



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Learn how to help your child with grief
- Get ready for the Warrior Moms Pajama Party!
- Discover how to create a Volcano Room for your child
- Get an adopted youth's thoughts on dealing with stress.

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Living With Loss: How to Help Your Child Grieve

By: Rachael Vaughn

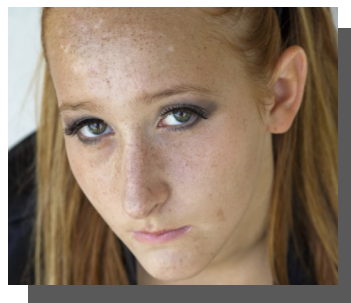
The American Academy of Pediatrics says, "Assume all children who have been adopted or fostered have experienced trauma."

Understanding grief and loss is essential when parenting children who have experienced trauma. During the time before they were adopted, they may have lost a primary caregiver, siblings or their sense of self.

Adoption Learning Process says, "It is natural for adopted children to grieve the life and family they never knew." With all of that in mind, it's important for adoptive parents to understand the grieving process. This allows the parent to be empathetic to a child who is showing signs of grief.

The way children experience

grief and loss can best be understood if we divide up the developmental stages. Keep in mind that developmental age and bio-



"It is natural for adopted children to grieve the life ... they never knew."

logical age are not necessarily the same. Children ages 3 to 6 tend to be curious about loss and may

ask a lot of questions. Answer these questions honestly. When they know the truth, it often keeps them from engaging in "magical thinking." Children in this age group are naturally egocentric. They may think that they caused the loss of a loved one. They may also blame themselves if the birth parent was simply unable to care for them. Characteristics of grief seen in children 3 to 6 are changes in eating and sleeping habits, worries of abandonment and regression in previously learned skills (potty training, thumb sucking, etc.). Keeping a regular routine is helpful.

We start to see a division between boys and girls in the 6-12 developmental age range.

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Warrior Moms Pajama Party

Healing Complex Kid's is gearing up to hold their second annual Warrior Mom's Pajama Party. The pajama party is for moms and caregivers of child with diagnoses such as ADD/ADHD, RAD, FASD, Autism spectrum disorder, sensory issues, anxiety, depression, learning disabilities and more.

The Warrior Mom's Pajama Party brings women together in an environment where they have the ability to exhibit self care and share recovery ideas for their children and family and information with others — and leave renewed and

rejuvenated after 24 hours away. The event takes place April 25th and April 26th at the Colombiere Conference Center in Clarkston. Register now to enjoy the respite and take in the inspirational talks, get a massage, enjoy a bonfire, and participate in many fun and relaxing activities.

To register, go to www.healingcomplexkids.org. If you're currently working with a PARC worker, be sure to contact them before registering for additional information.

Volcano Rooms and Calm Down Boxes



Rachael Vaughn,
PARC Intern

By: Rachael Vaughn

Some feelings associated with grief are hard to put into words. A parent can feel helpless if a child or teen is dealing with these difficult, complex emotions. SandCastles Grief Support is a Michigan-based program that provides nurturing environments for children and teens to grieve. They use something called the Volcano Room when children need to explore their more extreme emotions.

A Volcano Room has padded floors and walls and an abundance of pillows and other soft objects. In this room, children can express intense feelings without getting in trouble or feeling judged. They are free to

use loud voices and physical movement as coping mechanisms.

If you have an extra room in your home, think about creating your own Volcano Room to help your children deal with grief. You'll need some gymnastic padding for the walls and the floor and some extra pillows. If using a whole room is not an option, try making a "Volcano Box" or a "Calm Down Box." The box could include sensory items like stress balls, Play-Doh and/or bubble wrap. It can be as simple or elaborate as you want.

If you'd like to put a time limit on using the Volcano Room or Box, consider making a Mind Jar with your children. A Mind Jar is

a meditation tool used to calm all the overwhelming thoughts in a child's head, similar to a snow globe. After the jar has been shaken, the glitter inside will slowly sink back to the bottom. When it has finally settled, the child's time is up. Find instructions by searching "Mind Jar" online. Volcano Rooms, Volcano Boxes and Mind Jars will all help your children begin to self-regulate and recognize their own emotions.

For a Volcano Room handout, contact Jonathan Albert at jonathan_albert@judsoncenter.org. Reach SandCastles at (313) 874-6881 to access their grief support services.

A "Volcano Room" or "Calm Down Box" can help your grieving child deal with complex emotions in a safe and healthy way.



Volcano room photo from
www.diaperbank.org



Mind Jar photo from
www.herewearetogether.com

Living With Loss, cont.

Boys experiencing grief tend to show aggression and be destructive, whereas girls may become clingy. Try to put their emotions into words so they can become attuned to their own actions. For example, rather than criticizing their anger, you might say, "You must be feeling pretty frustrated right now, and I completely understand that."

Teenagers (13-18) have the same capacity as adults to understand loss. However, their brains are not fully developed, so they will often feel conflicted. They may go back

and forth between childlike emotional dependence and trying to be strong and brave like an adult. Let your teen know it is normal to feel confused. Tell them it is okay to be emotional.

It's possible that triggering experiences can cause an adopted child to re-experience grief from an earlier age. Encourage your children to write, draw or talk about past events as a means of reflection. Over time, this will help children to healthily come to terms with loss and move forward. It's up to the parents to support children through the grieving process.

Trauma Tip 1: Dealing With Defiance

By: Stacey Goodson, Bethany Christian Services

- 1) Why is the child acting defiant? What are they afraid of? Fear is almost always the underlying reason.
- 2) Keep kids involved in activities (sports, clubs, etc). This gives them an avenue to express their frustration.
- 3) Spend time with them. The child may be acting defiant in an effort to get attention.
- 4) Pick the battles! Is the discussion necessary or can it be put to the side?

Youth Corner: Dealing With Stress

By Jake Kapusansky

Hi. My name is Jake. I am an adoptee and I have a lot of stress from homework, siblings and friends. One reason I get stressed is from people cracking jokes. I find it frustrating because it is funny for a few minutes but then it gets old and it hurts. Here are some ways that I get rid of stress, maybe they'll help you too.

#1 – Exercise - I always exercise (jumping jacks, push-ups, running, and sports).

#2 – Breath in through the nose, out through the mouth.

#3 – Yell! However, my parents don't like it when I do that, so go to a secluded spot where no one can hear you.

#4 – Talk to your school counselor. I've talked to mine and he

says that feeling like this is totally normal in all teens and a lot of us get stressed so don't feel that it is unnatural.

That's all. I hope you get something out of this.

"A lot of us get stressed so don't feel that it is unnatural."



Jake Kapusansky

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



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PARC — Helping One Family at a Time
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 on parenting, trauma or another related subject. On Wednesday, March 24th the topic will be "Managing Stress as a Parent." Future topics are to be decided. Dinner and childcare is provided. For more information or to RSVP please email Thomas_Green@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