

# HEALING GUIDEBOOK



Practical tips & tools for working with children and youth who have experienced trauma (and for the adults who love them, too).



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Practical tips & tools for working with children and youth  
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A project created in collaboration between Anu Family Services and Alia.

[www.anufs.org](http://www.anufs.org)

*We create permanent connections to loving and stable families.*

[www.aliainnovations.org](http://www.aliainnovations.org)

*Innovations for people and systems impacted by childhood trauma.*

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First Edition

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# ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

This guidebook is a small sampling of the endless tools that can and have been used and adapted to help youth and others heal from relational trauma. Rather than focus on using only these exact activities, we encourage you to work to understand and apply the underlying premise of the activities and tools presented.

The through line that connects each item presented in this guidebook is that youth, really all humans, must feel *safe and connected*. Essentially, it's just SAFE both physically and emotionally, and humans—especially human young—feel safest through a secure, nurturing connection to another human being. When children do not feel safe and connected while they are growing up, their ability to trust others is greatly diminished. The core of this guidebook includes the knowledge and activities that can be used to help youth restore their capacity to trust, and therefore, to be in relationship with others, which is the foundation of human love and joy.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Four-Phased Framework for Healing

There are countless evidence-based models, evidence-informed models, and promising practices designed to heal childhood trauma. It can be confusing as a practitioner to know which model or practice is best for a specific client or will yield the most desirable outcomes. In addition, the knowledge base in trauma competency is rapidly evolving and models are being added and changed often. Many in the workforce have “initiative fatigue” or “model confusion;” therefore, instead of proposing or endorsing a specific model, this guidebook takes an anthropological approach about what is common across models that respond to what humans need to thrive (Jackson, 2016), which is represented by The Wellbeing Framework for Youth and their Healers. Since more than two-thirds of US adults have experienced childhood trauma (see [www.acestoohigh.com](http://www.acestoohigh.com)), and rates of childhood trauma are higher in those serving in child welfare, the framework represents what all humans need to heal...youth *and* their healers.

It is through that lens that we organized this Healing Guidebook into four distinct areas, which organize the relational trauma healing four core areas of the framework: Protect, Grieve, Connect, and Regulate. These concepts can also be found in other approaches and models, which affirm their universal nature (see chart on page 8); however, at Alia and Anu, we apply these concepts in an approach which is extremely effective at helping youth heal and find permanency called Intensive Permanence Services (IPS) (see diagram on page 9). IPS has received many awards, locally, regionally and nationally, and has produced nationally-leading rates of permanency for youth who had lost hope of belonging in a family. IPS has four stages including: *Trust, Heal, Connect, Support*. See the chart on page 8 to understand how these relate to the framework for wellbeing.

Developed in 2013, this framework has been implemented multiple times and continues to withstand the test of time and the addition of new knowledge and models. When used to guide work with those who have suffered trauma, the framework also continues to bring positive results and healing. The framework's development for youth *and their healers* occurred because of the emerging research on the vital importance of healthy and stable caregiving when working with youth who have experienced trauma. In addition, we know from the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study that 67% of all Americans experienced at least one childhood trauma, and estimates are higher for those engaged in the work of professional child welfare. Therefore, we approach healing from the lens of “us” not “them” who can benefit from healing interventions.

Furthermore, healers can be exposed to significant trauma during the helping and caring for youth with trauma. These healers include all adult caregivers—parents, professionals, or other caring adults who may require active intervention to ensure the wellbeing of the healers themselves. In addition, we know that all humans need the same fundamental things to thrive: to feel safe (protection), to make sense of past hurts (grieving), to belong (connection), and to find ways to calm and find our safe place again when we are faced with threats, anxiety, or adversity (regulation).

This framework is a conscious and intentional response to the unconscious and unintentional, systemic re-victimization of children through our interactions and practices. As professionals, healers, and caregivers, our ongoing question should be “What would be good enough for my child or a child I loved?”. Many of our current practices are based on an outdated knowledge base, are informed by a medical model of healing and what is covered by insurances, and continue to be used even though they have not produced the desired results (at best), and can, at times, cause additional harm (at worst).

This framework incorporates multiple learnings and teachings from Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, the Youth Thrive Protective Factors framework, Present Moment Parenting by Tina Feigal, Terry Cross and the National Indian Child Welfare Association’s Relational World View, Dr. Bruce Perry, Dr. Darla Henry, Mardi Louisell, Keven Campbell, Dr. Karen Purvis, The 40 Developmental Assets of Search Institute, Emily Esfahani Smith, The Foster Club, a decade of research with the University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, a five-year partnership and an abundance of research performed by the University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality and Healing, among many other teachings and insights from leaders in the field of healing and child welfare.

With this commitment to learning, this guidebook will be adapted and revised as new research, information, and strategies emerge. The guidebook includes multiple activities that can be engaged in with youth, and teams can work together to develop and build individualized combinations of approaches to create youth-specific toolboxes.

# FRAMEWORK FOR WELLBEING FOR YOUTH AND THEIR HEALERS

GRIEVE

Addressing  
Grief,  
Loss & Trauma

Trauma-informed  
Parenting and  
Building Resilience &  
Protective Factors

PROTECT

CONNECT

Building Networks  
of Support  
& Connection

Engaging in  
Integrative Healing  
Interventions

REGULATE



# FRAMEWORK FOR WELLBEING

An overlay with related approaches

	PROTECT	GRIEVE	CONNECT	REGULATE
<b>Anu/Alia Framework for Wellbeing</b>	<p>Keeping youth safe—stopping any harm by immediately ensuring physical and emotional safety</p> <p>Using trauma-informed parenting</p> <p>Supporting identity formation</p> <p>Building of Protective Factors &amp; Resilience</p>	<p>Understanding what happened to them, giving messages to relieve guilt and shame, deciding what the youth wants to let go of and what they want to take forward, and providing opportunities to physically and emotionally purge past hurts.</p>	<p>Helping youth to connect and reconnect with those a youth has loved and lost or to whom they are related using <i>exhaustive</i> family search. Connecting with youths’ family, helping them to heal, and coaching them to give healing messages to the youth (e.g., you deserved to be protected, we’ve always loved you, etc.).</p>	<p>Use integrative healing practices and other methodologies to improve youths’ capacity to find their place of calm when they are dysregulated. These include methodologies that help youth to be in connection and harmony with others.</p>
<b>Anu/Alia: Intensive Permanence Services Model</b>	<p><b>Trust</b></p> <p>Developing trust through a consistent, stable, nurturing approach &amp; helping youth learn more about their past and current identity</p>	<p><b>Heal</b></p> <p>Understanding, grieving, and letting go of past losses</p>	<p><b>Connect</b></p> <p>Connecting and reconnecting with those youth have loved and lost, or to whom they are related</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>Continuing to support youth through the ups and downs of relationships as they learn to regulate</p>
<b>Darla Henry 3-5-7 Model</b>	<p>“Where am I going?– trust and safety in relationships; attachment cycle</p> <p>Who am I? — identity formation”</p>	<p>“What happened to me?–separation and loss; the grieving process”</p>	<p>“When will I know I belong? — feelings of safety, wellbeing and a readiness for future”</p>	<p>“How will I get there? — recognizing those who will continue to provide support; relational permanency”</p>
<b>4 Pillars of Meaning by Emily Esfahani Smith</b>	<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p><i>We must first be safe (protect) to get out of survival brain to access higher order thinking.</i></p> <p>“It’s this pursuit that organizes your life and involves making a contribution to others.”</p> <p><i>Which Erikson says is critical to identity formation</i></p>	<p><b>Story Telling</b></p> <p>“Storytelling is really about the story that you tell yourself about your life, about how you became you. It’s your personal myth.”</p>	<p><b>Belonging</b></p> <p>“Meaningful relationships where you really feel like you matter to others and are valued by them, and where you in turn treat others like they matter and are valued.”</p>	<p><b>Transcendence</b></p> <p>“Those moments where you’re basically lifted above the hustle and bustle of daily life and you feel your sense of self fade away.” Found in a religious pursuit, meditation, prayer, in work or in nature.</p>



# INTENSIVE PERMANENCE SERVICES

**PHASE 1**  
0-9 MONTHS



**TRUSTING**



Building Trust



Exhaustive Searching

**PHASE 2**  
6-18 MONTHS



**HEALING**



Healing Trauma

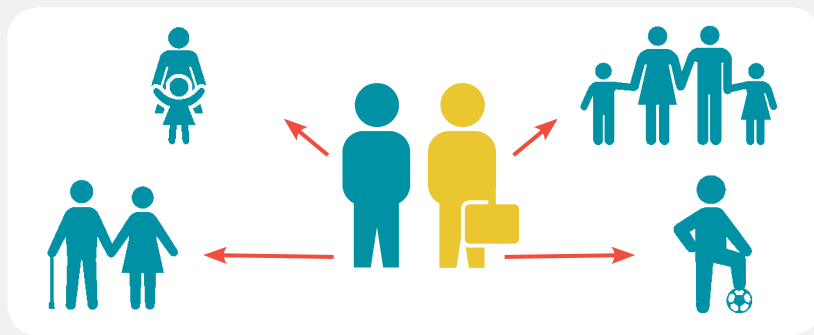


Connecting to lost loved ones

**PHASE 3**  
12-18 MONTHS



**CONNECTING**

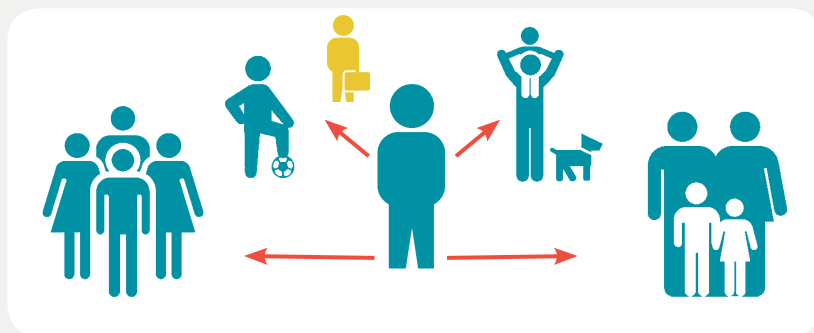


Connecting & Healing Relational Trauma

**PHASE 4**  
12-24 MONTHS  
& ONGOING



**SUPPORTING**



Supporting & Integrating Healthy Relationships

## IMPORTANT NOTES BEFORE BEGINNING THIS WORK

All activities are to be utilized to build connections between the youth and their healer(s). Most of the activities are to be used one at a time and should be adjusted based on the developmental needs of the youth and the phase of the healing process.

These activities help to create dialogue and language around the youth's history and its impact on the youth's current functioning. Youth are unlikely to sit and just talk about their identified problems; rather, they act out their pain through pain-based behaviors. Remember, youth "do" their pain first, before they can "talk" their pain. Therefore, healers need to provide ways that youth can begin to unpack and give us their emotional content in a safe and contained manner.

This work should only be done on a voluntary basis, meaning, youth must be given the opportunity to "opt in" to these healing relationships, services and activities. No one can be forced to grieve, and trying to do so can potentially cause immense harm. If at all possible, a youth should be given the opportunity to "hire and fire" the person doing this work with them, and the healer should be able to make at least a two-year commitment to working with the youth, no matter where the youth moves or lives. This work is best done through the application of an intensive healing relationship, such as through Intensive Permanence Services.

It is our experience that trust generally takes an average of 9 months to form with youth who have had trauma, and healing cannot fully begin until trust is formed. Trust is developed through regular contact that is consistent, safe and nurturing, and regardless of a youth's expression of pain-based behaviors, the healer continues to "show up" and show empathy for the youth.

It is important to note that we can't back out of, or shy away from, the immensity of a youth's emotional display. Healers must be brave enough to hold a youth's pain and cannot fear to share the same space with them as they move through uncomfortable emotions. Healers create safety and containment by serving as witness to the pain and conveying, "It's okay, I've got you." If a healer is unsure of their ability to hold a youth's pain, role play the activity with your supervisor before undertaking an activity with a youth. Many youth engaging in this work have had many failed attempts at connecting with healers, this may be their very last attempt to connect, and this sacred trust should be treated with extreme caution and commitment, so as not to cause further damage or cause the youth to refrain from engaging in healing relationships in the future.

