is not to be used with children. During a crisis and only in a behavior management context, passive restraint may be used judiciously. The logical consequences of a child's positive and negative behavior are to be stressed.

Behavior management techniques acceptable to Children's Choice for use with children include:

Preventative Measures:

1. Know the circumstances surrounding the child's placement in foster care and establish reasonable expectations of the child's behavior;
2. Discuss issues and problems at appropriate times in a calm productive, and positive manner;
3. Plan and participate in family counsel meetings at established dates/times weekly;
4. Post chores list;
5. Specify and consistently enforce rewards to be earned;
6. Permit input into planning for and participating in family activities;
7. Create daily private time and place for discussion of interactional problems.

Logical Consequences of aberrant behavior can include:

1. Restitution of property damage at the rate of not more than one half the child's weekly allowance;
2. Abridgement of \$7.50 per month telephone limit;
3. Time out administered for one minute per child's chronological age; etc:

3-year-old child – 3 minutes  
10-year-old child – 10 minutes

Effective time out will begin when the child stops the unacceptable behavior, be specific, and conclude with a conversation with the child regarding the reason for the time out, discussion of acceptable behavior, and consequences for future infractions

Crisis Management for the child who is verbally or passively acting out:

1. Interrupt behavior, say "Stop";
2. Send child to a private place for "Time Out";
3. When child is calmer, encourage him/her to speak with you (resource parent);
4. If no positive results are achieved, telephone the Children's Choice caseworker; using the Emergency Call procedure if the event occurs after regular business hours.

Crisis Management for the child who is physically acting out:

1. Leave the area, having done whatever possible to keep the child safe (e.g. lock door to prevent escape); do not attempt to physically restrain the child; use a calm voice; don't yell or blame child for bad behavior;
2. Call local police;
3. Follow Children's Choice Emergency Call Procedures (CC 4:6).

**THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS ARE PROHIBITED WITH FOSTER CHILDREN, MAY RESULT IN THE REMOVAL OF A CHILD FROM YOUR HOME, AND MAY CAUSE THE CLOSING OF YOUR HOME BY CHILDREN'S CHOICE:**

- A. Any type of hitting or any type of physical punishment inflicted in any manner upon the child's body;
- B. Mental abuse such as name-calling or actions which subject the child to verbal abuse, ridicule or humiliation;
- C. Requiring or forcing the child to take a painfully uncomfortable position, such as squatting or bending, or requiring or forcing the child to repeat physical movements when used solely as a means of punishment;
- D. Denial of elements of the service plan;
- E. Delegation of discipline to any other person than a responsible adult made known to the child;
- F. Assignment of physically strenuous exercise or physically strenuous work solely as punishment;
- G. Denial of visiting or communication privileges with family solely as a means of punishment;
- H. Withholding of any meals;



- I. Denial of sufficient sleep;
- J. Requiring the child to remain silent or be isolated for long periods of time;
- K. Denial of shelter, clothing or bedding;
- L. Extensive withholding of emotional response or stimulation;
- M. Specific time limits must be attached to all discipline and the child must be aware of the consequences;
- N. "Time Out" is intended for short periods of time and length of time should be discussed and approved by the caseworker;
- O. Washing a child's mouth out with soap or other caustic substance is prohibited;
- P. Hair-cutting or denial of personal hygiene is unacceptable;
- Q. Biting a child back or instructing another child to do so as a teaching method is prohibited;
- R. Use of foul language with foster children is highly inappropriate and does not present a positive role model;
- S. Punishment of any kind for bedwetting, enuresis, or encopresis;
- T. Hand slapping and spanking are considered forms of physical punishment.

Remember: Foster children are not "bad kids" they are "good kids" exhibiting bad behaviors.

Resource Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Resource Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Choice Representative \_\_\_\_\_

## THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

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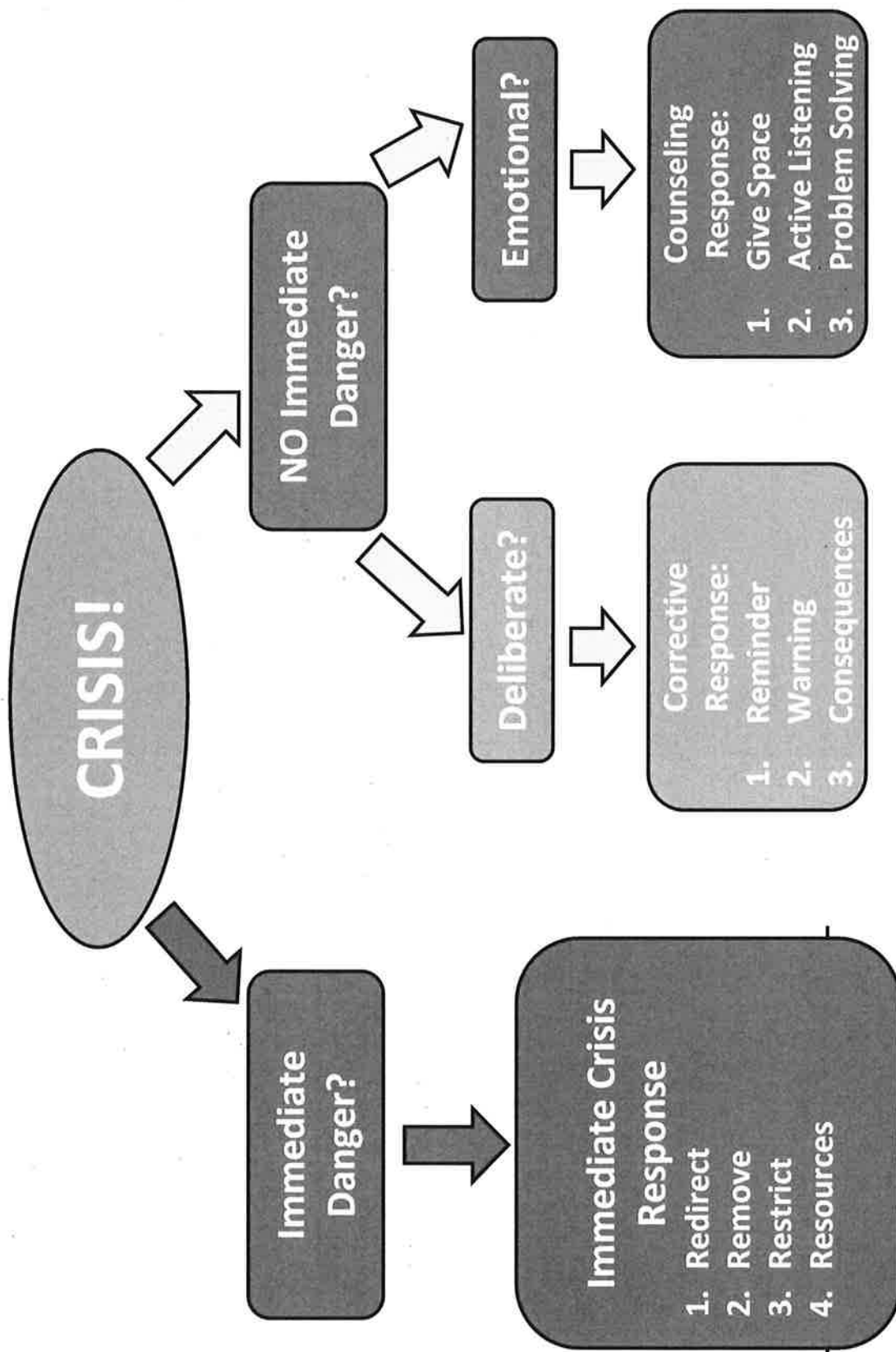
1. It teaches children that bigger people use power and force to stop smaller people from certain behaviors. One rarely sees someone small using physical punishment on someone larger. It increases the chances that older or bigger children will hit younger, smaller children.
2. It teaches children that using force or violence is a way to solve problems and conflicts and a way to respond to someone when you are angry.
3. It increases the likelihood that the person that is physically punished will grow resentful.
4. It reinforces poor self-esteem by not treating the child and the child's body with dignity and respect. Children do not necessarily connect the event or the behavior that they are being punished for with the consequences. Instead, they may think they're "no good" and that others don't like them.
5. Research in child development and psychology has shown that physical punishment may stop a behavior immediately, but not for long. It just means that a child might stop doing a particular behavior around the parent.
6. Physical punishment tends to set the child against the parent who inflicts it on the child. It is important to remember that painful feelings can cause more lasting hurt than physical pain.
7. It teaches foremost the importance of not getting caught. So, the child, who before the punishment was open in his/her actions, now learns to hide them and becomes sneaky in the process.

## Additional Information

## EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DISCIPLINE

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	YES	NO
1. Has the disciplinary action protected and nurtured the child's physical and psychological (self-esteem) well-being?	<hr/>	<hr/>
2. Did it enhance the child's development?	<hr/>	<hr/>
3. Were the child's needs met in a responsible manner?	<hr/>	<hr/>
4. Has it taught the child ways to prevent and solve problems?	<hr/>	<hr/>
5. Will this action maintain and/or build the parent/child relationship?	<hr/>	<hr/>
6. Will this method build self-control and self-responsibility?	<hr/>	<hr/>
7. Has this action produced the desired behavior?	<hr/>	<hr/>
8. Was the method based on an understanding and appreciation of the child's developmental status and uniqueness?	<hr/>	<hr/>



# Crisis Cues

Diagnostic Cue	Deliberate Misbehavior	Emotional Crisis
<b>BEHAVIOR</b> How characteristic is this behavior under normal circumstances?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Normal</li> <li>•Usual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Unusual</li> <li>•Uncharacteristic</li> </ul>
<b>EXPRESSIONS</b> How intense are facial expressions, body language, posture, tone?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Calm</li> <li>•Manipulative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Intense</li> </ul>
<b>PEERS</b> How are peers reacting to the problem behavior?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Reinforcing</li> <li>•Encouraging</li> <li>•Approving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ridiculing</li> <li>•Disapproving</li> </ul>
<b>OUTSIDE STRESS</b> What other stressful issues co-exist with the problem behavior?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Significant</li> </ul>

# Crisis Management Role Plays

1. 7-year-old Rich, a young boy who has been in your home for three months has just ended a visit with his birth mother, Ms. Johnson. As Ms. Johnson and Rich are saying their goodbyes, Rich begins to become upset. Ms. Johnson is also visibly upset, but tries to hide her emotions from Rich. Ms. Johnson says her final goodbyes and leaves to catch her. After Ms. Johnson has left, you sit down to talk with the caseworker briefly about how the visit went, and Rich's behaviors begin to escalate. Not only is he crying, but he is now screaming very loudly that he wants his mom. Rich begins wandering around the office and starts grabbing things and throwing them on the ground.
2. Krista, a 13-year-old girl who just joined your family last week, has reportedly been acting out in her new school. She has been disruptive in class, and has already been sent to the principal's office twice. You get a call from the school today, stating that Krista was fighting with another girl at the school, and ran away. About five minutes after you end your call with the school, Krista shows up at your home and refuses to go back to school.
3. You arrive at school to pick up Antonio, who is 10-years-old. As you walk into the school to pick him up, you can hear him coming down the hallway, as he seems to be shouting at someone else. As you approach, you can see that he is indeed yelling at another student, saying "It's none of your business who is picking me up from school!" The other student replies, "Well, it's not your mom, because she left you and doesn't love you." You can see that at this point Antonio's fists are clenched and he is getting closer and closer to the other student until he is only about six inches away.

