



## Building Resilient Families Conference Review

On Saturday, March 2, Judson Center PARC had a great turn out for our conference, Building Resilient Families. Adoptive, Kinship, Guardianship, Foster Parents and Professionals spent a full day learning ways to support our children and families. The keynote speaker was Lauren Peabody, LMSW. She is an experienced therapist specializing in family therapy, play therapy, internal family systems and attachment therapy.

The response from all who attended was overwhelming positive about Ms. Peabody's presentation. It went right to the heart of what we need to know in order to build resilience in our families and help our children heal from the trauma of a disrupted attachment in their past. The presentation covered the effects of trauma on brain development, and how to understand behavior. She taught that the parent can control the environment, but not the child. Part of that is for the parent to use strategies to stay regulated themselves. Ms. Peabody encouraged parents to journal, practice mindfulness and utilize empathy in order to support our children in becoming calm and regulated.

Ms. Peabody addressed common behaviors related to trauma, such as lying, defiance, stealing and aggression, and why consequences are often shame producing and ineffective. Ms. Peabody provided strategies for building connection, creating felt safety and using discipline as teaching to improve the behavior and build resilience.

The information provided a new way of viewing challenging behaviors, as well as practical strategies to support our children in healing.

Participants enjoyed a delicious lunch together, and had the opportunity to connect with other parents and professionals. Afterward, there were a variety of breakout sessions from experienced presenters including topics such as Therapeutic Parenting, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Adverse Childhood Experiences and several others. The conference was a great day for caregivers to connect, learn and recharge, before returning to the important work we do of building resilience in our families.

PARC hosts several conferences and trainings throughout the year. These conferences are always free of charge and geared to provide helpful information for adoptive and guardian families. Your attendance is highly encouraged.



“So much good information that pertained to my adopted children!” conference attendee

# What is “felt safety”?



## Does My Child Feel Safe?

By Rachel Kornilakis, PARC Family Worker and Adoptive Parent

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the cornerstone of modern day social science and our Post Adoption Resource Center has been concentrating their 2019 newsletter series on a resource family style hierarchy of needs. Our last newsletter highlighted information to help families address children's physical needs which is the baseline level in the hierarchy. Once physical needs have been met, the next level in the hierarchy is security needs. Helping children who have experienced trauma and loss find felt safety is one of the fundamental concepts of trauma informed care.<sup>1</sup>

Before coming home to our family, my children lived in neighborhoods and houses where break-ins and gun violence were real problems. Our neighborhood is a relatively safe place with low rates of crime, so the kids were safe at our house, but our kids didn't truly feel safe for several years. My children's brains had been conditioned by their traumatic experiences to be on high alert for danger even when in their own home. Young people usually don't have the self awareness or the words to tell adults that they don't have felt safety so the fear often times manifest in hard to interpret behaviors and actions.

One of my kids never seemed to feel safe outside and that was very challenging for us because we love to be outdoors. There were many times when we were extremely frustrated with this child

It wasn't until several years later that our child was able to tell us about a shooting they had witnessed outside their home where a member of the community was killed. My child didn't seem to remember this event before that day when the memory was triggered and it all came out. When recalling the story my child had a severe trauma reaction. This event had obviously shaken my child to their core. It was a heartbreaking revelation that connected a lot of dots for us. If we had known about this experience and how traumatic it was for our child, we may have done some things differently and would have perhaps had more compassion during our most difficult times. It left us wondering how many other untold traumas were impacting our children's daily lives.

Our families use a lot of different strategies to help our kids build felt safety, such as<sup>2</sup>:

- Having a bedtime routine that includes locking up the house.
- Creating predictable routines and schedules.
- Keeping their world small and introducing children to new environments and people slowly.
- Helping kids identify safe people and places outside the home.
- Consistent care from a calm adult.
- Enrolling kids in self defense or martial arts

Continued on the next page.