# PROTECT

## What it means to build trust through protecting youth

### *Physical and Emotional Safety*

The very first step in building trust is to engage in creating and sustaining safety. The roles of safety and protection are fundamental first steps to create healing. If someone is actively being traumatized and is not protected from further harm, it becomes nearly impossible to engage in the healing process. When we do not feel safe and we are actively engaged in survival, it takes over every aspect of our thought, attention, energy, and resources. Therefore, *physical AND emotional safety* build a critical foundation and serve as the *first* step for children and youth...for all of us! Without safety, nothing else matters. For children, because of their vulnerabilities, they experience safety through the presence of a protector. A protector is a secure and nurturing adult; someone who *claims* them...who says, "I've got you, *no matter what!*" This is the foundation of protection: a secure, nurturing, permanent relationship with a single trusted and safe adult caregiver. More safe, stable, nurturing connections are better, but one is *essential*. As we say in our practice, "a child cannot have too many people who love them."

Many teams will experience a parallel process of trusting and relationship building as they enter this work. They will also likely experience the parallel process of fear, grief, and resistance. We need to build trust between the healers and other team members who are working with youth who have experienced trauma. Ongoing efforts to build safety and trust within the team need to be prioritized and attended to, or the healing progress with youth will be impeded. This is accomplished through honesty, transparency, and clarity of purpose and mission. A culture without shaming, blaming, and punishment creates safety and trust.

### *Trauma-informed Parenting*

The next part of building trust is ensuring that continued harm is not inadvertently caused by using traditional methods of parenting or caregiving. Trauma-informed parenting interventions include an understanding of the behaviors we see in youth as normal, natural responses to what happened to them. Without an understanding of the impact of trauma on children and their resulting behavioral normal responses, caregivers can inadvertently exacerbate the youth's trauma by blaming, shaming, punishing or disconnecting youth. Many models utilize an approach that builds on the connection between youth and caregiver, focuses on strengths and successes, and builds a sense of unconditional love and affection with the child. The key is that *interventions that connect, promote healing* and *interventions that disconnect, cause harm*. This is because the scariest and worst thing that can happen to a child who does not have a secure, nurturing connection with a protector is that they would be disconnected further. Julie Alvarado, a colleague who works in trauma healing, says, "Sending children away, who have already been sent away, is not the answer." And further adds harm upon immeasurable harm. Therefore, trauma-informed parenting interventions build on the relational connection between the child and the caregiver, which becomes the essential tool for protection and healing...and for life-long wellbeing.

## *Supporting Identity Formation*

Part of development is understanding who we are, separate from our caregiver. Therefore, when youth have not had a secure attachment, going through the natural developmental process of separation can be terrifying. This is why we often see disruptions in placements and adoptions (even when they are done from birth) around the ages of 13 years old, which is when identity is formed, according to Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development. In this time, youth are answering key questions about who they are and who they will become, regardless of how they were raised. There is still a strong need for parental attachment and support, but youth are now trying to figure out who they are separate from their caregiver. For youth who were never firmly attached to their caregiver, this separation process often creates anxiety, confusion and fear.

Part of developing trust with youth who have had relational trauma is helping them to navigate the important question of "Who am I?" One way that we help youth to feel safe is to identify where they came from and who they are, which can be achieved with activities such as the ones listed in this guidebook, like the "I AM POEM". Building trust through exploring identity can also happen through genetic testing (think "23 and me"), tracing cultural roots and finding cultural mentors for youth, identifying spiritual or religious roots and mentors, creating a family coat of arms, researching the meaning of a youth's name, helping youth to identify their strengths or "superpowers", including giving themselves a superhero name, and so many more!

## *Building of Protective Factors & Resilience*

Part of building trust is building our tolerance and capacity to stay in connection, even when things aren't going well. For example, when we disagree, I may not like what you are saying, but I still love you. Children who have experienced the trauma of disconnection have a challenging time managing this tension and ambiguity in relationships. Therefore, we help to build the muscle of "resilience", which is knowing that along with the challenges, good will come. Finding ways to build the trust necessary to bend instead of break in the face of adversity is a critical part of sustaining human relationships. When we are children, building the sense of safety needed to face the challenges that the world will bring and still be okay comes from the borrowed strength and protection of our safe and protective adults. When we are adults, we lean on the nurturing and support of protective relationships in our lives to manage adversity (e.g., partners, friends, church families, close colleagues, etc.).

To withstand the tension and pain of adversity, we must also build reserves of goodness to draw on during these times. Building competencies (things we are good at), self-esteem (we are good), self-efficacy (we are capable), self-worth (we are worthy of love), and other "bucket-filling" habits, talents, hobbies, or life experiences help to create a foundation and reserve of "goodness" to keep us balanced when withdrawals come from our "buckets". In *How Full Is Your Bucket* (Rath & Clifton, 2004), the authors describes that we all have buckets. These buckets rely on others to be filled. They are filled by others' kind statements, encouraging words, and positive interactions. In contrast, bucket dippers are those people in our lives that take from us without refreshing our buckets. To maintain balance and a positive sense of self, we need bucket fillers in our lives who create positive outcomes through their intentions to counteract or balance those who try to extract or take energy from us.

These resilience-building actions serve as protection for our spirit and can be learned and practiced, increasing our capacity to thrive and trust, despite adversity. There are many examples of resilience-building actions; however, the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors (found at <https://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/Youth-Thrive-PPF-definitions.pdf>) and Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets (found at [http://page.search-institute.org/dev-assets-download\\_1212-17?submission=387131182](http://page.search-institute.org/dev-assets-download_1212-17?submission=387131182)) provide good places to start.

Another key aspect of building trust in this area includes helping youth with identity formation—essentially *understanding “who they are and where they come from”*. This can be done through an increased understanding of the assets of their family, culture, ethnicity, race, community, religion, sexuality and other factors associated with their identity. Many communities, cultures, and faiths offer significant supports in building this aspect of resiliency, trust, and protection for youth. This is key reason why it is essential to first consider a youth’s entire support network of already-trusted adults (people who they know and love, or to whom they are related) before moving to strangers to build trust and protection. Knowing our primary, biological and cultural origins is a primal, human hunger that creates a life-long emptiness and longing, and sometimes anger, when unfulfilled. No youth should ever be denied the knowledge of their origin, as this in itself is a form of abuse.

### **Understanding a youth’s need for building trust**

It is imperative that caregivers and parents understand that the key to building trust with the youth is providing the youth with *both* physical and psychological safety. Historically, the focus centered solely on physical safety; however, for a youth to heal from their past losses, they must feel safe to express their grief through the psychological safety that comes from secure, nurturing relationships with adults that drive a sense of protection, safety, and belonging.

Children arrive on the earth as the most vulnerable mammals...and they know it from the second they are born. Human beings must be cared for and protected immediately upon birth, by another human being, or they die. When human young have an inconsistent or disorganized caregiving, they can also develop “Failure to Thrive” and fail to meet their developmental milestones with severe consequences, up to and including death.

Youth in the foster care system experience additional vulnerabilities because they often lack a secure, reliable protector. For some youth, an adult who was supposed to protect them instead took advantage of their vulnerabilities and hurt or abused them. Youth often come to this work with the belief that to trust adults creates vulnerability and puts them at risk for being abused or hurt again. Youth may feel it is better to depend on no one for care and protection rather than be hurt again. Their brain tells them, “You can trust no one. You are in it on your own. The only person you can trust is yourself.” But deep down they know that they are kids, they are vulnerable, and they won’t make it on their own. That brings a profound sense of loss and longing to belong. As they feel this deep emotion, they may act out their pain and these pain-based behaviors may show up as behaviors that are perceived as oppositional, defiance, depression, or impulsivity.

This fundamental need to belong is so powerful that youth will do almost anything to be claimed. Therefore, youth often put themselves in high-risk situations which make them even more vulnerable to abuse and pain. Because their brains are telling them that they are “in it on their own”, youth often display symptoms that meet the criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. These behaviors come from the youth knowing that they need to be “on” or “activated” *all the time* to survive. They feel as though they can never let their guard down or rest because no one is protecting them and no one has their back; thus, they can’t trust anyone, ever. To think of anything beyond their own survival, youth need the trust and safety that comes from a permanent relationship with a safe, secure, nurturing adult. This is a primal need, without which complete healing cannot occur.

Therefore, one of the most important sources of protection comes from an adult relationship. If a youth is not in a permanent home, a worker can be the first source of building trust and protection, if that worker is committed to following the youth, *no matter what*, wherever they go (e.g., if they move placements, they keep the same worker), until permanency is secured. Predictability and consistency build trust, safety, and security; building the stage for the next phase of healing.

The research is clear that the professional team (a.k.a. “healers”) who are working with our youth have often experienced childhood trauma in very high numbers estimated at 70%-90%. The team needs to experience safety just as the youth does. When we focus on and keep the team safe, they are free to be fully present for the youth, to connect, grieve, and heal. The critical nature of this parallel process cannot be overstated.

### **What it means to protect healers**

Many healers (e.g., foster parents, therapists, social workers, etc.) come to the work with traumatized youth with wide open hearts. They intend to help youth heal and thrive, and this process can be overwhelming, taking all their time, energy, and emotional capacity to help the youth with whom they are connected—and in many cases, this still will not be enough.

Healers often come into the work without adequate preparation for the armor they must wear to protect themselves. Our need for protection as adults is similar to what youth need to feel protected. We, too, must learn how to attend to our physical and emotional safety and build resilience and protective factors into our lives. A fundamental key to this protection is learning how to utilize good boundaries with our work and in our own lives. Finding ways to say no, or to know when you have given enough are key to keeping our reserves from being depleted. In addition, as healers and caregivers, it’s critical that we learn how to practice and build our muscles of resilience.

Resilience is the ability to return to normal functioning after adversity; learning to bend instead of break as we navigate the normal and expected ups and downs of life. Resilience is a muscle that can be strengthened with practice and intention. Seeking people, activities, and intellectual or emotional practices that help us to “fill our buckets” or build our resilience is critical to our long-term sustainability as healers. Our need for protection of our spirit is no different than our youths’ need for protection; it is a fundamental human need.

### **Resources that help with building protective factors are:**

Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors <https://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive/Youth-Thrive-PPF-definitions.pdf>

Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets [http://page.search-institute.org/dev-assets-download\\_1212-17?submission=387131182](http://page.search-institute.org/dev-assets-download_1212-17?submission=387131182)

Brené Brown’s teachings on “enough” <https://vimeo.com/124371905>

## Pop-Out Stories:

- ❖ **Voice & Choice:** A healer was meeting with a 16-year-old girl for the second time. The girl quietly mentioned a city she used to live in. The healer was genuinely interested in the fact that this girl previously lived in another state and asked questions about what that state was like. The girl looked at the healer and stated, “How could you not know that about me - it’s in my file?” The healer responded, “I really don’t have a right to read your file or know about your story without your permission or your wanting me to know, so I didn’t read it”. The girl smiled, and said “I never thought of it like that” and proceeded to talk about her favorite things from the state she used to live in. “Her story” was hers alone to share. This is one of the key elements that builds her voice and choice; giving her some control.
- ❖ **Pain-based Behaviors:** Kayla was a 4-year-old girl who experienced significant trauma prior to being placed in her healing home. As a result, she was constantly activated in survival mode: fight, flight, or freeze. She would frequently display severe temper tantrums that would involve throwing herself on the floor, throwing her shoes across the room, pulling off her socks, and pulling her toes apart so severely that her healing parents feared she would break her own toes. These tantrums would frequently occur after a small, seemingly insignificant request was made, such as asking her to put away her backpack. When she would respond in a full tantrum, the healing parent would scoop her up, bring her to the rocking chair and rock her until her body calmed. Instead of reacting to the behavior with punishment, behavior modification or yelling, the healing parent reacted to what was underneath the behavior. After many months of consistently responding in this manner, Kayla no longer threw the tantrums, but instead could describe what she was feeling, instead of acting it out through a pain-based behavior.