# Disruption, Dissolution, and Crisis Management Notes



# **Disruption, Dissolution, and Crisis Management Notes**

Behavior(s):

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[illegible]

# **Treatment Foster Care - Weekly Behavior Tracking Chart**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Resource Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Month/Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Week (circle one): 1 2 3 4

## **Behavior #1**

In detail describe one behavior challenge this week. Please be specific: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Insert number of occurrences this week in each setting:  
 Home \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Community \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the severity of the behavior challenge relative to prior occurrences (circle one): Much better - 1 2 3 4 5 - Much worse

What seemed to trigger the behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

What interventions/means of de-escalation were used? \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the effectiveness of the intervention (circle one): Not effective - 1 2 3 4 5 - Very effective

## **Behavior #2**

In detail describe one behavior challenge this week. Please be specific: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Insert number of occurrences this week in each setting:  
 Home \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Community \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the severity of the behavior challenge relative to prior occurrences (circle one): Much better - 1 2 3 4 5 - Much worse

What seemed to trigger the behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

What interventions/means of de-escalation were used? \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the effectiveness of the intervention (circle one): Not effective - 1 2 3 4 5 - Very effective

# Treatment Foster Care - Weekly Positive Scan Chart

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Resource Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Month/Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Week (circle one): 1 2 3 4

Every Resource Parent should spend at least 10 minutes of quality time per day with each child.

Describe the quality time activity the resource parent and child shared together each day: Circle the quality of the interaction Describe one positive thing your child did that you complimented or praised purely and descriptively:

SUN 1 2 3 4 5  
- - - - +

MON 1 2 3 4 5  
- - - - +

TUE 1 2 3 4 5  
- - - - +

WED 1 2 3 4 5  
- - - - +

THUR 1 2 3 4 5  
- - - - +

FRI 1 2 3 4 5  
- - - - +

SAT 1 2 3 4 5  
- - - - +

# ABC Model Notes

# ABC Model Notes

## How the System Works Notes

## How the System Works Notes



Setting: At a school program

Question: "Don't you want children of your own?"

Setting: Out in a store with the 4 or more children

Question: "Are they all yours?"

Setting: Church

Comment: "Wow, they're so well-behaved for foster kids!"

Setting: On the phone, telling a friend how tired you are after the kids are in bed

Question: "Well, you *chose* to do this, what did you expect? Why did you choose to make this a long-term commitment then?"

Setting: Mom waiting in check-out line with the child of a race different than hers, and customer behind her says;

Comment: (to the child)

"You're very lucky to have that lady, you'd better behave for her!"

## SWAN Helpline

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- 1-800-585-SWAN (7926)
  - Explain the services available
  - Submit a referral for assessment
- You can also email [SWANHelpline@diakon-swan.org](mailto:SWANHelpline@diakon-swan.org) for post-permanency services

**Trust**

**Confidentiality**

**Commitment**

**Burnout**

**Family Preservation**

**Honesty**

**Adaptability**

**Cohesion**

**Family-driven**

**Fears & Anxieties**

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

# HELP

**for families providing  
permanency in  
Pennsylvania**



*The journey through  
post permanency services*

**1-800-585-SWAN**



Improving the quality of life for all Pennsylvanians

[www.dpw.state.pa.us](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us)

Edward G. Rendell  
*Governor*

Estelle B. Richman  
*Secretary*

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare  
Statewide Adoption and  
Permanency Network (SWAN)

Pub 546 1/06

# FAQ ...

# Step by Step ...

**Approximately 20,000 families provide permanency to children in Pennsylvania.**

**Q** *Who is eligible for post permanency services?*

All Pennsylvania families who are:

- permanent or subsidized legal custodians
- fit and willing relatives or adoptive families

**Q** *Why are these services necessary?*

Post permanency services are ongoing prevention services that enhance permanency and support in families.

**Q** *How do I access post permanency services?*

Call the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network at 1-800-585-SWAN.

**Q** *How long before services begin?*

Onset of services varies from family to family.

**Q** *What is the cost?*

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare provides funding for post permanency services.

## Step One:

### *Call for HELP*

Call the SWAN Helpline at 1-800-585-SWAN (7926). Helpline staff will explain the services, assist the family in choosing an agency to complete an assessment and submit the referral.

## Step Two:

### *The Assessment Process*

All families seeking post permanency services must have an assessment. An assessor will visit the home and talk with the entire family to build on family strengths. He or she will then recommend the best possible services.

## Step Three:

### *Referral for Services*

Three services are available to Pennsylvania families.

#### *Case Advocacy Service*

Case advocacy is designed to provide support for families through a case advocate who communicates with the family by providing ongoing support. The advocate also assists the family by attending meetings or helping to access services in the community.

#### *Respite Service*

Respite services support the family by developing resources that help alleviate the pressures of parenting special needs children. For example, a respite provider can provide a safe environment for the child while the family takes a break by going out for the night or enjoying a weekend away. Respite can occur in the family's own home or outside the home. This is a decision families can make with the respite provider.

