



Region 5 Meetings and Support Groups

Build connections with and get support from others who truly understand!

In addition to adult meetings, PARC youth groups for older children and childcare for younger ones are available at most meetings! Please RSVP to Tracy_Kapusansky@judsoncenter.org.

New! Jackson Family Connections Meeting

Meets from 6-8 pm the 3rd Thursday of each month and starts with a potluck dinner; please bring a dish to pass if you are able. Location: Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1505 W. Michigan Ave., Jackson, 49202

New! Lunch at the PARC

Meets from 12-1 pm the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Bring a brown bag lunch; we'll provide drinks! Youth groups/childcare are not provided, but very young children may attend if you can watch them. Location: Judson Center, 3840 Packard Rd., Ste. 170, Ann Arbor, 48108

Brighton Family Connections Meeting

Meets from 6:30-8:30 pm the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month, except 12/22. Potluck dinner to start the meeting; please bring a dish to pass if you are able. Location: 2 | 42 Community Church, 7526 Grand River Ave., Brighton, 48114

Fabulous Foster and Adoption Group

Meets from 6-8 pm the 1st Monday of each month and starts with a potluck; please bring a dish to pass if you are able. Offered in conjunction with the Fabulous Foster and Adoption Group. Nominal fee for childcare. Location: Summers-Knoll Elementary School, 2203 Platt Rd., Ann Arbor, 48108

Kalamazoo County Support Group

Meets from 6:30-8:30 pm the 4th Tuesday of each month. Offered in conjunction with the Adoptive Family Support Network. (AFSN contact sgarcia@afsn.org). Location: St. Ambrose Church, 1628 E. G Ave., Parchment, 49004

For a complete list of events, visit the calendar page on our website. Additional activities and resources are listed there as well!

<http://www.parc-judson.org/calendar>



PARC NEWSLETTER

FOR ADOPTIVE AND GUARDIANSHIP FAMILIES

Region 5

Volume 14

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Developing Emotional Intimacy in Your Family

By Thomas Green, PARC Worker

In her article "Intimacy: The Art of Relationships," Lori Gordon, a family therapist, advocates for the importance of intimacy in our lives, relationships, and families. She wrote, "Intimacy... is based on a deep biological need." Gordon also reflected on how those she observed "needed support and affection, the opportunity to express the range and intensity of their emotions without judgment." Adoptive families have these needs as well. As Gordon felt in her work with troubled teens, it can be "remarkable to discover their depth of need, their depth of pain over the lack of empathy from significant people in their lives," and we know many adopted children have experienced these same things.

Adoptive families I've worked with have shared several tips with me that they have used to enhance emotional intimacy in their families. Hopefully the following tips will help you accomplish this goal in your family, too.

Create opportunities for conversation. As you know, telling someone to "talk to me" doesn't work most of the time, especially with teens. Instead, create ways to start conversation. When possible, pass around a Post It note pad to members and ask them to write down something they would like to talk about during family meals. If you need to "prime the pump," visit the site <http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/communication/family-discussions> for ideas. You can then select themes or topics, write them on small pieces of paper, and place them in a small jar or box on the dinner table. During the meal, someone pulls out a slip and addresses the topic. Each member is then encouraged to respond. To help with this process, create a "no judgment zone" and be sure all family members utilize effective listening skills.

Pursue family meals together. I know we're all busy, and sometimes we're too busy to get everyone together for a meal.



Family meals create an opportunity for connection

Family dinners can be elusive, but they have a big pay off when they occur. Use your creativity to entice all family members to participate. Consider having a theme for the meal, such as cultural awareness, school spirit, or take suggestions from the family. Keep in mind that this will take advanced planning. It may be a fun way to create opportunities for conversation, too. A website to spark your imagination is <http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/4707/family-dinner>. Also, don't restrict your family meal times to just evenings. Lunch or breakfast may work better for your family. Be flexible!

Date nights. This one should be required. Kids aren't going to ask for it, so you will need to take the lead on this one. Families report that these opportunities provide for bonding and relationship building. Date nights don't need to be expensive. BOGO (buy one, get one) meal deals or window shopping are ideas. Kids also tend to talk more when riding in the car, so you can use those times when you are out as an opportunity for conversation. A date night doesn't always mean going out either, so ideas for them are only limited by your imagination. Be sure to make every effort to reach each of your children, too, since they all have different preferences and emotional needs.

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for Adoptive &
Guardian Families!



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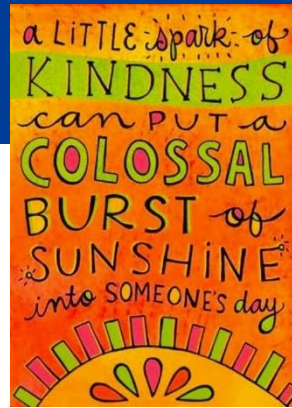


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In Association With





Random Acts of Kindness

By Julie Miller, PARC Intern

At this time of year, the stress of gift giving can weigh us down with thoughts about what we need to buy, what we can afford, and what we'll have to wrap. Presents are also on the minds of our children as they anxiously await surprises. Too often, though, we can forget one of the oldest lessons about gifts: the best ones are free. From an unexpected, much-needed hug, to someone who we know is busy spending time with us, to a stranger opening a door and wishing us a good day, each one is a little gift. They are also an expression of kindness--no matter how big or small they are!