**Key Points:** To heal, youth must first feel safe emotionally, physically, culturally and intellectually. They must know they are protected, and this protection comes from a permanent relationship with a safe, nurturing adult. Youth know they have this when they feel like they *belong*.



### Questions to Ponder:

1. What is the role of relationship within healing for youth? See Amelia Franck Meyer’s TEDx talk on the Human Need for Belonging for more information on this at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r-ci4iybt8>
2. Describe the role of resilience. Give three examples of how you can develop resilience.
3. How do Brené Brown’s teachings on vulnerability relate to the development of trust? [https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability)
4. Belonging is a key element in a youth’s healing. How can you help youth feel claimed?

# TRUST BUILDING ACTIVITIES



# THE SOCCER BALL

**Purpose:** To build mutual trust between caregiver/worker and youth.

**Supplies Needed:** 1 soccer ball, 1 permanent marker

**Preparation:** Write questions on each hexagon of the soccer ball prior to meeting with the youth. Some hexagons can also have the word PASS written on it to provide a break.

**How to Play:** This activity is designed to build mutual trust between the youth and the healer. Each person tosses the ball back and forth, taking turns answering the questions on the ball. Typically, the rule is, whichever hexagon the right thumb ends up on, is the question that is answered; however, this is a great opportunity to allow the youth to add rules, or create new ones. Youth are also allowed to pass on any question.

## Question Ideas:

- If you could have one super power, what would it be?
- What is your favorite color and how does it make you feel?
- What's the best meal you've ever had and who did you have it with?
- If you could vacation anywhere in the world, where would you go?
- What is your favorite animal and why?
- If you were granted three wishes, what would you wish for?
- What would you buy if you were given one million dollars?



# THERAPEUTIC DREAM CATCHERS

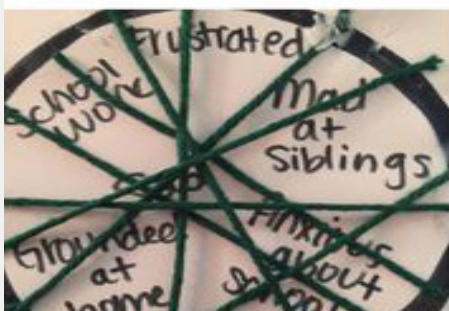
**Purpose:** To help youth create a sense of safety and resilience and to build trust.

**Supplies Needed:** Paper, yarn, scissors, tape, markers, crayons or colored pencils

**Preparation:** None, although the healer may want to create a sample of their own to share, or create the blank outline on the paper as a starting point.

## How to do:

- Steps:
- 1) draw pattern of dream catcher
  - 2) decorate dream catcher
  - 3) have the child write out negative emotions, triggers, or experiences.
  - 4) trap the negative thoughts/triggers/emotions
  - 5) have the child circle the dream catcher with strengths, positive traits, activities, and other things/people the client loves.



# MY LIFE SOUNDTRACK

**Purpose:** To help youth develop protective factors and regulation and to build trust.

**Supplies Needed:** A few copies of the form below, colored pencils, marker, or crayons; access to music (such as on YouTube) is also beneficial.

**Preparation:** It is beneficial for the healer to come prepared with a few sample songs, or songs that are meaningful to the healer.

**How to do:** The healer talks with the youth about why music is beneficial to all humans (see information below), and works with the youth to fill out the “My Life Soundtrack” activity below, which can be filled out with words alone, or decorated more colorfully.

Many youth respond to the messages reverberating through their music and lyrics. Music can also play a role in helping individuals and communities to cope with trauma, whether it be through the intervention of music therapists, community music making programs or individual music listening. “Music therapy provides an emotional release for traumatic instances, both on the individual and the community level.” <https://www.thecmf.org/news/how-music-heals-in-times-of-trauma/>



## How Music Heals in Times of Trauma

*Content by Josh Pineda, Adapted From The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA).*

Music can help build healthy relationships and provide a way to manage social stresses. To maintain social wellbeing, it is necessary to cope with the trauma and crisis we face in our lives; music therapy provides the natural & expressive means to do so. Musical lyrics may give our youth words when they have none. In her book, *The Unsayable*, Annie Rogers introduces the concept of ‘found poems’. Found poems are when we use another source to provide our words. This activity could be cutting out words from a magazine or using lyrics to a song to create their own personalized ballad,

theme song or emotional discharge. They can then keep their work, burn it, release it in a balloon, or find another use for it. The activity *I Am Poem* follows if you want a structured activity to complete with your youth.

According to a 2015 study published in the *Frontiers of Psychology* journal: “Cultural techniques play an important role in helping communities to recover from trauma. ... Music can also play a role in helping individuals and communities to cope with trauma, whether it be through the intervention of music therapists, community music making programs or individual music listening.”

“The directed use of music and music therapy is highly effective in developing coping strategies, including understanding and expressing feelings of anxiety and helplessness, supporting feelings of self-confidence and security, and providing a safe or neutral environment for relaxation.” It is in this manner that music heals and helps youth reach their wellness goals.

Some of the benefits of music in cases of traumatic incidents:

- Anxiety and stress reduction
- Positive changes in mood and emotional states
- Enhanced feelings of control, confidence, and empowerment
- Positive physiological changes, such as lower blood pressure, reduced heart rate, and relaxed muscle tension
- Emotional intimacy with peers, families, caregivers

# MY LIFE SOUNDTRACK

date:

my theme song is...

my favorite style of music is ...

and this is why ...

i chose this song because...

a song that makes me happy...

a song that makes me sad is...

a song that helps me relax is...

a song that helps me release my anger is...

names:

this song reminds me of a particular event in my past:

the event was...

my favorite song is ...

and this is why ...

a song that i can relate to is ...

i remember when i listened to this song creates a lot of feeling...

# I AM POEM

**Purpose:** To help youth develop a sense of identity and to build trust.

**Supplies Needed:** A few copies of the form below, colored pencils, markers, or crayons. It can be helpful to bring a list of feeling words and/or a thesaurus.

**Preparation:** None

**How to do:** This form may be overwhelming. Doing a line or two or three each visit may be all a youth is able to complete. Work at the youth's pace, and end when they indicate they are not ready or able to continue. You may have to provide ideas for each line to the youth and offer positive feedback for their efforts and ideas to keep them engaged. When the activity is complete, ask the youth to read the poem, or to read it for them, if they prefer. You may want to discuss if there is anyone else they feel comfortable sharing the poem with, such as reading to their therapist or treatment team, or what they want to do to keep the poem safe or display it, etc.

## I Am Poem

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
(Two special characteristics)

I wonder \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you are curious about)

I hear \_\_\_\_\_  
(An imaginary sound)

I see \_\_\_\_\_  
(An imaginary sight)

I want \_\_\_\_\_  
(A desire you have)

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
(The first line of the poem repeated)

I pretend \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you pretend to do)

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
(A feeling about something imaginary)

I touch \_\_\_\_\_  
(An imaginary touch)

I worry \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something that bothers you)

I cry \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something that makes you sad)

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
(The first line of the poem repeated)

I understand \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you know is true)

I say \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you believe in)

I dream \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you dream about)

I try \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you make an effort on)

I hope \_\_\_\_\_  
(Something you hope for)

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
(The first line of the poem repeated)

# GRIEVE

## What it means for youth to grieve

The worst thing that can happen to any child is the death of their parent, the second worst thing is separation from their parent. This is because deeply hardwired into each human is the understanding that the parent represents protection and belonging, especially to children who are highly vulnerable...and they know it from the second they are born. Therefore, any time a child is separated from a caregiver, by death, removal, or other disconnection, they experience an enormous amount of grief and loss; however, they may not be able to identify their feelings as grief. The ability to grieve is a necessary component on the pathway of healing.

In addition, the grief a youth experiences is disenfranchised; people don't see them as grieving and they don't have social supports to help them grieve—and their loss is ambiguous. Ambiguous loss is a loss with no clear ending; therefore, the grieving process gets frozen, without closure. This keeps the pain alive, instead of allowing the normal healing process. The youth experience ambiguous loss because of all the unknowns: is their mom okay, are their siblings okay, is their dog okay, how long will they be in foster care, and when will it end. There is no clear beginning or end to their pain, no closure of when it will be over. Finally, youth experience secondary losses, which occur as the normal, natural consequence of the primary loss. For example, when youth move foster homes, they don't just lose their foster parents...they lose the way things smell, taste and feel. They lose their routine, comfort, familiar settings, school, church, etc.—and the list goes on and on.

Some of this grief is conscious, but much of it is not, which is why youth *do not talk their pain, they do their pain*. We call this “doing” of pain-based behaviors. Pain-based behaviors are ways that you say, “Can you see me?” or “Can you hear me?” or “Can you tell how badly I am hurting?” or “The pain I am in is so significant, that I cannot focus on controlling my mind or body; I am just surviving.” The challenge is that pain-based behaviors can look as though they are disobedient, defiant or disrespectful behaviors. Pain-based behaviors can appear as aggression, anger/rage, sexual promiscuity, sadness/depression, running away, self-harm, lying, or even numbing behaviors such as using drugs or alcohol to numb the pain they are feeling.

Another unconscious reason for pain-based behaviors is that they serve to help the youth maintain a safe distance from others who may see their vulnerability, pain, and grief. When you don't know who to trust, you keep everyone away. If the youth can keep you from connecting to them, they can avoid being vulnerable or feeling pain.

It's important to think of youth as grieving rather than as oppositional or defiant. They are not manipulative, disrespectful, defiant or rude...they are just trying their best to survive the enormous pain they are experiencing. Unfortunately, these pain-based behaviors are often very undesirable or risky to adults, and caregivers want them to stop, so interventions (such as punishment), are often used which exacerbate rather than heal the youth's pain. Important to note is that behavior modification responses also don't work as the youth's brain is not fully developed so their executive functioning or logical portion of the brain is not functioning.

Adults often fail to see the youth as grieving and may be confused or triggered by the presence of pain-based behaviors. The youth may appear calm, then suddenly lash out over something seemingly minute. Their reaction is disproportionate to the action or request. Whenever you see a much larger reaction than the stimulus presented, this is a sign of work yet to be done and is a “trauma-response”. Adults mistakenly interpret this as “naughty” behavior, when in fact, it is pure pain pouring out of the youth because they cannot contain it any longer. Instead of being consoled, they are blamed, shamed, punished, disconnected, or have their pain numbed through medication.

During the worst thing that can possibly happen to a child—separation from their caregiver—youth are expected to start new schools, switch homes, and be separated from siblings *and* not show pain. They are expected to start their new school a week after leaving home and immediately behave appropriately in their new placement. These expectations are unrealistic and do not honor the deep losses youth previously experienced. It is important to validate youth's losses and give them permission to grieve. By teaching the grief cycle and introducing a common language for what they are going through, youth learn that they are not crazy. Instead, they learn they are normal and all people go through these phases when they lose something, or someone, they love. They also learn that grief is a *normal* emotion that all humans feel.

### Understanding how to help a youth grieve

Youth grieve by understanding what happened to them (past), understanding what meaning that has for them today (present), and what these experiences mean for them in the future as they try to envision belonging in a family (future). Helping a youth to make sense of this process helps them to form a sense of meaning, purpose, and hope as they piece together their identity. Knowing where they came from helps them to create a sense of who they are and where they want to go.

A significant component of grieving is working to understand that adults should protect them and that they deserved to be protected. This work helps youth to be relieved of their overwhelming sense of guilt and shame, mistakenly believing that things that happened (or didn't happen) were within their control or their fault. Another way to help relieve their guilt and shame is engaging a youth's family in the grieving process. When families deliver healing messages to their youth directly, it is significantly more impactful to the healing process than if the messages are delivered by strangers.