#### *Support Group Service*

The support group service is designed to ensure that families are supported by building relationships with other families, forming a community of support and mentoring and providing information and educational materials.



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**statewide**

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**adoption and**

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**permanency**

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**network**

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## Permanency Notes

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## Permanency Notes

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# Additional Information

## The Evolving Conversation

Should parents initiate talk about adoption or wait for their child's questions? Sometimes you lead, say the authors, and sometimes you follow.

by Gail Steinberg and Beth Hall

How will I talk to my child about adoption? This is a question every parent asks himself or herself. Even as your new baby takes her first steps, you wonder if you'll be ready when the questions come. Soon you realize that your child is simply your child, not your "adopted" child, and it becomes difficult even to imagine an adoption talk. But you'll have this conversation, not just once, but over time, offering more information as your child matures. Sometimes its coming will take you by surprise, launched by the query of a curious child. Sometimes you'll see an opening and take it, offering the chance to talk if the feelings fit. The key here is comfort, to create an atmosphere of openness and warmth in which both parent and child feel free to approach a hard topic.

What if you miss an opportunity? What if a question's asked and you deflect a thought? Relax. You have a whole childhood in which to talk. Sometime between ball games and play dates, math tests and family reunions, you'll have your conversations. In a way, talking about adoption is like dancing with your child. Sometimes he leads and you follow. Sometimes it's the reverse. And with each conversation, successfully joined, the dance will become more graceful. So go ahead, take that first step.

### DIRECTED PLAY: Following a child's lead

Three- to five-year-olds often use words without having a clear idea of what they mean. The goal with even the youngest child is to create a healthy intimacy. A preschooler feels like the star of his own adoption story when it is presented as something that makes his parents happy. And don't be fooled by their using the right words. Research makes it clear they are sometimes mimicking more than understanding.

Haley, at four, is delicious. All seriousness and concentration, she cooks our breakfast at her toy stove in the backyard—sand oatmeal, pebble popovers, squashed raspberries, pretend vanilla ice cream. Pouring cold water tea from a red flowered pot into thimble-size cups, she serves up her feast as grandly as a queen. I take imaginary sips from my little cup. We have time today to do anything we choose, the sun is shining, and I'm filled with every wonderful, astonishing, miraculous inch of her. It's hard to keep from scooping her up and holding her close. Then she says gravely, "Remember when I came out of Daddy's tummy?"

Curiously, I am not panic-stricken. What do I say? How do I say it? I think, I breathe. I pay attention. I tell myself, "This is not the only chance I will have to talk about adoption."

"Haley, you didn't come out of Daddy's tummy. Only mommies can grow babies inside of their bodies, not daddies. I've been your mommy since you were born, but you were not in my body either. Daddy and I adopted you. Your birthmommy, Ellie, carried you in her body, and when you were ready to be born, you came out of her."

"Nope, your body," Haley insisted. "If I wasn't in Daddy, I was in you."

"I can see how you might have thought that," I said. "Actually, Daddy and I came to get you at the hospital when Ellie gave birth to you. You grew inside your birthmommy, just like all babies do. And when it was time for you to be born, you came out of your birthmommy, just like all babies do. Ellie was sad that she couldn't take you home with her and care for you, but she couldn't. She didn't think she could take care of you in the ways she knew you would need. So she picked us to be your other real mommy and daddy."



forever "

"What did you say when you first saw me?"

"We said, 'How amazing! How wonderful! You are our most important dream come true! We are so happy!' And we wrapped you in your yellow blankie and drove home very, very carefully, right to the place where you were going to be forever. With us, your very real parents!"

"Oh," she said, relaxing against me. "Would you care for some more tea?"

The best way to read children's feelings about adoption is by their actions rather than their words. To know what your child is thinking, play with her. Use dolls, stuffed animals, puppets, scarves, trucks—whatever toys she enjoys making up stories with. Let her be the boss and tell you what your character in the story should do. For example, if she asks you to be a lost puppy, while she is the mother dog, ask her how to do it. Rather than initiating the pretend plot, ask your child if the puppy is scared, or worried, or hungry. Your child will probably be delighted to be in charge and direct your actions.

Follow your child's lead and don't push to give the story a happy ending. You want to learn how she interprets the situation. You may be surprised but try not to seem distressed. Remember, this is a window into your child's thinking at this one moment. If the story is unhappy or anxiety-provoking, come back to it later. Over time you will have opportunities to clarify and expand understanding.

### **SHARE YOUR FEELINGS: Leading by example**

When I picked Jordan up from school that day, I hoped he couldn't see how crummy I felt. During a visit that morning, my aunt had implied that I could never love Jordan as much as I would a child who was born into our family. She talked about blood being thicker than water. I felt hurt and angry. I was doing my best to hide it—afraid my little boy would pick up on it.

"What's wrong, Mom?" he asked.

"Nothing, honey. Don't worry about it."

We drove in silence for a while, me not trusting myself to say more, Jordan seemingly absorbed in his own thoughts. During our long drive home, I had a lot on my mind, and I could tell Jordan was concerned by my silence. I wondered if I should share my feelings with him. Wasn't it up to me to protect him from the hurtful views some people have of adoption and not to burden him with adult concerns? On the other hand, we always asked Jordan to share his own feelings.

"Are you okay, Mom?" he asked again.

"Sometimes it's hard to talk about things, honey, but thank you for asking. Something upsetting happened to me today. I'll try my best to tell you about it, but I'm embarrassed, hurt, angry, and sad all at once. It doesn't have anything to do with you. Someone I thought was close to me said some stupid things about my not being a real mother, and it really hurt my feelings. Some people just don't understand that you are my real son, I guess."