**Felt safety is one of the fundamental concepts of trauma informed care.**

## Talk to your kids about Protective Factors.

Continued from previous page -

For our kids, we spent time talking about the protective factors of our home. We live on a busy corner and we are good friends with many of our neighbors so we know that our neighborhood is always looking out for us. We have two dogs who love to bark at anything that moves and we know they will alert and protect if needed. "This" Mom

and Dad are good at keeping kids safe. These types of reassurances seemed to help our kids but really time was the essential element. It takes a lot of time in a safe, stable home for kids to feel safe again.

One of our kids had a hard time feeling safe at school as well so we tried some interventions. We noticed our child always seemed to feel anxious when someone was behind them whether that be in the car, on a bike or in a line. It was a common concern for them. So our first school interventions included making sure their seat always faced the door and having them stand at the end of any line. Another strategy we used was to identify a "safe" person in the building who they could go to if they were having anxiety.

Those simple strategies helped that child improve their behaviors at school tenfold by increasing their felt safety.



### Opportunity Awaits.....

By Somer Vickery, PARC Family Worker

As we go through the business of life we realize that life goes by quickly. One minute our children are babies and then in the blink of an eye they are graduating high school and heading off to college.

Over the years, as they became settled in our home and at school, our children's safety needs dramatically decreased. However, there are times

when trauma triggers bring the issue of felt safety back to the forefront. Last year, there were several lock downs at one of my child's schools because of bomb or gun threats. Those lock downs were very triggering to that child and we could see a lot of those old acting out behaviors coming back. We had to go back to our intervention planning and reassurances to help that child through another difficult time. The child was able to stabilize more quickly than they would have in our first years of family life. This was a welcome sign of the progress we have made. Progress with our child feeling safe and having built up their resilience and progress with us as parents knowing how and when to intervene.

1 Bath, H. (2008) The Three Pillars of Trauma Informed Care.

2 Purvis, K., Cross, D., Sunshine, W., (2007) The Connected Child.



We all go through life in our own way. I just wanted to take a moment to reflect that we all can take a minute and slow down to be able to spend a special moment with our loved ones. As our children grow they need in us in different ways. As infants their needs are much more than when they are adults. As parents we need to take time with them and make the memories when we have the opportunity. To us as parents it may seem small but to the child it could mean everything.

Taking time with your children to play a board game, play catch, paint their nails, do their hair, draw a picture, make slime, eat dinner and have movie nights! It could mean the world to them. take in. We have water parks, amusement parks, drive in theatres, campgrounds, apple orchards, 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks, escape rooms, the great Lakes and many more! Please take the time with your loved ones to make a memory this summer.

**Spend some special moments with your loved ones!**

# Region 5 Events

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

## Monthly Support Group:

### **Fabulous Foster and Adoptive Families**

For parents and youth! Teen and Pre-teens may join the PARC Youth Group or join in the activities provided for younger children.

When: First Monday of each month

Time: 6 - 8 p.m.

Location: 2/42 Community Center 648 S. Wagner Rd. Ann Arbor MI 48103

Group starts with a potluck; please bring a dish to pass if you are able.

RSVP to [Jane\\_argiero@judsoncenter.org](mailto:Jane_argiero@judsoncenter.org) or call 517-937-7580



## Trainings:

**June 15, 2019** -Trauma Informed Parenting in Sandusky

**June 29, 2019** – IEP/ Special Education Advocacy in Kalamazoo

**July 27, 2019** - Independence Lake Family Picnic

**August 1, 2019** -Human Trafficking in Flint (Youth Edition)

**August 10, 2019** – Inter-racial adoption and Self Esteem in Kalamazoo

## Conferences:

**September 14, 2019** – Mike Berry Foster and Adoptive Parent and Author.– Port Huron

**August 2, 2019** in Rives Junction (Jackson County) At Youth Haven with Keynote speaker Stephanie Grant ,PhD.



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>



## **Region 5 Office**

3840 Packard Ave, Suite 170  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

**Phone:** 734-794-2988

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

 [www.facebook.com/parcjudson](http://www.facebook.com/parcjudson)

 [www.twitter.com/parcjudson](http://www.twitter.com/parcjudson)

 [www.pinterest.com/parcjudson](http://www.pinterest.com/parcjudson)