Trauma is stored in the whole body, not just the brain. Because youth DO their pain (not talk their pain), grieving can be a very physical process. Think of grieving as needing to get something out of the body. The pain, the grief, the trauma...it's stuck inside. Work to get it out. This can happen by letting youth draw their experiences, act out their anger, scream out their disappointments, punch out their pain, write out their stories, spit out their disgust, run out their rage, throw rocks to represent their offenders, cry until the river of tears dries up...you get the picture!

In addition, the grieving process may vary dependent on age and the length of time spent in out-of-home placement. For younger youth, this may be their first placement. Reunification may still be an option, but there is a lot of uncertainty. The losses for these youth can feel very raw. The combination of the unknown, the lack of language for their feelings, and the developmental difficulties related to self-regulation are more than they are capable of handling or processing. These youths are hypervigilant. This can manifest itself through asking numerous questions, fidgeting, difficulty focusing, high anxiety, and avoiding difficult topics. These responses can be intense and fatigue a healer.

It's important to allow the youth the space that they need to talk about the losses they've experienced when they are ready. Talking about the things, people and places they miss are important. Youth recognize when healers are uncomfortable, dysregulated or distressed. Often, adults don't want to "rock the boat" or cause pain, and avoid talking about the losses with youth. Typically, no one ever listened to or validated their losses. Teaching the grief model with toys, maps or other creative activities helps youth learn words to describe what they are feeling; they subsequently realize they are not "crazy or different". These activities can also be interactive or physical in nature to help release some of the energy out of the body.



Often older youth experienced an infinite amount of losses. They also learned important lessons about what adults will do if they show their grief through pain-based behaviors. Often, their pain-based behaviors were met with a negative response. Youth are not asked what happened to them; the focus is on the future and their independence. Youth demonstrate difficulty going back and talking about losses because they buried and blocked/numbed a lot of memories to survive in the child welfare system. Youth often will share a past memory or loss in a very matter of fact way, acting as if it did not cause pain. When we go back in time with activities such as lifelines, it gives healers the chance to validate losses for them until they can feel for themselves. For example, “I notice on your lifeline you were in 10 different foster homes. I can’t believe that happened to you, I can’t imagine what it was like having 10 different beds, or 10 different sets of rules! That had to be a scary time and it must have made you so angry!” This may be the first time an adult gave the youth the right to express or even admit they are angry. This type of response also builds empathy by expressing caring replies to the pain they experienced.

### **The importance of grieving and healing parents & caregivers**

A healing parent or caregiver is an adult healer who understands pain-based behaviors, the importance of trauma-informed parenting, the importance of connections, and the benefit of using regulation interventions to help youth heal. In addition, to be fully present with youth as they engage in their grieving and healing work, the healers need to process and work through their own trauma and grief work as well as engage in ongoing self-care practices. If the healer’s bucket is empty, they can’t give to that traumatized youth, and can possibly do more unintentional damage or harm. Since we know from the research that 67% of adults in the US experienced at least one childhood trauma, and those who work in the child welfare field yield a higher percentage still, the need for healers to do their own healing work is critically important to their ability to help youth heal, too. We can’t take youth where we did not go.

Just like the youth, healers need their needs met and their voices heard. An example of this may look something like the following story:

A sibling group of three were placed in a healing home. At the time of placement, the youth were 4, 6, and 8 years old. After several months in placement, one night at dinner, they started to share some of their trauma story with their healing parents. While the team developed deep suspicions about the types and forms of abuse the children endured from their birth family, that evening, what were suspicions became verified by the children and were significantly worse than the team imagined. That evening after putting the children to bed, the healing parent wrote an email to the entire team, providing in detail, the specifics of what was shared with them. Journaling is one way that the healing parent practiced self-care. So, while fulfilling his duty as a mandated reporter, he also used this as a tool to heal his own hurts from what he heard and absorbed. Important to note, that to maintain our own regulation, we need to discharge the content we take in. Similar to what we guide youth to do, we can choose activities such as running, talking to a friend, sports, yoga, or other options that allow the physical discharge to occur. \*\*Waking the Tiger, Peter Levine.

The following day, after reading the email, their social worker sobbed. She grieved for the trauma the youth experienced, for the birth family, and for the healing parents who created the environment so the children could feel safe enough to tell their story. She also cried for herself, because no amount of education, supervision or training could prepare her heart and soul for what she just read. It is extremely important to be mindful of this. For their worker to be present and provide the healing parents with what they needed to grieve, she needed to do her own grieving first. It’s the oxygen mask metaphor. You must put your own oxygen mask on FIRST before helping others. If you’re not “breathing,” then you can’t help others “breathe.” Their social worker reached out to them via phone and could hear the exhaustion in their voices. The youngest was not in a place to go to school that day, so the social worker decided to come later that day to take the youngest on an outing, to allow the healing parents time to nap, process, meditate; whatever it is they needed, so they could “turn off” for a bit while the children were out of the house. This type of team support is what helps healing parents stay the course and do the emotional work of healing with the youth in their care.

The reality of all of this is that after hearing those horrific stories, the healing parents needed the opportunity to grieve themselves. It's unrealistic to think that they wouldn't need their own caretaking after hearing the youth's stories from the night before. Because their worker put her oxygen mask on, she could attend to them, and meet their "breathing" needs, so that when the kids returned to the home at the end of the day, they were in a place to attend to children's needs all over again. Healers need their own healing/grieving. It's a parallel process.

### Pop-Out Story:

- ❖ Ten-year-old Jason was struggling in his new foster home after being told his adoptive family no longer wanted him back. His IPS worker introduced the stages of grief early on within the relationship and reviewed it periodically with him during the first few months. During one session, Jason was noticeably agitated and engaged in an earlier incident at school because he was not listening to rules or instruction. When the IPS worker could discuss more deeply with Jason what he was feeling prior to the incident at school, Jason stated, "I have been thinking about my adoptive parents and that I should have behaved more at home so they would have kept me, I think I am in bargaining right now." Because there was a common language about his grief, we could discuss what was happening and help the other adults in his life understand as well. While it is tempting to tell a youth things aren't their fault and they should or should not feel a certain way—we need to be present with them in the midst of their feelings without judgment. The only way out is through—we need to let the youth go through their emotional distress with our caring compassion and support.



**Key Point:** We must normalize the grieving process as something all humans experience and give youth an understanding of what can be expected (e.g., the stages of death & dying—a.k.a. loss) and a shared language to talk about this experience.



### Questions to Ponder:

1. What are some common losses a youth may grieve?
2. What does it mean to say that youth 'do' their pain?
3. What pain-based behaviors might you observe?
4. How can caregivers make sure they stay regulated during the youth's healing process?

# HEALING ACTIVITIES

# PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES: THE 5 STAGES OF GRIEF

**Purpose:** To help normalize the grieving process and help youth understand that grieving is a normal human process, which is shared by others.

**Supplies Needed:** A visual model of the stages of grief and loss. Books about loss, such as *Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing after Loss* by Pat Schwiebert, Chuck DeKlyen, Taylor Bills, which describe a story of owning one's own grief and grieving in one's own time, may also be helpful.

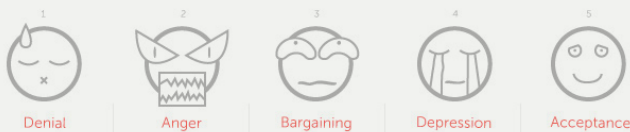
**Preparation:** The healer should have a clear understanding of the stages of grief and loss, including that they are not linear or predictable in nature.

**How to do:** Sharing the model with youth, while helping the youth to understand the general process and their experience in the process.

## The 5 Stages of Grief

Published on December 1st, 2012 by Loc.

### THE 5 STAGES OF GRIEF



Life can be such a fragile and precious thing. I recently experienced a loss in the family and I'm still trying to process things. My sister who passed away has been sick for many years now and in a way, it's a relief to not see her in pain anymore. Without going into too much details, her death was something my family has been anticipating and the day came on Monday.

I know about the 5 Stages of Grief from some previous research project for school. I won't tell you where I am right now, but it's heading in the right direction. I made this mini infographic because I couldn't design anything until today. Art has always been my refuge and I hope this helps whoever finds this post.

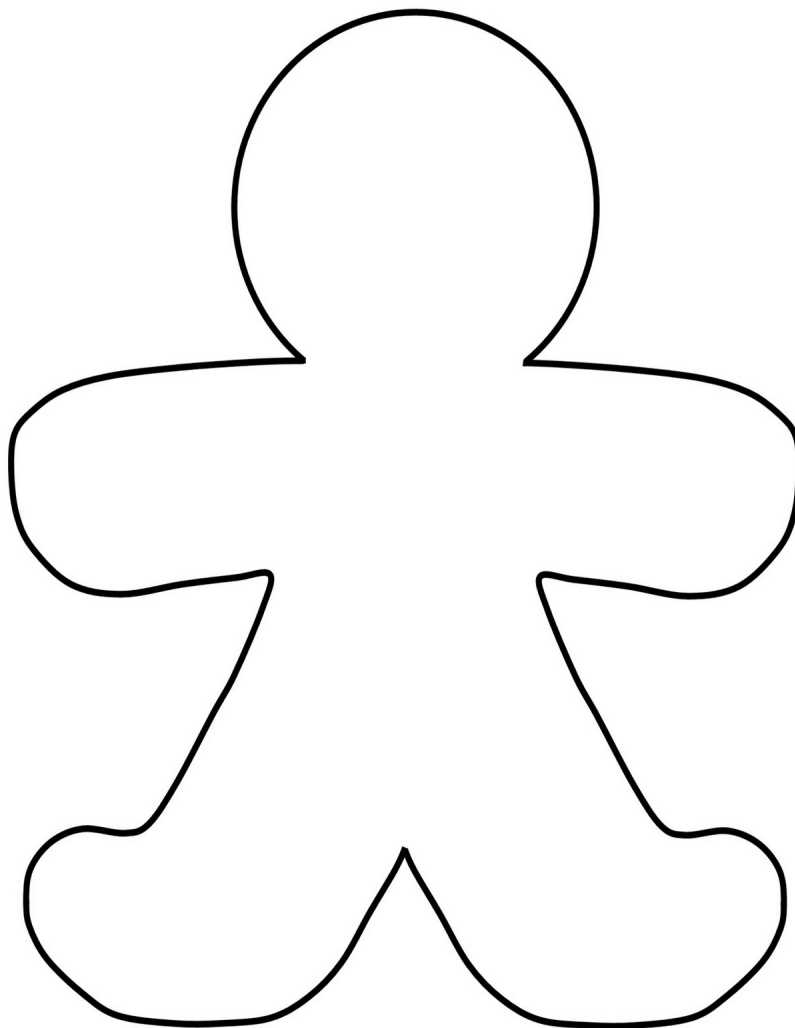
## BODY MAP ACTIVITY

**Purpose:** To help youth identify places in their body where they hold trauma or where trauma triggers present themselves first so that they may be identified earlier, before they escalate.

**Supplies Needed:** Copies of the image below, or one like the image below, and crayons, colored pencils, or markers

**Preparation:** Prepare yourself for the conversation with the youth by identifying key questions to help the youth identify where they feel early physical indicators when they begin to feel angry, frustrated, upset, etc.

**How to do:** Talk with youth about how trauma is stored in the body, how our body remembers when things happen to us, and how our body gives us early warning signs. Ask the youth to draw on the diagram below (offered on a separate sheet of paper), where they feel things in their body first when things aren't going well. Maybe they feel like hitting and they draw their hands in red, or kicking and draw their feet in red, or they scream, so they draw their mouth in red. Maybe they get an upset stomach and color it blue, or they feel like throwing up, and color their throat green. It's up to the youth how they want to proceed.



## GETTING GRIEF OUT OF THE BODY

**Purpose:** To help youth understand that trauma is stored in the body and can be physically purged from the body to promote healing. This can happen by using physical motion while verbally purging the grief.

**Supplies Needed:** Get creative about ways to purge...what can be pushed, hit, thrown, etc. safely? Privately? Consider each youth's need.

**Preparation:** Depending on the activity, you want to set boundaries about what is okay. Physical aggression with the punching bag is okay, but not with people. Swearing is okay during this activity, but not normally or in other settings.