"Oh," he said. A few minutes later he added, "I wonder if it's like how I feel when kids ask me why my real mom didn't want me?" I was astonished.

"Maybe."

"Why didn't my birthmom want me, Mom? Do you think maybe I cried too much?"

Wow, I thought. Jordan had never mentioned this before. With a sigh, I reached over to rub his back.

"Babies are supposed to cry," I said. "Crying is how babies tell us they need something before they can talk. Sometimes when a baby is born, his parents have problems that keep them from being able to take care of him. It's not ever the child's fault."

Jordan and I were quiet the rest of the way home. We held hands across the seat, and we both had a feeling that something important had happened. When we got home, as we were getting out of the car, Jordan said, "I'm glad you told me, Mom. I like it when you tell me how you feel, even if you feel sad."

"Me, too," I said.

One way to take the lead in discussing adoption is to offer your own experiences of being an adoptive parent, both the happy and the sad. Disclosing difficulties often has more impact than sharing only joyous feelings. Kids know it's not easy to talk about the hard stuff, and they feel honored to receive "privileged information." It's important, too, to give permission to express their concerns about birthparents without denying their feelings or trying to fix things. Parents can show that they accept their children's feelings with an empathetic sigh or hug, a soft exclamation, or just by saying "What a way to feel." When parents share painful as well as joyous experiences, children feel free to follow.

### **THE CASUAL COMMENT: Lead by opening topics you think matter**

Another way to lead is by making casual comments and letting them resonate. Your child may not respond to these at all. Nonetheless, by putting them out there, you are saying you are ready to discuss these issues when they arise. Do this often, simply by thinking out loud about things you've read or seen on TV, your child's genetic inheritance, or feelings. Here are some examples:

"You're such a talented pianist, and now you're even composing your own songs. I wonder if someone in your birth family was a musician."

"I always think about your birthmother when it's time for your birthday. I wonder if you think about her, too."

"I read that lots of adopted kids think it's their fault they got placed for adoption."

Adoption is but one aspect of your family's life. Remember, the goal is to create a reasonable balance between talking about adoption and just living daily life. Ask yourself, when was the last time adoption came up? If you can't remember, it's probably time to raise the subject. But none of us is defined by a single feature of our lives. We are parents first, not adoptive parents. Never forget your most important job—creating the close family you dreamed of when you began the journey toward adoption. Life is a gift. Our children are treasures. Cherish them above all.

#### ***When do you lead?***

- + When your intuition tells you to
- + When your child appears sad or contemplative
- + When your child experiences loss
- + On your child's birthdays
- + On Mother's Day and Father's Day
- + Whenever the subject of birthparents comes up in books, films, or conversation
- + Whenever there is an opportunity

#### ***When do you follow?***

- + Whenever kids ask direct questions or make statements about adoption

- + Whenever outsiders ask questions about your family in front of your kids
- + When adoption comes up as a school issue or in sensitive school assignments
- + When hurtful incidents occur

***How do you follow?***

- + Ask your child what happened
- + Ask how it makes her feel
- + Ask when it happened
- + Ask if she is happy with what she said or did
- + Ask if there is anything you can do to help

***Beth Hall and Gail Steinberg are the co-founding directors of Pact, An Adoption Alliance, and the authors of Inside Transracial Adoption.***

## Preparing Children to Answer Questions About Adoption

*Children learn how to manage life by modeling their parents behavior. How you, the parents, respond to questions about your family, about your child's heritage, personal story, family membership, etc. will have a profound impact how your child responds to questions and comments about adoption!*

Children need to feel empowered to choose to answer or to choose not to answer questions regarding their heritage, their adoption, their personal story, etc.

Even well meaning, polite questions and comments from friends, relatives, and/or strangers can be inappropriate and intrusive. Out of curiosity or genuine personal interest many adults say and/or ask things that are either not really their business or that are not appropriate to ask in this setting or at this time. Remember, when you are out in public with your children your first responsibility is to parent your children not to educate others about the joys and validity of adoption. Toddlers and preschoolers often groove on the attention that public questions brings. Still they are being 'paid attention to' because they are or appear to be different from you the parent(s). This very fact can undermine your child's sense of belonging to and with you. Belonging, feeling that you belong and knowing that you belong to and with your parents is one of the cornerstones of attachment. Explaining how and why your child is related to you, how you belong together can undermine your child's very sense of belonging. On an experiential level, if people and things belong together they do not have to be explained, especially in public, to strangers, next to the lettuce! Acting like the parent that you are, by monitoring your responses in your child's best interests, shows the questioner and more importantly your child that you do belong together.

Actively considering if, when and how to answer any and all questions empowers your child choose whether or not to give out personal information; teaches ( by modeling ) your child to be proactive, not reactive to questions and/or comments. Children need to develop the capacity to be proactive in situations where they feel others are being intrusive and in situations where they are being teased.

Please try to recognize both the immediate and the long term effects of answering questions about your family or your child in public.

**Questions to ponder when considering whether or not to respond to questions and/or comments:**

- ⇒ Do I want to give this information to anyone?
- ⇒ Do I want to give this information to this person?
- ⇒ Do I want to give this information out here, e.g. next to the lettuce?
- ⇒ Do I want to give this information out now, for instance answer questions about the adoption process in your children's presence?
- ⇒ Why is this person asking this question, here and now?
- ⇒ What does this person really want to know?
- ⇒ Is it my responsibility to educate this person re: adoption?
- ⇒ If I consider it my responsibility to educate others is this the place and time to do so?
- ⇒ How will my child(ren) perceive my interrupting our time together to respond to these kinds of questions?

