



Igniting Greatness: Building Inner Wealth

By Annie Lange BSN, LMSW, ACSW: In the world of adoption, families are faced with the challenges associated with past trauma and disrupted parenting. Overwhelming stress within the family can result

from trauma driven acting out behavior. This often leaves a parent feeling hopeless, helpless, ineffective and completely worn out.

As a mom of six children, five of whom are adopted, I personally lost light at the end of the tunnel during our family's adoption journey. Everything I knew about parenting, including that which I had learned in my social work studies, and everything that worked with my biological child born into relative stability, simply did not work with my other children. These children had very different beginnings and experiences, resulting in sometimes mind-boggling behavior. I did not know what to do or how to help. I was humbled and taken down on my knees.

In the midst of my world of white-knuckle parenting, a pamphlet crossed my desk, advertising a workshop entitled, "Transforming the Difficult Child". My response was, "I live with a pile of these Difficult Children, I need to go to this workshop." The workshop was based on the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA), founded by Howard Glasser.

It is not an over statement to say this approach has changed my personal, family and professional life. I continued my learning by participating in NHA advanced training and have been practicing and teaching the Nurtured Heart Approach ever since. This approach has become a way of life. It is a practice of seeing the greatness in every moment. This approach is not a magic wand and it has helped me see that there is always something going right and sometimes we have to dig real deep to find it.

It is with great joy and passion that I share real life experience and trauma informed principles with other sojourners in the foster and adoption world, bringing healing, hope and possibility. Please join on April 5 and 6 for a NHA conference (see back page for details).

Parenting Children Who Have Experienced Loss and Grief While Navigating Coronavirus

By Laura A. Ornelas, LCSW, contributing author

Retrieved and condensed from C.A.S.E. For the full article go to <https://adoptionsupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Parenting-Children-While-Navigating-Coronavirus.pdf>

For children who have experienced separations, loss and trauma, the impact of this pandemic may include any or all emotions that everyone else is experiencing, yet may also run deeper. Survival instincts that children and youth learned very early on may exacerbate or return. Behaviors like food hoarding or withdrawing into beds or bedrooms, yelling, blaming or being highly insensitive to others may resurface or develop. Other children may exhibit more concerning behaviors like self-soothing through head-banging or even high-risk behaviors like self-harm.

Remember that children who have experienced separations, loss and trauma may have learned to emotionally catastrophize because they truly lived in harm's way and/or deprived conditions. The despair and distrust learned from those experiences could easily get tapped as a result of this crisis, which will most often play out behaviorally. These kinds of responses show us that children are more than typically anxious and possibly, in a state of fear about the effects of COVID-19. When people are experiencing anxiety, such as with this pandemic, we're worried something bad could happen.

Fear is different than anxiety because it comes from the experience that something bad is happening. While your family may not currently be in immediate danger, your child's past may tell them otherwise. Their former life experiences may be tripped up in their brains and bodies and cause them to now experience the past as if it were happening in the present. Before the concern of this virus, you may have noticed this reaction occur with just the slightest amount of "threat", like when plans got cancelled, or not having the right cereal for breakfast-big reactions to minor stressors. These reactions may not seem to make sense, but they actually make perfect sense to a child who is searching for control amongst what feels like chaos.

Coronavirus Cont.

And, these days, it's certainly been easy to see and sense the chaos in the world. So, it is logical that control and fear (possibly even terror) could heighten. Remind yourself that an increase in behavioral concerns are not children's fault—they are likely reactions to fears about losing you and/or all that they have with your family. They could even be scared about their birth families becoming sick or not having enough food.

As always, what our children need is our support, emotional stability and compassion. **Acknowledge the fear that this situation could be bringing up for your child(ren): It is important to say out loud. It is scary.** Ask about specific concerns and if the child does not verbalize any, be sure to **regularly pepper reassurances into daily life that remind the child that they and the family are safe.** Keep verbal messages simple, concrete, and focused in the present- you are safe, here now, with our family. Be reassuring—we will be doing everything humanly possible to continue to keep you and the whole family safe (we have so much food stocked now, we could never run out!) Consistency and predictability are critical components of keeping children who have experienced separations, loss and trauma, safe and stable.

A major disruption in routines is a reality that children and families are dealing with across the country right now. It will be very important to create a new schedule and routine. As part of your routine, make sure you balance relaxation and getting some form of exercise or healthy movement. While you may not have access to your usual activities, both remain important forms of self-care and physical stress release. And, for children who have experienced trauma, exercise can also be a meaningful way for their body to continue to heal.

Talk to your child(ren) about COVID-19. Find the balance between talking openly about the pandemic and allowing kids plenty of time away from those concerns. As always, considering a child's developmental age is very important in figuring out how to have meaningful conversations. With your words and body language, show the conversation is open for future questions/concerns, try giving the child a bit of control by asking them how much/when/if they'd like to be updated, and be sure to follow through. Others may do better with distraction and very little to no talk of the virus.

Remember that children are children. Forgetting, playing, and hanging out with friends will all be important as with any other time. Allow for this by getting creative about virtual or open-air play dates.



Resource Corner

The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.)

C.A.S.E. nurtures, inspires and empowers adoptive and foster families and the professionals who serve them through counseling, lifelong education and a national network of trained professionals.