**How to do:** Some examples of this are youth who have gone out to a field and thrown handfuls of rocks over and over while yelling, "How could they?" "Why would they?" "I deserved to be loved." "I am lovable." All the while crying and throwing hands full of rocks into the field. This can also be accomplished by punching a punching bag, running to exhaustion, writing feelings of grief down and then ripping the paper, or burning the paper, screaming, crying, spitting, etc. We hold toxins in our tears and in our spit (e.g., spitting mad), and these feelings can come out through physical motion as a way of grieving and purging.



# BACKPACK OF GRIEF

**Purpose:** Assist youth in identifying emotions they are carrying around inside of their body. Provide psychoeducation on effectiveness of sharing their burden by sharing the weight of their emotions so others can help carry the burden—no need to hold it all in.

**Supplies Needed:** Backpack, various weighted objects; weighted ball, yoga block, balls of various sizes, shapes, balloons

**Preparation:** This is usually best done outside on a path in a park, etc. As a lead up, completing an activity to identify emotions in their body will pair well with this as the worker can refer back to the activity and remind the youth what they identified during the previous activity.

**How to do:** This activity helps youth identify the various emotions that they are “carrying” around. Each object represents an emotion; either positive or negative. Use objects that are heavier or more uncomfortable for the high impact emotions (anger, confusion, sadness, hate, etc.). The strongest emotion for the youth should be represented by the heaviest object (i.e. weighted ball).

As the youth names the emotions they are carrying around, the healer/caring adult picks up a corresponding object and puts it in their backpack (empty backpack is on the youth’s back). The healer then places items intentionally in the backpack to make it more uncomfortable, etc. Each time the healer picks up an object to put into the backpack, ask the youth’s permission; “are you ready to carry this?” Once the backpack is full, zip it up and walk alongside the youth (preferably on right side).

Start walking with youth, ask: How is it feeling? What do you notice? What are your senses saying? Is it too heavy? Is something uncomfortable? The longer you carry it, does it feel heavier, etc.? As the youth is processing, acknowledge the “weight” they are carrying. Notice their nonverbal cues. Ask if they are ready to unpack it yet. Follow the youth’s cue. Ask permission; “Do you feel like I could carry this with you?” After carrying for a while, offer to give it back. Process what it feels like to carry it by themselves again.

When ready to unpack, ask permission to reach in and pull objects out. Intentionally stand on their right side. Remind them what emotion they identified for that object. Ask them to identify a time they felt this emotion. If ready to let it go, instruct them to throw it as far as they can. Be intentional with heaviest object removed last. When empty, if still feeling the weight, allow the youth to throw objects again and again until they feel released from it.

Upon completion, process that some emotions are harder to hold and some you want to hold on to. Ask the youth to pick up what objects/emotions they want to keep. Then identify positive emotions (use balloons, light and airy), and place them with the other objects, so the backpack feels light and manageable/balanced. Hike out!



# LIFE LINE

**Purpose:** To help youth clarify life events, identify losses, and engage discussion about past trauma.

**Supplies Needed:** Large drawing paper, pens, markers, crayons and tape

**Preparation:** Prior to the session, describe this activity to youth to ensure they are ready to do this. Also ask if there are more difficult years than others, and how they would like to break it down. For example, this session the youth may only want to work on birth to 5 years old. Find a meeting place which is a known safe place for youth. Also, ensure there is privacy and quiet.

**How to do:** Have the youth draw a line horizontally across the paper. At the beginning of the line, write birth, and at the end of the line, draw the age the youth is choosing to end with today. For example, birth-----age 5. There are many ways to start, depending on the youth you are working with and the emotional state they are in during the session. You can start by identifying happy memories between the given age groups.

Happy memories can be documented under the horizontal line. Youth can write words, draw pictures or whatever they want to do to document the happy memory. You can also start by just writing down all the places this youth lived and how old they were when they moved. Draw houses/buildings directly on the line to indicate a placement. When youth are ready, they can recall significant losses or traumatic events in their lives. These are written or drawn above the horizontal line. This can be a painful process and will take time.

Let youth set the pace for this activity. It is also important to encourage and validate their feelings, their losses and their trauma. Lifelines should not be shared with anyone without the youth's permission. Also, never allow anyone to "correct" the youth's lifeline. For example, "you weren't in that foster home when you were 9, you were 11". These are the youth's memories and perceptions and need to be honored. However, there are times when youth are not sure when or if something happened to them at certain points. This is a good time to talk about how to get clarification and truthful information if the youth wants it.





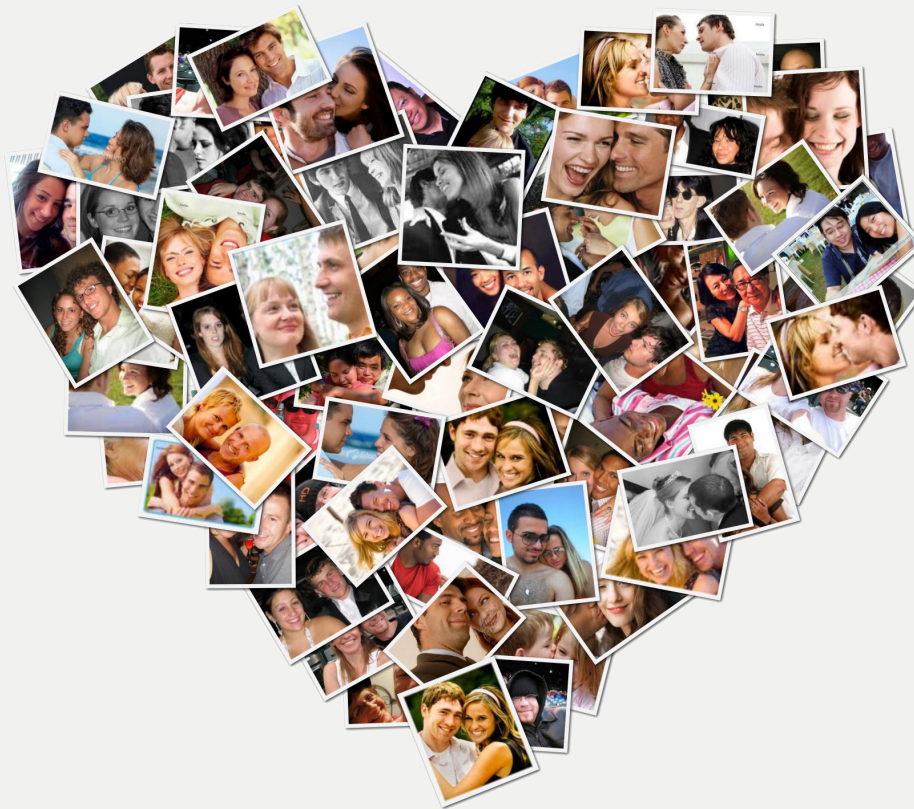
# HONOR COLLAGES

**Purpose:** To acknowledge, validate and honor the many losses youth in the system have experienced.

**Supplies Needed:** One large piece of tagboard cut into a heart; magazines, colored paper, photocopies of important photographs, anything that can be glued to the tagboard; one bottle of glue, one glue stick and scissors.

**Preparation:** Have the tagboard cut in advance. If you have photographs of the youth or past important people, make photo copies and bring them. Ensure you will have at least one hour of uninterrupted time with the youth for this activity.

**How to do:** Help youth to identify important losses in their lives. Have them cut out words, pictures, colors—anything that reminds them of these persons, places or things. This is a way to not only honor the youth and their pain, but also a beautiful way to honor, remember and stay connected with the pieces of the past they want to keep.



# STORY DICE

**Purpose:** To explore grief and loss the youth may have experienced.

**Supplies Needed:** Story dice

**Preparation:** None

**How to do:** The activity is to use the pictures on the story cubes to tell a story with the healer. The healer can suggest a topic such as family, a memory, etc. These can be used again during the connection phase and often include family members in the game with each person grabbing equal amounts of dice and going around in a circle expanding out a story in the given theme.

The youth can also just pick one dice that appeals to them and talk about what the picture means to them during the trusting phase as a way to open communication. This is a great activity that can be modified in many different ways to fit all four phases.



# BILL OF RIGHTS FOR TEENS EXPERIENCING GRIEF

**Purpose:** To normalize the grieving process and empower youth who feel overwhelmed by or disempowered by their grief.

**Supplies Needed:** The Bill of Rights below

**Preparation:** None

**How to do:** Talk with the youth about owning their own grief, and review the Bill of Rights to help them identify ways to do that.

## BILL OF RIGHTS FOR TEENS EXPERIENCING GRIEF

Although many people will give you advice, always keep in mind that you have basic rights as you experience your grief.

\*\*\*\*\*

1. You have the right to your own feelings. Your feelings are neither right nor wrong. But they are your feelings.
2. You have the right to express your grief and be comforted. If you do not get comfort, you have the right to request additional support.
3. You have the right to continued loving care, but you must understand that it may sometimes be difficult for those who love you to provide that care.
4. You have the right to help plan and participate in the funeral ceremony, as much or as little as you wish.
5. You have the right to ask any questions and expect thoughtful, honest answers.
6. You have the right to be treated as an interested and important individual, not as someone's "kid."
7. If you are a surviving sibling, you have the right to maintain your own identity. You are yourself and you cannot take the place of your dead sister or brother.
8. You have the right to grieve for days or years, however long it takes you to feel good again. There is no set time to feel better.
9. You have the right to be free from guilt or continued grief, and you have the right to counseling if you need or want it.
10. You have the right to be a comforter to others who are grieving and to share your grief with them.

Materials presented as part of the Kids, Teens, and Grief Program Beloit Regional Hospice  
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# CONNECT

## What it means to help youth connect

The primary goal of connection is to reconnect youth with those they loved and lost (fictive kin) or to whom they are related (kin). There is a profound human need for belonging and claiming that creates safety, so we work to identify permanent connections with safe, stable, nurturing adults. The key effort here is to identify a permanently legal guardian for a youth; however, we also work to increase the quantity and quality of a youth's connections. We are trying to increase not only the number of connections but the depth of bond that exists between former or existing connections. Every connection matters, and so does every disconnection. Family search techniques are important in this part of the framework.

Youth in the foster care system oftentimes are disconnected from everything and everyone familiar to them. This includes family, friends, communities, favorite places, toys, clothing, and beliefs. With every move and every day a youth spends in foster care, the disconnection grows deeper. Each day they move further away, emotionally, physically and spiritually from where they were. Isolation intensifies the losses youth experience. There is no one to console or help them, or even understand a small portion of what they went through and are feeling. Being disconnected begins to affect self-worth and identity. Who am I, who do I look like, where do I fit in, what is wrong with me, why does everyone and everything I love go away or get taken from me—what is fundamentally wrong with me? I must be bad for these bad things to happen. If I am bad, then I will fulfill that role of being “bad”.

For youth ages 6-12, the disconnection is profound. Being separated from a parent/caregiver can be the most traumatizing event for youth they will ever experience. Developmentally, youth in this age group internalize everything and blame themselves. The guilt, anger, and frustration of feeling responsible for the disconnection are often too much to bear. The longing for answers, contact, and connection is something youth within this age group will usually share freely if a healer asks. Talking to youth about what and who they miss will help identify where to start with connecting. The connection can be as simple as a favorite blanket or stuffed animal, a favorite teacher or family member. Lifelines, heart maps, and life books are all wonderful ways to help youth remember who they love and who loves them.

Youth's innate need is to remain connected to important people from their past. This can be done while keeping the youth safe. If there are safety reasons which prevent youth from contact with someone from their past, it is important to give truthful answers about why it isn't safe. Helping the youth send cards to important people, exchanging pictures, phone contact and visits are all ways to help youth connect to people from their past. Even if there are people in the past the youth, because of safety/legal reasons, is not able to have contact with, these people can still deliver healing messages and truth via letters vetted through an appropriate adult. For example, it can be very healing if a father writes a letter telling the truth and takes accountability for what happened, apologizing to the youth and describing all the wonderful things he remembers about the youth.