Remember, these episodes of questions and comments do not just happen once or even once in awhile. If your child looks or acts "different", different from the norm and/or different from you, you and your child are vulnerable to questions and comments *any time you are out and about*. The damage these questions can do to your child's sense of belonging to and with you and to your child's self-esteem occurs not just from one or two episodes, but from the experience that this *can and will* happen more than once.

## STRENGTHS & NEEDS WORKSHEET

This self-assessment tool is for adoptive parents who are considering adopting a child who has been living with them. In a two-parent family, both parents should complete a worksheet and then compare answers. The worksheet provides ideas to be discussed with the agency social worker during the decision-making process.

	<b>STRENGTHS:</b> To what degree is the statement true?	<b>NEEDS:</b> What remains to be accomplished?
I have discussed the entire placement history of my child with at least one social worker and believe I have all information that is available.		
I have identified several strengths and several potential problems with this adoption.		
I have discussed ways to solve the potential difficulties with those I consider to be family.		
I have all information that is available about this child's birth family and have determined ways to help this child maintain positive connections with his or her roots.		
I have considered levels of "openness" in adoption and have planned for a level of openness that will meet the needs of this child and work for our family.		
I have discussed the difference between attachment and commitment with those I consider to be family. Those close to me understand that I am making a lifetime commitment to a child who may later in life have challenges and difficulties as a result of early experiences.		
This child has a lifebook which I plan to use to help him or her understand the differences between foster care and adoption as well as to help with developmental grieving.		

(Continued on next page)

## STRENGTHS & NEEDS WORKSHEET

(PAGE 2)

	<b>STRENGTHS:</b> To what degree is the statement true?	<b>NEEDS:</b> What remains to be accomplished?
<p>I have considered the ways this child expressed loss earlier in life and have anticipated and planned for ways this child may grieve at the time of adoption and at other important milestones during life (developmental grieving).</p>		
<p>I have planned ways to help this child maintain a tie to his or her cultural, racial, or ethnic roots.</p>		
<p>I have planned ways to talk with other children in the family about this adoption, including ways to help the family understand the differences between foster care and adoption.</p>		
<p>I have planned for the future financial and medical needs of this child and have thoroughly discussed subsidy with at least two social workers.</p>		
<p>I have identified people who will support me if I become discouraged.</p>		
<p>I am pursuing adoption willingly and at this time do not feel coerced by a loved one or the agency.</p>		
<p>I have talked with at least one family who has adopted through the foster care program.</p>		
<p>I have considered this decision for several months and believe that adoption of this child is important for the well being of this child, my family, and myself.</p>		

This worksheet is adapted with permission from material published in *From Foster Parent to Adoptive Parent*, developed by Heather L. Craig-Oldsen, M.S.W., and published by the Child Welfare Institute, 1365 Peachtree Street, N.E., Suite 700, Atlanta, GA 30309, 1988.

## ADOPTION DISRUPTION

### PREVENTION

#### **Adopting parents and case workers as a team can:**

1. Attain the child's complete health, genetic, family history in written form and if possible, orally delivered by past care givers and birth family members. Use video or audiotapes as well as paperwork about placement history, addresses. Include photos and belongings that the child may treasure.
2. Resist the natural tendency to rush into an adoption. Children take longer to adopt parents than vice versa. For some children, resistance to the adoption is their only real power.
3. Realize that parental love, while powerful, will not adequately fit the needs of some children who have fragile backgrounds. Most parental love is conditional on positive responses from their children. These children may not know how to trust or how to return nurturing without giving up their power.
4. Every relationship needs more positive than negative input. Healthy adult relationships require a 5 to 1 praise ratio and children with fragile backgrounds require at least 10 to 1. Praise is crucial in raising these children.
5. Recognizing good behavior helps reinforce normal behavior.
6. In advance of an adoption, get connected to services a child may require and learn how to advocate for those services.
7. Parents should not assume that they correctly understand a child's words. Many children have developed their own code and language that must be learned by parents.
8. Examine realistic expectations of the child and the parents' unique role in this child's life that may vastly differ from day-to-day parenting tasks.
9. Enlarge the definition of extended family to include important people from the child's past whose presence may be a healing connection for the child and who can be enlisted to verbally give permission to the child to join their new adoptive family.
10. Seek out specialized education that fits the child such as alternative schools, home schooling or a school that excels in understanding and serving the educational needs of children who have special needs.
11. Put respite care and childcare into place before adopting. For single parents, create a "tag team" support system.
12. If children are already in the family, carefully observe the child to be adopted in interactions with their potential siblings.

Material used in some parts of this factsheet is gratefully attributed to Rick Tsukuda, a psychotherapist and licensed social worker in Casey Family Services' Post-Adoption Services Program in Hartford, Connecticut.



Thirty Things Adolescent Adoptees Wish They Knew  
About Their Birthparents - But Often Are Afraid To Ask

By Laurie Elliott

**Questions adolescent adoptees have about their birthparents.**

Through working as a court-appointed agent with adoptees in search, I have learned that many older adoptees have nagging questions about their adoptions. They lacked some very basic information about themselves during their growing years, and this lack affected their sense of identity.

To help other adoptees avoid the same adoption-related identity issues, I made a list of the things that the adoptees I worked with most wanted to know about themselves, their birth parents, and their adoption circumstances. I recommend that adoptive parents try to gather as many answers to these questions as they can when their children are young and the information is easier to find.

I have been busy gathering information to share with my own nine children, and it has offered them a piece of who they are.

