



**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- Read about the importance of self care
- Read a PARC Family Worker's thoughts about the impact of trauma.
- Get an adopted youth's thoughts on holiday survival.
- Connect with PARC on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

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## Self Care: Avoiding Compassion Fatigue

By: Maggie White

When you adopt a child from the foster care system, you know you're expanding your family, you assume there will be a few challenges along the way and you expect that your child endured some trauma during their early life. So you spend time learning how to help your child acclimate to your family and do what you can to help your child heal.

What you may not have known is that you need care, too.

Just like secondhand smoke, secondhand trauma can effect you. Listening about the trauma that occurred to your child, feeling tremendous empathy for the pain your child endured before he or she was in your family, dealing with the difficult behav-

iors, and seeing the impact trauma has on your child's daily life, can lead to emotional duress for you.



**It's important that parents take time for themselves.**

All parents get tired from time to time, but compassion fatigue can lead to PTSD-like symptoms and can inhibit your daily life. Rachel

Remen, author of *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, wrote "The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as realistic as expecting to be able to walk through water and not get wet."

To prevent compassion fatigue, you have to make self care a priority. It may seem difficult to find the time or appropriate childcare. That's why it's important to build your village. Family and friends will likely be your first line of support, but you can also connect with other adoptive families through support groups — they may be some of your most qualified sources of respite care.

If you feel that caring for your child is overwhelming for others

## Adoption Subsidy Redetermination

During October, DHS and Judson Center's PARC program sent out information regarding Michigan's Adoption Subsidy Redetermination program. This redetermination is an opportunity for the subsidy office to review your family's situation to see if you may qualify for a higher adoption subsidy rate.

If you were interested in applying for redetermination, a letter of intent was due to the subsidy office by November 1st. If you have missed this deadline, please contact us at 810-732-8510 or call your subsidy representative. It may not be

too late!

If you did submit the letter of intent, the subsidy office will send you a full application packet by January 1st, 2015. If, after receiving the packet, you have any questions about how to complete it, please call us. We're happy to help!

The subsidy redetermination program is not required. If you are satisfied with your current subsidy rate, you do not have to do anything — your adoption subsidy will continue as is.

## Understand Your Child's Behavior by Understanding Their History



Thomas Green,  
PARC Worker

By: Thomas Green, MS

Let me preface this article by stating that most childhood experiences are positive. Some... not so much.

When young children experience or witness a traumatic event, some adults may say "They're too young to understand, so it's probably better if we don't talk to them about it." However, young children are affected by traumatic events, even though they may not understand what happened (NCTSN, 2014). So what can you as a parent do that will benefit your children?

You might consider reflecting on your own childhood experiences, how you cope with traumatic memories, and how those involvements shaped the person you are today. Children often cope through emotional outbursts, aggressiveness and sometimes shutting down. There are specific considerations leading to these behaviors such as genetics, poor pre-natal care, and abuse and neglect.

### Genetic Possibilities

There's really no way around it. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH, 2013), Scientists recognize that many psychiatric disorders tend to run in families, suggesting potential genetic roots. In contrast, ongoing research indicates that children can display behaviors of these disorders as a result of traumatic

experiences. Both perspectives should be explored. Since most personal information related to birth parents is sealed, you may connect with the county clerk's office in which the adoption occurred and request an intermediary. This is a third party given authority to review these files and communicate with you.

### Poor Prenatal Care

Prenatal care is crucial during the first trimester of pregnancy. The central nervous system is undergoing extreme developmental changes and is susceptible to teratogens or toxins entering the birth mother's blood stream. These include alcohol usage, drug and prescription medication abuse, smoking and domestic violence. It is well documented that alcohol abuse during pregnancy causes irreversible brain damage. Alcohol's effects target the facial features of the child and the midline of the brain, more specifically the fibers that connect the two sides of the brain. These fibers are responsible for pathway connections between the right (emotional) side and the left (logical) side. These exchanges are crucial in order to recognize consequences and cause and effect. Children affected by poor prenatal care can demonstrate cognitive, psychological and emotional disturbance.

### Abuse and Neglect

In his Theory of Human Moti-

vation, Maslow identifies 5 basic human needs such as: Physiological needs for food and water. Safety needs including health and protection. Belonging, such as friendship and intimacy. The desire to feel respected and valued produces Esteem. Finally Self-actualization produces motivation to live to one's potential. When these needs are not met, through neglect or abuse, it can lead to trauma-related behaviors and cause your child to have trouble attaching to or trusting adults.