For youth ages 13-21, connecting can be more challenging. At this age, youth typically experienced so many disconnections and feel so far removed, it is often difficult to remember what they miss. Connection is scary because of all the unknowns and their cognitive ability to imagine the possibilities. For example, from the youth's perspective, it is easier to remember how much the youth loved that teacher, rather than risk finding out the teacher doesn't remember or want contact with the youth. Youth were rejected so many times that the thought of a rejection from someone they feel fondly about is worse than not knowing; however, when probed further, these youths are the most desperate for that connection. Youth at this age typically possess an all or nothing mentality. For example, if Dad misses or is late for a visit for a legitimate reason, then the youth perceives that Dad must not really love the youth. Youth did not learn the necessary skills to navigate a healthy relationship. Thus, if someone upsets them, they immediately throw up walls and terminate the relationship versus sharing their feelings and working through the misunderstanding.

Developmentally, youth between the ages of 6 and 12 might not know what a healthy relationship looks or feels like. Most youth at this age experienced few relationships outside the primary family and school. Youth in foster care are even more confused because complete strangers appear to possess sensitive information about the “secrets” within their home or other intimate details they did not share. It is common to meet foster youth who will recite their various diagnoses and the fact that they were sexually abused. They did not experience examples of how to discriminate appropriately between people or understand the depths of relationships. The first step a healer takes with youth is to earn their trust.

The act of telling a youth, “You don’t have to tell me anything about you until I EARN your trust,” is at first confusing, but eventually empowering. Allowing youth to choose the place to meet, the activities to participate in, and more importantly allowing them NOT to participate, is validating, and promotes healing. Furthermore, sharing their feelings, sharing their story, sharing their hearts and trust are all things to be earned, not just given. Healers must be vulnerable during this process; youth will often test to see if healers are telling the truth. They will be watching for inconsistencies in what the healer does and says. If the healer is consistent, trust is earned, and the youth will also learn that there are adults worthy of trust who will not hurt them.

Youth between the ages of 12 and 21 also possess confused ideas of what healthy relationships look like. These are the years youth desire to conform to their peers, start exploring sexuality and romantic relationships and figure out how to be independent with no safety net. These youth desire control, but are usually more tentative and more focused on watching what the healer is going to do first. Youth at this age learned how to “people please” or use relationships with people to serve very specific needs, but at a superficial level. Youth this age typically were in and out of the system for years. They experienced multiple caregivers and decision makers in their lives, and each one expects something different from the youth. Youth often do not know what THEY like, or what is lovable about them because the answer was different depending on who was caring for them. They emulate low self-worth, no sense of identity and little self-awareness, which makes them vulnerable.

Again, the healer can earn their trust, the right to hear their story, and their choice to participate, similar to working with younger youth. Being consistent with words and actions as well as being vulnerable are vital. It is more important to engage with these youth rather than assess these youth. To really be interested in finding out what they like, what they might be good at, what is lovable about them, are all conversations that did not often occur. Youth usually experienced numerous assessments and questionnaires and know all the right things to say without really tapping into their vulnerability. In contrast, you can find activities that engage in a conversation. Music is usually a great place to start with youth. Learning about the artists, types of music and specific songs they like provides insight into where they are emotionally. Often, youth placed in residential settings are not allowed to listen to music, so the opportunity to listen to their favorite songs is a treat (even the ones with swear words). Showing genuine interest will open the door to deeper conversations that will ultimately develop trust.

## The Role of Healing Parents & Caregivers in Helping Youth Connect

One common theme and comment that healing parents experience is how much their support system changes after they become healing parents. The people they connected with prior to becoming healing parents often don't understand the significant needs of children who were traumatized. Due to the significant trauma, the youth's pain-based behaviors are often foreign to those who don't understand.

Additionally, parenting children who were traumatized is significantly different than parenting children who joined one's family through birth. Often, friends' parenting styles are different and support is difficult as a result. The key to the success of healing parents is to be connected with other healing parents and those who truly understand what it means to be a healing parent. It is a basic human need to experience love and belonging; whether you are age 2 or age 72. This need doesn't end, so finding support from and connections to like-minded individuals is normal and necessary. Connecting healing parents with other healing parents is integral to not only the success of the healing parents but inadvertently to youth in the healing home.

This connection responsibility frequently falls on the licensing social worker's shoulders. This often is the best-laid plan, because of the close relationship the licensing social worker develops with the healing families. As a result, the worker often makes a great "matchmaker" for like-minded families to connect and begin to support one another.

When a single mom began the licensing process, the licensing worker began to include her in on trainings and gatherings with another foster family who not only lived in her geographic area but approached parenting in a similar way as she did. The worker introduced these two families and was very intentional to support and assist in building that relationship. Daniel Siegel teaches that what is shareable is bearable. We need to be intentional about connection (Siegel, 2011).

This intentional effort came to fruition when the single mom received her first placement. As this whole experience was new to her and was accompanied by a strong support system, she began to realize that some members of the support system she engaged prior to becoming a healing parent pulled back and significantly changed. While healing parenting of traumatized youth can be a difficult journey, losing key members of her previously identified support system in the process was devastating. Thankfully the relationship she started developing with the other healing family was already in place, because not only did she reach out to them for questions and support, but also the two families began getting together on a regular basis; doing activities within the community with the youth in their homes and thus inadvertently building a healthy relationship and connection between the foster youth. This also empowered her to identify other members of her previous support system who began to play a different and more integral role in supporting her as a healing parent.

While the loss of a support system is not every healing parent's story, it is a natural inevitability that as the healing parent's role changes, so will their connections. This speaks to the basic human need for connection. Humans reach out to connections that will support them throughout their life. The importance of connection is not only a basic human need but also exemplifies the importance of connections to the youth served/parented by healing parents and professionals. If the healing parents and professionals do not possess positive support systems to meet their own need for connection, they're not only ignoring their own needs for connection, but they cannot demonstrate how to form solid relationships/connections to the traumatized youth they are serving and/or parenting; an integral part of human development.

## Pop-Out Stories:

- ❖ Seventeen-year-old Jamal was in the foster care system since he was 6 years old. His mother died and his father's rights were terminated when he was young. Jamal admitted that he felt responsible for his family splitting apart and for all the children going into foster care because he found a crack pipe within his home. It was after this discovery that the home was raided and the children removed. Jamal carried this guilt and sense of responsibility for 10 years. The IPS worker found his birth father and discovered that he was sober and clean for nearly 6 years. Because Jamal was much older, and his father made life changes, it was determined that reconnecting Jamal with his father was in his best interests. When they met, Jamal shared his feelings of guilt and responsibility, and his father could give Jamal truth and accountability for what happened. Jamal was instantly relieved of the burdens he felt most of his life and experience healing through one conversation with his father.



**Key Point:** It is imperative that we help youth create permanent, safe, and stable relationships. Without them, healing cannot happen, and there are lifelong negative impacts.



### Questions to Ponder:

1. Karyn Purvis in *The Connected Child* says that we should “connect before we correct”. What does this mean to you and why is it important?
2. What is the primary goal of the connection process?
3. Connection is not always physical. What can you do if family members are unsafe and contact cannot be completed?
4. What does your support system look like? Has it changed since you became involved in the healing process of a youth?

# CONNECTING ACTIVITIES



## CONNECTIONS MAP

**Purpose:** To help youth identify connections and create a visual map of people who the child loves, is related to, or feels connected to in some way.

**Supplies Needed:** Connections maps can come in many different forms; therefore, a solid piece of paper, glue, tape, markers or crayons are a good starting point; however, as you can see from the Spiderman map below, you may want to bring supplies or pictures specific to the child's developmental age or interests.

**Preparation:** Bring a list of important connections, in case the youth struggles to identify connections; bring supplies listed above, and ensure you will have at least one hour of uninterrupted time with the youth for this activity.

**How to do:** The white spaces by the Captain America shields contain names of connections that were marked out to protect the child's confidentiality. On an actual map, names would be present.



# YOUTH CONNECTIONS SCALE

**Purpose:** To measure the quality and quantity of a youth's connections. The Youth Connections Scale may be used to 1) form connection with the youth; 2) learn more about who the youth considers important to assist with family finding; 3) keep permanency in the forefront of supervision; 4) evaluate performance or programs; 5) as a measure for performance-based contracting of permanency-driven services.

**Supplies Needed:** A copy of the Youth Connections Scale; pencils

**Preparation:** Bring information with you about what you know about a youth's important connections, to help support a youth's memory and completion of the form. Consider participating in the online learning module and learning more at: <https://cascw.umn.edu/portfolio-items/y/cs/>

**How to do:** With the importance of connection in the forefront of healing trauma, the Youth Connection Scale serves as a valuable tool to identify the youth's relationships. This tool provides the framework for discussion about the youth's specific connections or lack thereof. This process can promote self-awareness and understanding of the youth's needs, strengths, and challenges. Care must be taken to choose the appropriate setting and timing for administering this scale. Some level of rapport and trust must be established before engaging in the Youth Connections Scale with the youth.



# Youth Connections Scale

## (A) Tools for Youth Connections

	Yes	No
Has a genogram or connectedness map been completed with youth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Lifebook been created with or for the youth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## (B) Number of Supportive Adult Connections:

For each category, please write the total number of meaningful relationships that apply for youth at this time.

“Meaningful relationships” are defined by the youth. This would include adults who have some on-going contact with the youth and who can be counted on for some type of support.

### Total # of Adult Relationships for Each Category

Mother (birth, adoptive, stepmother)	
Father (birth, adoptive, stepfather)	
<b>Adult siblings</b>	
Other adult relatives	
Current foster parent	
Former foster parent	
Current or former social worker	
Current or former teacher	
Current or former therapist, counselor or psychologist	
Pastor, rabbi or other spiritual leader	
An adult friend, mentor or sponsor	
Other adults (Please list relationships):	

## (C) Strength of Youth Connections:

Indicate the strength of the relationship between the youth and adult right now.

In categories where there is more than one person, choose the most meaningful relationship and answer about that person. You can list up to two additional adults in the last two rows. Circle the best response for each row.

**Very Weak:** No Contact

**Weak:** Infrequent contact; youth can't count on this adult for support

**Moderate:** Some contact with this adult but may not be consistent; youth feels a connection but can't count on this adult all the time

**Strong:** Contact at least once per month; youth feels a connection of the heart, mind or spirit with this person; youth can usually count on this person

**Very Strong:** Contact at least once per week; youth feels a long-term connection of the heart, mind or spirit with this person; youth can count on this person to be there for them when needed

**N/A:** Not applicable because adult is deceased or youth has no siblings

	Very Weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very Strong	N/A
Parent 1 ( <i>birth, adoptive or step mother or father</i> )	0	1	2	3	4	N/A
Parent 2 ( <i>birth, adoptive or step mother or father</i> )	0	1	2	3	4	N/A
Siblings	0	1	2	3	4	N/A
Other adult relatives	0	1	2	3	4	N/A
Other caring adult identified by youth:	0	1	2	3	4	N/A
Other caring adult identified by youth:	0	1	2	3	4	N/A

**(D) Support Indicators:** Answer yes or no for each indicator. *These do not have to be from the same adult.*

You have an adult in your life whom you will be able to count on for the following support after you leave foster care:

Yes	No	Indicator
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing a home to go to for the holidays
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing an emergency place to stay
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing cash in times of emergency
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help with job search assistance or career counseling, or providing a reference for youth
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help with finding an apartment or co-signing a lease
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help with school ( <i>homework, re-enrolling in school, help in applying to colleges</i> )
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assisting with daily living skills, such as cooking, budgeting, paying bills and housecleaning
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing storage space during transition times
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional support – a caring adult to talk to
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sharing in or supporting experiences of youth’s cultural and spiritual background
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Checking in on youth regularly – to see how they are doing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assisting with medical appointments so youth does not have to experience that alone
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assisting with finding and accessing community resources.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A home to go for occasional family meals
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help providing transportation ( <i>help with purchasing a car</i> ) or figuring out public transportation
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Someone to send care packages at college
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assisting with purchasing cell phone and service ( <i>for example, youth is added to a family plan</i> ).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A place to do laundry
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting youth in civic engagement such as voting and volunteering

List has been modified and adapted from the FosterClub Permanency Pact (2006).