I also encourage parents to share this information with their child before adolescence to promote a stronger sense of identity and to avoid issues later on. Information that would be matter-of-fact to children at a young age becomes a crisis if they're older and don't know.

1. What are my birth parents' first and middle names?
2. Where was I born (hospital and city)?
3. What time was I born?
4. Were there any complications at the time of my birth?
5. Did my birth mother see me or hold me?
6. Who else was present at my birth?
7. What were the circumstances surrounding my placement?
8. Did my birth mother pick my adoptive family?
9. Did my birth mother know anything about my adoptive family? (Did she meet my adoptive parents?)
10. What did my birth mother name me?
11. Does anyone else in my birth mother's family know about me?
12. Who knows what?
13. How old were my birth parents when I was born?
14. Were my birth parents married when I was born?
15. Where did my birth parents go to high school? College?
16. What kind of students were they?
17. What religious backgrounds do my birth parents have?
18. What is my ethnic/racial background?

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19. Did my birth parents marry each other or anyone else after I was born? Do I have any biological siblings? Do they know about me?
20. Did I go to a foster home after leaving the hospital?
21. What was my foster family's name? How long was I there?
22. What do my birth mother and birth father look like? May I have a picture of them? Are my birth parents still alive?
23. Do my birth parents love me?
24. Do my birth parents think about me? Did they ever regret their decisions?
25. Do my birth parents have any special talents, hobbies, or interests?
26. What traits did I inherit from my birth parents? Personality? Looks? Talents?
27. Did my birth parents write to me over the years (journal/letters in a file)?
28. Are there any medical concerns I should know about?
29. If I called my birth parents or wanted to meet them some day, what would they do?
30. What should I call my birth parents?

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*Real Moms* is a newsletter by and for adoptive mothers. Support, information, encouragement, and networking for domestic adoption are offered to adoptive and prospective adoptive mothers.

**Philadelphia Department of Human Services  
Children and Youth Division**

**What Are the Comparisons Between Adoption and Subsidized Permanent Legal Custodianship (SPLC)?**

Adoption and SPLC are intended to allow caregivers to make a lifelong commitment to children who cannot live with their birth parents. Although there may be some differences between the two commitments, DHS encourages adoptive parents AND subsidized permanent legal custodians to take these commitments seriously, with the understanding that they are entering into a lifelong relationship with the child/ren.

DHS also encourages all caregivers to review and understand the similarities and differences between SPLC and adoption before making a final decision. Even if SPLC appears to be the right decision, State law requires DHS and the Family Court to rule out adoption as an option and understand the reasons why it is not in the best interests for child/ren in care. Thus, it is very important for caregivers to discuss these options thoroughly with caseworkers, attorneys, child/ren, and other family member before making a final decision about what is best for them.

	Adoption	SPLC
<b>LEGAL STATUS</b>		
<b>Birth parents rights</b>	<p>Birth parents voluntarily give up their rights or the court has terminated rights involuntarily. Adoption is a permanent, lifelong, legal relationship</p> <p>Birth parents do not have right to make any future decisions regarding the care, custody and supervision of the child.</p> <p>Birth parents can not ask the court for consideration to regain custody of the child</p>	<p>Birth parent/s keep certain rights. These rights include: visitation, consent to adoption, financial support, and the right to claim the body of a deceased child. SPLC can still be established for children where parental rights have already been given up or terminated if adoption is ruled out.</p> <p>Birth parents can ask ("petition") the Domestic Relations Court to regain custody of the child if parental rights have not been terminated</p>
<b>Caregiver Rights</b>	<p>The adoptive parent/s is given all the rights and responsibilities that once belonged to the birth parent/s.</p> <p>When the adoptive parents are married, both spouses must adopt. If spouses are separated, the spouse not adopting must consent to his/her spouse adopting as a single parent</p>	<p>Custodian is given legal and physical responsibility for the child and assumes the rights of care, custody, and supervision.</p> <p>When married either one or both spouses may be named custodian.</p> <p>If the birth parent/s' parental rights are terminated the custodian may legally adopt the child but without DHS's help.</p>

SPLC and Adoption comparison chart (rev 05-24-03)

	Adoption	SPLC
<b>Legal Documentation</b>	<p>The final Decree of Adoption finalizes the adoption.</p> <p>The Adoption Subsidy Agreement is made between DHS and the adoptive parent/s and includes all relevant information about the subsidies.</p>	<p>The SPLC Court Order finalizes the SPLC and includes information about visitation.</p> <p>The SPLC Subsidy Agreement is made between DHS and the caregiver and includes all relevant information about the SPLC, including subsidy.</p>
<b>Decision Making for Child/ren</b>	<p>All decisions are made by the adoptive parent/s.</p>	<p>Major decisions regarding school, medical treatment, and consent for most other major life decisions are made by the custodian.</p> <p>Birth parent/s keep important rights, e.g., visitation and consent to adoption when parental rights have not been given up or terminated.</p>
<b>Relationship with the Birth Parent/s</b>	<p>The adoptive parent/s have the right to determine if the child will have any relationship with the birth parent/s.</p>	<p>If the birth parent/s' rights have not been terminated, they have the right to visit the child unless a court orders no visits. The Court when issuing SPLC will specify how the visitation will occur and how often. Birth parent/s also have the right to ask ("petition") the court to have the child returned to them.</p>
<b>Financial Assistance</b>	<p>The adoptive parent/s, whether receiving a subsidy or not, are responsible for financial support of the child. Subsidies are available for the adoption of DHS children who meet certain eligibility requirements at the same rate as the foster care payments. Almost all DHS children meet these eligibility requirements.</p> <p>Birth parents have no financial responsibility for the care of the child.</p>	<p>A custodian, whether receiving a subsidy or not, is responsible for the financial support of the child. Subsidies are available for children who meet certain eligibility requirements at the same rate as the foster care payments. The custodian is responsible for financial support of the child until the child reaches age 18 or the court ends the SPLC.</p> <p>If the birth parents' rights have not been terminated they can be held responsible for contributing to the financial support of the child.</p>