Sharing "Random Acts of Kindness," or RAKing, is very popular at this time of year, and it's something your family may enjoy. It teaches children the importance of thinking about others, which helps develop empathy. RAKs are usually done anonymously, so they also teach about selflessness in helping others. They're a fun activity that can show children how great it can be to give rather than receive as well, which is another great lesson. And the best part? They can be done year round!

There are many ways to RAK and most are free or low cost. Some people like to spontaneously do things, like helping someone carry groceries, baking cookies for a friend, offering a stranger a compliment, or anonymously shoveling snow from a neighbor's driveway. Others like to leave a note with an item saying "You've been RAKed!" that asks the person who received the kindness to do something for someone else. Some ideas for RAKing include leaving new pencils on a table at school, taping an envelope with quarters to a vending machine for a free treat, sticking a flower under a windshield wiper (weather dependent!), hiding a travel size package of wipes in a diaper changing station, placing an extra blanket (or food/hygiene supplies) in an area where there are homeless people, or leaving packaged candy in unexpected public places. The most fun part of RAKing is coming up with creative ideas for others!

Families can also make a game of charting how many RAKs each member does or discussing a daily one done each night over dinner. If you would like to track your acts online, kindnesscards.org sells tracking cards. When an item is left, leave a tracking card with it and hope the recipient will then enter details in at the website and re-use the card for his/her own RAK. It's a way to watch your kindness being paid forward. boomboomcards.com also sells cards that give RAK challenges and then encourage story sharing about the challenges on their site. But remember: you don't need to spend money to RAK! It's about giving of yourself to make someone else smile. Some families do choose to spend higher amounts on them, though--like by picking up the of tab of someone behind you at McDonald's or Starbucks, anonymously paying a dinner or grocery bill, or even hiding cash at a store or in a library book for someone else to find.

Randomactsofkindness.org has lots of ideas to get you started, and Pinterest has many as well. If you enjoy

RAKing, be sure to watch online for details on websites about Random Acts of Kindness Week heading our way in February. Each day we are given ways to show kindness to others and spread some happiness, so what could you do for someone today? Smiles are contagious; help to create them and pass them along!



Ideas for RAKing and free downloadable materials can be found at randomactsofkindness.org!

Upcoming Event!

We are pleased to announce that we are planning our first PARC Parent Conference! In order to schedule speakers and trainings on the topics that are most important to our families, please take a moment to fill out our quick, online survey to let us know the issues you would like to learn more about at the conference. We appreciate your input! <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/V99D7DD>

Quote of the Month:

"Family is not an important thing. It's everything."

— Michael J. Fox



Celebrating National Adoption Day & Month Including a Reflection on the Power of Adoption

In November, we joined our PARC families in celebrating National Adoption Day and Month. Our monthly youth groups made "Family Dinner Question Jars" to take home and share with their families. We had a great time making them, and the group members were able to ask and answer a variety of fun questions with one another. We also shared our thoughts on what this month means to each of us. We hope all our families were able to reflect during this time on the ways adoption has touched their lives--and how it has also made each of your families even more special!



The Power of Adoption

The choice to adopt a child provides that child with a chance to reach his or her potential. Every child deserves to be loved. Every child deserves to call some place home. Every child deserves to be someone's baby. When you provide a child with a stable home, family, and parents, newfound opportunities are on the horizon. Adoption is the answer to someone's prayer, and adoptive parents are the miracle a child is waiting for. And that is powerful.

By Brandy Woods, PARC Worker

Developing Emotional Intimacy - Continued

For more ideas visit <http://inspiredbyfamilymag.com/2012/10/10/3-family-date-nights-ideas/>. And don't neglect parent date nights either. Parents need to cultivate their emotional intimacy as well. Maybe the kids could recommend date night ideas for you. Hmmmm...

Listen. According to Rachel Naomi Remen, "The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is attention." We can't listen actively if we are busy talking, so it's important to "stop talking." Let the other person finish his/her thoughts. Once he/she is finished, you may need to ask for clarification by rephrasing what was said. This process will ensure that you've fully understood what the other person was trying to say. It is important for you to be calm throughout the communication process as well. Listening also involves a level of *empathy*. Empathy is having the ability to see a situation from another person's point of view. Listening effectively will build bridges rather than walls as you seek to create emotional intimacy with your family. Find more details at <http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html#ixzz3r1VRXeJp>.

As the new year approaches, consider taking at least one of these strategies to either start or continue building emotional intimacy in your family.



Help spread the word!

PARC now serves families and youth twenty-one years of age and younger who were:

- Adopted from Michigan's foster care system OR
- Adopted in Michigan through an international adoption OR
- Direct consent/direct placement adoption OR
- Placed in a guardianship through Michigan's foster care system and are eligible for guardianship assistance through the MDHHS adoption subsidy office

Youth and families must require supportive services to ensure their on-going stability as a family unit, and the child's adoption must be finalized.