**(E) Level of Youth Connections:** Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Circle the best response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
While in foster care, you have connected or re-connected with relatives or caring adults who will be lifelong supportive connections	0	1	2	3	4
An adult has made a commitment to provide a permanent, parent-like relationship to you	0	1	2	3	4
You are living with an adult who has or plans to adopt you or become your legal guardian	0	1	2	3	4
You feel very disconnected from any caring adults	0	1	2	3	4

Office Use Only: Youth Name \_\_\_\_\_ Youth Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Worker Completing Form \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Completion of Form \_\_\_\_\_

Form Completed: Within 30 Days of Placement  Within 30 Days of Discharge  Other

Form Completed Without Youth at Discharge: Yes  No  If Yes, Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

# USING SENSES FOR CONNECTION

**Purpose:** To help youth stay connected with those who they cannot be physically connected with. Connections can happen in many ways, including through pictures, smells, songs, mementos, and others.

**Supplies Needed:** Various...there are endless possibilities

**Preparation:** Consider who the most important connections are for the youth and build connections to these important connections. Bring supplies according to the activity planned.

## How to do:

- **Connect by smell.** Smell is an essential element of connection. Find ways to associate smell with memories of people to whom the youth is connected.
  - *Aromatherapy:* have a diffuser of lavender (or other calming scent) in the youth's room, then have cotton balls of lavender in a Ziploc in the youth's backpack or at the school nurse for the youth to access in times of stress.
  - *Human scent:* if the youth is deeply connected to someone, have that primary connection wear a bandana around their hair or neck, etc. After several hours, the bandana will smell like that connection, and the youth can carry the bandana to school or to bed, etc. to carry the familiar scent. This can also be done with a pillowcase that a close connection has used that can be shared with the youth.
- **Connection with words.** Notes left in lunches, lockers, inside books or notebooks under pillows, etc. which reaffirm the connection, the love, and the feeling of, "I'm thinking of you when I'm not with you."
- **Connection with pictures.** Keep a picture of youth and important connection next to the youth's bed, or inside the youth's notebook, etc. Pictures of a youth with an important connection is very important for the youth to see.
- **Connections with mementos.** Tokens can be shared which say, "This reminds me of you." These can be anything at all, even a rock, but can also be a necklace, a token kept in the pocket, or a sticker (such as from the book *The Kissing Hand* about a child who does not want to be separated from his caregiver), etc.





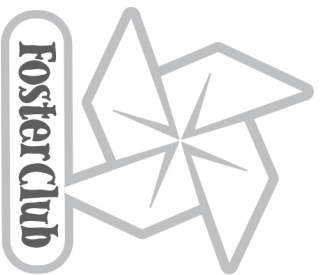
# PERMANENCY PACT

In an effort to substantiate and sustain  
an on-going connection between a youth and a supportive adult,

\_\_\_\_\_ SUPPORTIVE ADULT \_\_\_\_\_  
pledges to provide specific support to, and has been accepted as a  
provider of such support by,  
\_\_\_\_\_ YOUTH \_\_\_\_\_

confirmed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
DAY MONTH YEAR  
as witnessed by \_\_\_\_\_ FACILITATOR \_\_\_\_\_

*FosterClub's Permanency Pact documents a  
life-long, kin-like commitment to a relationship  
between a youth and a supportive adult.*



the national network for young people in foster care | [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org)

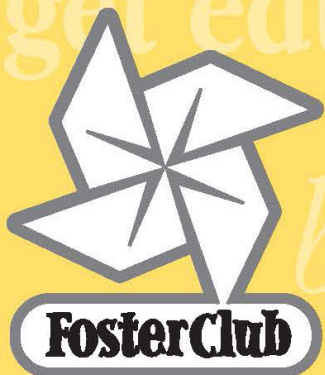
- A Home For The Holidays
- A Place To Do Laundry
- Emergency Place To Stay
- Food/Occasional Meals
- Care Packages At College
- Employment Opportunity
- Job Search Assistance
- Career Counseling
- Housing Hunt
- Recreational Activities
- Mentor
- Educational Assistance
- Relationship/Marriage/Parenting
- Transportation
- Assistance With Medical Appts
- Storage
- Motivation
- Someone To Talk To/Discuss Problems
- A Phone To Use
- A Computer To Use
- Clothing
- Spiritual Support
- Legal Troubles
- Cultural Experience
- Apartment Move-in
- Cooking Lessons/Assistance
- Regular Check-in
- Bills & Money Management Assistance
- Drug And Alcohol Addiction Help
- Mental Health Support
- Co-Signer
- Help Reading Forms, Complex Docs
- Mechanical/Building Projects
- Housekeeping
- Home Decorating
- Voting
- Volunteerism
- Finding Community Resources
- Safety And Personal Security
- Babysitting
- Emergency Cash
- Social Circle/Community Activities
- Advocacy
- Reference
- Adoption
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



# Permanency Pact

*Life-long, kin-like  
connections between  
a youth and  
a supportive adult*

A free tool to support permanency for youth in foster care



The national network for young people in foster care

[www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org)

get educated  
advocate  
speak up  
belong  
involved + informed



*What's a Permanency Pact? A pledge by a supportive adult to provide specific supports to a young person in foster care with a goal of establishing a lifelong, kin-like relationship.*

## Permanency Pact

Youth transitioning from foster care are often unsure about who they can count on for ongoing support. Many of their significant relationships with adults have been based on professional connections which will terminate once the transition from care is completed. It is critical to the youth's success to identify those adults who will continue to provide various supports through and beyond the transition from care. Clarifying exactly what the various supports will include can help to avoid gaps in the youth's safety net and misunderstandings between the youth and the supportive adult.

### A Permanency Pact provides:

- structure and a safety net for the youth
- a defined and verbalized commitment by both parties to a long term supportive relationship
- clarity regarding the expectations of the relationship

A Permanency Pact creates a formalized, facilitated process to connect youth in foster care with a supportive adult. The process of bringing the supportive adult together with youth and developing a pledge or "Permanency Pact" has proven successful in clarifying the relationship and identifying mutual expectations. A committed, caring adult may provide a lifeline for a youth, particularly those who are preparing to transition out of foster care to life on their own.

### Participants in a Permanency Pact

In addition to the two primary parties in a Permanency Pact (the youth and the supportive adult), it is recommended that a Facilitator assist in developing the Pact.

The *Facilitator* may be a Case Worker, Independent Living Provider or other adult who:

- is knowledgeable in facilitating Permanency Pacts\*
- is familiar with the youth, and
- can provide insight into the general needs of the youth transitioning from care

The *Supportive Adult* is an adult who:

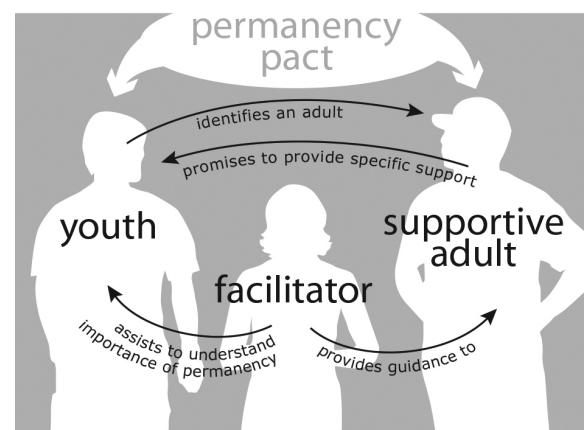
- has been identified by the youth
- has a relationship with the youth
- is willing to commit to a life-long relationship with the youth
- is a positive role-model and
- is able to provide the youth with specific support on an on-going basis

\*A Permanency Pact Toolkit will be available Summer, 2007 at [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org)



Shawn from Michigan,  
FosterClub All-Star

"As I get older I am seeing the importance of family, community and peer support. Ever since I became engaged and active in my community my circle of support has expanded. My life has become so much more enriched now that I have accepted that I have a lot of people that care about me, I genuinely believe that family: peers, bio, foster, adoptive, in-laws are the most valuable thing a person can have in their life."



## Developing a Permanency Pact

The first step is to engage the youth to identify the supports they want or need as they prepare for the transition out of foster care, and beyond to adulthood. The following list of 45 Suggested Supports can help with this process. Together with the youth, the Facilitator can then begin to develop a list of adults who may be able to provide some of those supports. This list may include current relationships or adults with whom the youth has had a previous connection to which they wish to reestablish.

The Facilitator then:

- obtains necessary releases of information
- makes initial contact with the indentified adult(s)
- updates them regarding the youth's current situation
- gauges their level of interest
- assists the adult in identifying possible supports they will provide, and
- schedules and facilitates the Permanency Pact meeting

Working with the Supportive Adult, the Facilitator can use the following list of 45 Suggested Supports to draft a list of supports that the adult wishes to offer the youth. The list is then presented to the youth who will acknowledge the offer and accept those supports that they feel would be most beneficial. Additional supports may be suggested by either the youth or the supportive adult.

The final list may then be hand written using the attached list or entered into the Pact template, available in Microsoft Word, Wordperfect, and PDF formats (available in the Permanency Pact toolkit, order through [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org) starting Summer 2007). The youth and Supportive Adult sign the Pact and the Facilitator provides a witness signature. Copies of the Permanency Pact are provided to the youth, the Supportive Adult and maintained in the case record as part of the youth's Transition Plan. It is recommended that a certificate be prepared which documents the Pact between the adult and youth (certificate templates available in the Permanency Pact toolkit). All other members of the youth's Transition Team, including foster parents, CASA, judge, etc. should also receive copies of the Permanency Pact.

Taking a step toward trusting a relationship is often a very great accomplishment for a youth with a background where relationships are broken, promises are often not kept, and disappointment in caretakers prevails. The gift that a Supportive Adult contributes by way of a life-long commitment to the relationship is heroic. The impact of the forged relationship may be profound to all parties. To symbolize the importance of the commitment, it is recommended that a Permanency Pact be held in conjunction with some sort of ceremony or celebration. The Supportive Adult may want to give the youth a token keepsake gift (a piece of jewelry, photo frame, watch, engraved item, a special note, photo album, etc.), a celebration meal can be enjoyed.

A Certificate has been provided in this packet which may be used to affirm the Permanency Pact made between a youth and supportive adult.

*FosterClub member Caliguy94037,  
age 18, from California*

"I consider permanency to be a life long connection with an adult and consider it very important. In my experiences, I have just met adults that seem to stay in my life and that connection with them helps me to succeed in life."



*Schylar From Montana,  
Fosterclub All-Star*

"I have been through a lot in my life, and sometimes felt as if I were the only one alive in the world even when I was surrounded by lots of people. I am not always sure why I felt this way, maybe because I was a foster kid or maybe because I had always been told I was meant for nothing. But after a life of trials, I found someone that can almost make me forget a lot of the hurt and bad relationships. He is my 6th grade music teacher, my mentor, my savior through 11 placements, and now... my dad. I am 23, and am soon to be adopted your never too old to be adopted."



# 45 Suggested Supports...

*...that a Supportive Adult might offer to a youth transitioning from care*

## ❑ **A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

Spending the holidays without a family and with nowhere to go is a significant issue cited by young people who have transitioned out of foster care. Extending an invitation to holiday celebrations, or birthdays can help a youth fend off the depression that usually sets in around these important times of year.

## ❑ **A PLACE TO DO LAUNDRY**

Many adults can look back at the times they returned home as a youth with bags loaded with dirty clothes to wash. The offer to use laundry facilities can be a great way to keep a regular connection with a youth and provide them with a way to maintain pride in their appearance, regardless of an unstable housing situation.

## ❑ **EMERGENCY PLACE TO STAY**

Statistics show 25% of young persons will spend at least one night homeless within the first 2-4 years of leaving foster care. The offer of an emergency couch to sleep on or a guest bedroom to stay in can reduce anxiety and keep young people safe during hardships. Supportive adults may want to specify limits in time or expectations (help with housework, etc.) as a condition of this offer.