SPLC and Adoption comparison chart (rev 05-24-03)

	Adoption	SPLC
<b>Duration of subsidy</b>	The adoption subsidy lasts until the child is 18 but the relationship is life long.	The SPLC subsidy lasts until the child is 18 but the relationship is life long.
<b>Amount of subsidy</b>	Adoption assistance payments are the same as the monthly foster care board payment received while the child was in foster care.	SPLC monthly payments are the same as the foster care payment received while the child was in foster care.
<b>Annual redetermination of subsidy</b>	DHS must conduct a review every year ("annual determination") that there have been no changes in the family's situation that would affect eligibility of the adoption subsidy i.e. whether or not the child is still living with the adoptive parents.	DHS must conduct a review every year ("annual determination") that there have been no changes in the family's situation that would affect eligibility of the SPLC subsidy, i.e. whether or not the child is still living with the custodian or whether the child is now receiving some additional income, such as SSI.
<b>Eligibility for Medicaid</b>	Children receiving an adoption subsidy are automatically eligible to receive Pennsylvania Medical Assistance. In addition, if the family moves to another state and the child was IV-E eligible (federal funding) while a foster child, the child will be eligible for medical assistance in the new state.	Children receiving an SPLC subsidy are automatically eligible to receive Pennsylvania Medical Assistance.
<b>Eligibility for Other DHS Services</b>	Adoption is a permanent commitment to the child. Families needing services or support to care for the child would contact specialized agencies in their community or the DHS prevention division.	SPLC is a permanent commitment to the child. Families needing services or support to care for the child would contact specialized agencies in their community or the DHS prevention division.
<b>Child's Legal Name</b>	The adoptive parent/s determine the child's legal name.	The child retains his/her own legal last name.

	Adoption	SPLC
<b>Inheritance</b>	An adopted child has all of the same rights as birth children when the adoptive parent/s does not have a will. Otherwise, inheritance rights are established through a valid will as they are for birth children.	The child has no rights of inheritance from the permanent legal custodian unless the child has been included in the permanent legal custodian's will.
<b>Consent of the Child</b>	A child who is 12 years of age or older must consent to his/her own adoption.	There is no legal requirement that the child of any age consents to the SPLC; however, the wishes of the child must be taken into consideration.
<b>Death of A Caregiver or Termination of Adoption/SPLC</b>	A child adopted with adoption assistance remains eligible for adoption assistance when he/she is orphaned due to the death of his/her adoptive parent/s or when a court terminates the adoptive parent/s parental rights. He or she can continue to receive adoption assistance if adopted by someone else.	SPLC is not transferable to another. If another potential permanent legal custodian needs subsidies to support the child, the child must be declared dependent and in DHS custody for at least 6 months before a new permanent legal custodian can be appointed and new subsidies received.
<b>Returning a Child to DHS</b>	An adoptive child would have to be found by the court to be abused, neglected or dependent in order to have DHS again assume legal responsibility for the child.	A child living with a custodian would have to be found by the court to be abused, neglected or dependent in order for DHS to again assume legal responsibility for the child.
<b>Court Roles</b>	The Adoption branch of the Family Court is responsible for finalizing the Adoption. Once the Adoption is finalized, there is no right to request a modification.	The Dependency Court is responsible for establishing the SPLC Order. After the order is established, the case is transferred to the Domestic Relations (DR) Court. The DR court must hear any petition to modify or terminate the SPLC Order. If the custodian wishes to adopt the child, the case is heard in Adoption Branch of the Family Court.

**ADOPTION TERMINOLOGY**

Adapted from the work of the Parenthesis Post Adoption Program,  
Columbus, Ohio, 1986

Certain adoption-related terminology evokes negative feelings and should be avoided. Below are suggested alternatives that communicate the same information in more positive ways.

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Birthparent (father, mother)	Real parent
Biological (parent, child, ancestry)	Natural parent
Woman (lady) who gave birth	
Adopted person	Adopted child (when speaking of an adult)
Adoptee	
Adult Adoptee	
Adoption Triad	
Adoption Triangle	
Adoption plan was made for...	Adopted out
The baby joined the family	Put up for adoption
The older child moved in with his/her family	Given away
An adoption was arranged for...	Given up
He/she was placed	
Birthchild	Their own child
	Their real children
To opt for, to take on, to choose, to continue parenting	Keeping

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Born outside of marriage Born to a single person (Divorced Single , Never married, Unwed mother)	Illegitimate child Bastard Unwanted child
Termination of parental rights; Unable to continue parenting (older child) Court termination	Gave up for adoption
Made an adoption plan Legally released Voluntary release	Gave away
My child	Adopted (when it is used constantly, it can become a label)
The waiting child Child with special needs Child available for adoption	Hard to place child
Search Reunion Making contact	Finding one's real family Locating one's parents

- Language is important in describing adoption.
- Adoptees are sensitive to feeling different.
- We want to try to avoid negative terms and use less judgmental language.
- How is language used in your own family? What does Grandma say? Peers? Outsiders?
- Help to educate yourself and others to routinely use positive and constructive language