Tweens and teens do not likely benefit from guarded information the way that younger children do. Create space and talk openly about whatever is on their mind and what questions they may have. Do not assume they feel safe or protected because they say they're fine. For those who continue to think about the virus extensively, consider books and movies that discuss global crises that have inspirational characters and hopeful endings.

With plenty of time now on their hands, older children may feel more relaxed or more precocious or both. Free from the pressures of schoolwork and/or a social life, the down time can actually help quiet stress levels for youth. Let them take some time to relax from those pressures, while keeping them accountable to the routine consistency of remote learning, chores, etc.

This is an opportunity for parents and caregivers to thoughtfully approach and strengthen relationships with older children in ways they may not usually have time and focused attention for. These moments will be particularly powerful if you are in a relaxed mood, stay affirming and have no agenda.

Why Join a Virtual Support?

With Covid, our support groups have moved to an on-line platform. Many parents have appreciated the ease of getting connected with no drive time. More people have been able to join on the conversations have been great. With this success, we have added several additional support groups.

Support groups provide a **network of knowledge** and insight. You may have heard the old adage “It takes a village to raise a child”. Raising a child requires the support of friends, family and members of the community. For adoptive families, finding and connecting with other members of the adoption community is especially important. These other individuals know the struggles and triumphs that come with being an adoptive family. They can share insight, provide **links to useful resources** and lend support. For these reasons, the presence of an adoptive family support group is very important.

One of the happy surprises of adoptive parenting is the **friendship and camaraderie** to be found in adoption support groups. While friends and family don't always understand the joys and challenges of raising children whose ethnicity, special needs, or personal histories may set them apart, support groups can provide **information, companionship, and enrichment** that you won't find elsewhere.

Talking to other individuals who have gone through similar experiences and feelings can be very helpful. Support groups provide a **space to vent** about frustrations, **ask questions, and celebrate successes**. Check out the adoptive parent support groups those offered by your PARCs. See the back page for a list of groups.



Are you ready for Spring?

Spring is just around the corner and planning activities for the kids to do can sometimes be a little difficult. Here are some ideas to help make your spring a bit easier.

- ◆ **Have a picnic:** Pack a lunch so you can enjoy the outside when weather permits. If you can't get outside, lay a blanket on the floor and enjoy an indoor picnic. It is a nice change from eating at the table.
- ◆ **Get Active:** Go for a walk or a bike ride. Enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. Get out the bats and balls or other sports equipment. Help kids burn off some energy and get their bodies moving.
- ◆ **Scavenger or Treasure hunt:** You can list items that are in the house, outside, or both. Use your imagination. Create a scavenger list or find one on line and start hunting. Or find something to make a “treasure” and hide it somewhere. Create a map. A fun twist could be that the map is not whole.
- ◆ **Garden:** Get your hands in the dirt. Prepare a space for a summer vegetable garden, make an indoor herb garden, plant bulbs, start seeds inside to plant when the weather gets warmer.
- ◆ **Tour the town:** Play tourist in your own town. Find places you have never been. Search the internet for ideas of what your town has to offer.

Dad's Only



My name is Jonathan Albert, I am the supervisor for the Post Adoption Resource Center Region 6. I am also a father of 10 children, many of whom were adopted. Since I began working for PARC over eight years ago, I have found that I engaged with moms at a much higher rate than dads. Like moms, dads have a need to have a safe space to be heard and understood, to have their feelings affirmed. Being a good father and helping other men become good fathers has always been a passion of mine. With that passion, I am excited to announce that the Post Adoption Resource Center (PARC) is now offering a **Dads Only Group**. The group meets virtually at 9:00 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month. This group is intended to be a positive and uplifting time where men can gather, build each other up and talk honestly about their parenting journey. We have a tough job and no one knows that better than another dad! Hope to see you there. To RSVP call (989)627-4010 or jonathan_albert@judsoncenter.org.

PARC EVENTS

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

Monthly On-Line Support Groups:

Fabulous Foster and Adoptive Parents

Date: 1st Monday of Each Month

Time: 6pm—8pm

Family Connections

Date: 1st Thursday of Each Month

Time: 7:30pm—8:30pm

2nd Monday Adoptive Parent Support Group

Date: 2nd Monday of Each Month

Time: 7:30pm-9pm

Dad's Only

Date: 2nd Wednesday of Each Month,

Time: 9pm—10pm

Single Adoptive Parents

Date: 3rd Wednesday of Each Month

Time: 8:30pm—9:30pm

Mom's Only

Date: 3rd Thursday of Each Month

Time: 7:30pm—8:30pm

Married With Children

Date: 4th Friday of Each Month

Time: 9pm—10pm

For questions or to register for support groups or events, contact parc_5@judsoncenter.org or 734-528-2047.

Trainings and Conferences

The Nurtured Heart Approach

March 5, 2021 and March 6, 2021

Hope for the Journey -

previously known as Empowered to Connect

April 17, 2021 and April 24, 2021

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>

We asked some of the families we have worked with, what PARC means to them. Here are their responses:

“ I really appreciate all the trainings.”

“They were extremely easy to contact, work with and extremely responsive.”

“PARC saved my life this Christmas.”



Judson Center

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