So, what does all this mean? We know our brains are sculpted by our early experiences. We also know that a marvelous human trait is resilience. No one will doubt that you must be flexible in raising your children; flexible in schedules, requirements and with expectations. Hardiness...you know how you anticipate the return of Mums in the fall and Daffodils in the spring. They are hardy and able to weather the elements, much like you and your family. Finally, resilience is strength. Not Super Hero strength, but emotional potency. You derive this from your mate, your children, and members of the greater community. For any questions, comments or concerns I invite you to reach out to your regional Post Adoption Resource Center.

*"Our brains are sculpted by our early experiences. Maltreatment is a chisel that shapes a brain to contend with strife, but at the cost of deep, enduring wounds."*

--Teicher,  
2000, p. 67

# Self Care cont.

or that they just can't do it, teach them how! Help others learn how to care for your child by inviting them to spend time with your child when you're home.

Then schedule time for you. Go on dates nights to keep your relationship strong, find individual time to do things you enjoy — even if it's just a quick half hour break for a cup of coffee, incorporate exercise into your life as that's an ideal way to burn off stress, and spend some child-free time with friends. Once your children are comfortable and

feel safe with another caregiver, you may even be able to schedule a mini-vacation for a day or two.

Self care is not frivolous. Self care is not selfish. Self care is not putting your needs before your child's. It's an important part of ensuring that you're an emotionally healthy parent who is capable of caring for your child.

Read more about compassion fatigue, or secondary traumatic stress here: [www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress](http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress)

## A New Year for PARC

On October 1st, the start of the new fiscal year, there were some changes in the way Post Adoption Services are covered.

In addition to Region 6 (Genesee, Lapeer, Sanilac, Tuscola, Huron, Macomb, and St. Clair counties), Judson Center also manages Region 5 which covers much of the lower belt of the state. As of October 1st, a few counties that were previously part of Region 5 — Berrien, Cass and VanBuren — switched to Region 4 which is managed by Bethany Christian Services.

This change will not effect Region 6 families. If you have any questions, please contact us at 810-732-8510.

# Youth Corner: Holiday Survival

By Alex Vink

When I was first adopted, I loved winter break because there was no school and Christmas was coming soon. Even though I was happy and excited I kept going off on my mom and never really knew why. I just felt angry and even little things upset me. My mom was upset all the time because I was always throwing tantrums and, for some reason, when she was upset it just made me more angry.

My mom says that the holidays are hard for a lot of people. If you're like I used to be — angry and upset when you should feel happy — try these two tips:

- Replace the bad with good. What I mean is, replace bad behaviors with something that's okay to do. When I used to get upset, I'd try being quiet and tapping my leg to get rid of some of that extra energy. Then I'd play basketball or go

for a run to burn off steam.

- Tell your parents you need some time. My mom likes to talk about everything and I don't always want to. Instead of getting mad, I've learned to ask for some time before we talk.

***“Replace bad behaviors with something that's okay to do.”***



**Alex Vink, 17**

# Connect With PARC

For resources, news, inspiration and up-to-the-minute information about PARC events, you can connect with us online.



Search for Judson Center PARC



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## PARC Region 6

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[www.parc-judson.org](http://www.parc-judson.org)



# Adoptive Family Connections Meetings, Region 6

## Macomb County Adoptive Family Connections Meeting

The Macomb group meets on the 4th Wednesday of every month from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. at Judson Center's Warren location. Join this supportive group of adoptive parents to share your joys and your challenges with people who truly get it. Often, we invite guest speakers in to talk about adoption-appropriate topics or we hold a short training session for on parenting, trauma or another related subject. Dinner and childcare is provided. For more information or to RSVP please email Maggie\_White@judsoncenter.org.

## Lapeer County Adoptive Family Connections Meeting

Join PARC and the NALO Therapy Center for this Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents Support Group. We all need a space to honestly share our trials and successes. Please join us... and help your family grow stronger! This group meets on the second Monday of each month from 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. at Nalo's offices in Lapeer. Dinner and childcare is provided. For more information or to RSVP please email Jonathan\_Albert@judsoncenter.org.

**For a complete list of upcoming events, please visit [www.parc-judson.org/Calendar](http://www.parc-judson.org/Calendar)**