## ❑ **FOOD/OCCASIONAL MEALS**

A friendly, family-style meal every Thursday evening or an invitation to Sunday brunch or a monthly lunch can provide a youth with a healthy alternative to the fast-food that often composes a youth's diet. It also provides a chance to connect and to role-model family life. An open invite to "raid the pantry" can be very comforting to young students or those on a limited budget and will help to ensure that the youth's health isn't jeopardized when funds are low.

## ❑ **CARE PACKAGES AT COLLEGE**

Students regularly receive boxes of homemade cookies, a phone card or photos from their parents when away at college. A regular package to a foster youth who has transitioned from care reminds them of connections "back home", and allows them to fit in with their peers.

## ❑ **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

An employer or person in a position to hire, can help by providing special consideration when hiring for a new position. A phone call to the youth inviting them to apply, help with a written application, coaching for a job interview are all ways to help. Supportive adults can offer a youth the chance to help with yard work, housecleaning, babysitting, etc. in order to earn extra money and to establish a work reference.

## ❑ **JOB SEARCH ASSISTANCE**

Finding a job can be a daunting task for anyone. Advice, help filling out applications or creating a resumé, rehearsal of interview questions, transportation to interviews, preparation of appropriate clothing, discussion of workplace behavior, and just plain cheering on can help a youth successfully land a job.

## ❑ **CAREER COUNSELING**

An adult working in the youth's field of interest can offer advice which could launch a youth's career. Youth particularly benefit from connections and introductions which lead to apprenticeships, job shadows, or other real-world experience. Supportive adults can help the transitioning youth make these contacts.

## ❑ **HOUSING HUNT**

Securing a first apartment is a rite of passage to adulthood. But without guidance, finding housing can turn into an overwhelming experience. Youth leaving care often lack references or a co-signer which a supportive adult may be able to offer. Former foster youth may have opportunities for financial assistance, but may need help locating it or applying for it. Also, supportive adults can utilize apartment hunting as an opportunity to discuss other daily living challenges, like roommates, utilities, selecting a neighborhood, transportation to job and needed services, etc.

## ❑ **RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Extending an invitation to a youth to go bike riding, go bowling, shoot some hoops or to simply take a walk can promote health, relieve anxiety, and provide a comfortable way to connect. Recreational activities like cooking, woodworking, painting or playing guitar can provide an outlet for youth and help to develop skills. Other activities include going to a movie, playing cards or chess or Monopoly, taking photographs, going shopping or taking a short trip.

## ❑ **MENTOR**

Mentors have proven to be an effective influence on youth. Whether a formal or informal mentor to a youth in care, the supportive adult can be a role-model, coach and a friend.

## ❑ **TRANSPORTATION**

Youth often need help with transportation and may have no one to turn to. A supportive adult can be a transportation resource, specifying the limits of the offer, i.e. for school, to find employment, for medical appointments, to visit relatives, etc. Youth can often use help to figure out how to use public transportation.



❑ **EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE**

According to statistics, only 50% of foster youth will graduate from high school. These shocking statistics show that many youth in care struggle through school against terrible odds including multiple moves, learning disabilities, lack of parental support and missed time in class. A supportive adult can help by becoming a tutor, an educational advocate, or by simply providing advice when needed. Youth planning to attend college can use help with college applications, finding financial aid, and visits to perspective college campuses.

❑ **RELATIONSHIP/MARRIAGE/PARENTING COUNSELING**

Youth coming out of foster care often lack the skill to cultivate and maintain lasting personal relationships. In many cases, role-modeled relationships for the youth have included biological parents with dysfunctional relationships and paid caretakers from group homes or facilities. Supportive adults can provide frank discussions about relationships, marriage, the role of a spouse and how to be a good parent when the time comes.

❑ **ASSISTANCE WITH MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS/ CHAPERONE**

It can be scary attending a medical appointment all alone. A supportive adult can accompany a youth to a medical appointment or rehearse what questions to ask, interpret a doctor's instructions, or provide advice about obtaining a second opinion.

❑ **STORAGE**

Sometimes the life of a youth can be transient, moving from location to location before getting settled. The supportive adult can provide a safe place to store valuables and help ensure that the youth doesn't lose track of valuables, including photo albums, family keepsakes, and records.

❑ **MOTIVATION**

Everyone does better with a personal cheering section. The supportive adult may be the only one to offer encouraging words to a youth.

❑ **SOMEONE TO TALK TO/DISCUSS PROBLEMS**

When a youth transitions out of care, there are often moments of insecurity, loneliness and anxiety. The supportive adult can provide a listening ear for a youth to vent, offer advice and wisdom, or be a sounding board for ideas. It may be wise to establish "calling hours" to avoid late night or early morning calls, if that is a concern.

❑ **A PHONE TO USE**

Sometimes a phone is simply not an affordable luxury for a youth starting out on their own. A supportive adult could provide use of their phone as a message phone for the youth's prospective employers or landlords. Use of the phone can be helpful to keep in touch with caseworkers, siblings, parents, former foster parents, or to access resources in the community.

❑ **A COMPUTER TO USE**

Access to a computer is a valuable tool for a youth for school work, employment or housing search, or contact with siblings or other relatives. A supportive adult can provide this access from a computer at work or at home, and may want to establish limits in time, websites visited, or downloads that are acceptable.

❑ **CLOTHING**

A youth may need assistance and/or advise in purchasing or preparing clothing for events like a job interview, weddings or special occasions, or graduation. Sometimes special opportunities need special gear, like a school ski trip, a costume party, etc. A supportive adult can assist with laundry, ironing, mending, shopping for new clothes, or occasionally purchasing a new item. Improving a youth's personal appearance can boost self confidence.

❑ **SPIRITUAL SUPPORT**

Youth often develop the same spiritual beliefs as their parents. Youth coming from care may have lacked this spiritual guidance. A supportive adult can invite a youth to join them as they search for their own spiritual path. The adult can offer to explore religion with the youth and invite them to participate in church or other spiritual activities.

❑ **LEGAL TROUBLES**

A youth emerging from care who gets into legal trouble usually cannot afford legal advice. When youth have a tangle with the law, they often land in deeper trouble because of their lack of experience and resources in navigating the legal system. A supportive adult can assist by connecting youth to needed legal services. The supporter may also wish to provide preventative advice to the youth who may be headed for legal entanglement.



*JJ from Michigan,  
FosterClub All-Star*

"Permanency is a feeling that is different for everyone, it is not bound by time nor can it be measured. It has to be discovered and often times it has to be tested, and rejected more than once before permanency can be established. Permanency is so hard to understand because it is a conceptual idea of an

emotion and is received on both ends very differently for every person. There is no straight "by the book" definition of permanency because the emotions I feel cannot be felt by anyone else, and that's the great thing about it."

❑ **CULTURAL EXPERIENCE**

Supportive adults who share a cultural background with a youth may wish to engage them in cultural activities. Even if the cultural backgrounds are different, the youth can be motivated to participate in cultural events. Support can be given to examine cultural traditions and beliefs and encouragement given to take pride in their cultural identity.

❑ **APARTMENT MOVE-IN**

Moving is so much easier with the support of friends, from packing, to manpower, a truck to move, to help setting up the new apartment. The supportive adult can also invite the youth to scout through their garage or storage area for extra furniture or household items that might be useful.



**COOKING LESSONS/ASSISTANCE**

Many times youth coming out of care have not had the opportunity to practice cooking on their own. Meal preparation is often a natural way to engage in meaningful conversation and build a relationship. The supportive adult may decide to take a youth grocery shopping, or help stock the youth's first kitchen with a starter supply of utensils, spices, cleaning supplies and food.

**REGULAR CHECK-IN (DAILY, WEEKLY OR MONTHLY)**

Simply knowing that someone will be aware that you are missing, hurt or in trouble is important. A supportive adult can instigate regular check-in's with a youth transitioning out of care, easing feelings of anxiety and building confidence that someone is concerned about their safety.

**BILLS AND MONEY MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE**

Sorting through bills and balancing a checkbook can be a particularly daunting task for a youth with a learning disability, deficient math skills or experience. Understanding how to maintain and obtain credit, deciphering loan applications, and budgeting are some of the items where a supportive adult can lend help.

**DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION HELP**

A high percentage of youth in care have parents who had drug or alcohol dependency problems. Working with young people transitioning out of care to avoid these dangerous pitfalls and offering support if a problem should develop could help break a familial cycle of addiction.

**HELP WITH READING FORMS, DOCUMENTS, AND COMPLEX MAIL**

Many youth in care have learning disabilities which may make complicated reading assignments all the more difficult. The supportive adult can make arrangements for a youth to collect materials for review on a weekly basis or to give a call on an as-needed basis.

**MECHANICAL AND/OR BUILDING PROJECTS**

Youth may need help keeping an automobile in good repair. Teaching a youth about the care of their car can help them build self-confidence and skills that can last a lifetime. Helping a youth fix up their apartment or a rented home, or asking for their assistance in projects around your home, can teach new skills which may be put to use throughout life.

**HOUSEKEEPING**

Some youth, particularly those who have lived in a residential facility or restrictive environment, may not have had real-life experience in keeping a home clean. The supportive adult can discuss cleaning supplies to use for particular household chores, how to avoid disease, and organization of clutter once a youth has transitioned to their own home.

**HOME DECORATING**

Helping a youth decorate their home can be a fun and rewarding way to contribute to the youth's sense of pride and self esteem.

**VOTING**

Youth in our society often form their first political impressions based on their parents' political beliefs. Youth in care often do not receive this role modeling. A supportive adult may wish to discuss current local, state and national issues, help a youth register to vote or take a youth to the polling location to vote.

**VOLUNTEERISM**

Volunteering to help others or for a worthy cause is an excellent way to build self-esteem. Supporters can offer to engage a youth in their own good work or embark on a new volunteer effort together.

**FINDING COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Navigating through the maze of government agencies and myriad of social service programs is difficult at best even for a resourceful adult. The supportive adult can help the youth make a list of useful resources in the community and offer to visit them together.

**SAFETY AND PERSONAL SECURITY**

The youth transitioning from care needs to take charge of their own personal safety. The supportive adult can encourage them to take a self-defense class, get CPR certified, get current on health and safety issues. The adult can take a tour of the youth's apartment and make suggestions regarding home safety, can help develop an evacuation plan, and make plans with the youth on what to do in an emergency situation. The supportive adult can offer to be called when something goes wrong, and offer to be listed as "person to contact in an emergency" on business forms.



Sharde from Indiana, FosterClub All-Star

"Permanency is important because if you spend your entire life moving around it doesn't give you a chance to get close to anyone, and you don't learn how to build those essential relationships you will need later in life. Moving around also influences you to run away from your problems."

**MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

Some youth in care suffer from mental health challenges. Depression, attention-deficit disorder, eating disorders, and other illness may afflict the youth. It is suggested that the supportive adult educate themselves about any mental health disorders that are at issue.

**CO-SIGNER**

Many times youth need co-signers to acquire housing, car loans, or bank accounts (particularly when the youth is under 18 years old). Consider the financial liability if the youth were to miss payments or not fulfill the financial agreement. It is suggested that an adult who acts as a co-signer closely supervise the arrangement until the youth has established a consistent pattern of responsibility.



❑ **BABYSITTING**

If the youth is a parent, babysitting services can be the relief that is needed to keep a young family intact. In addition to providing a time-out, the offer to watch a child while the young parent gets other chores around the house accomplished (laundry, cleaning, etc.), provides an excellent opportunity to role-model good parenting skills.

❑ **EMERGENCY CASH**

Most of us have experienced a cash shortage at one time or another as a youth. Youth coming from care usually lack this important “safety net”. The supportive adult may wish to discuss up front their comfort level in supplying financial assistance. They would discuss what constitutes an emergency (not enough to cover rent? a medical emergency? cash for a date? gas money?).

❑ **REFERENCE**

Many applications, including those for college, housing and jobs, require a list of references be provided by the applicant. If the supportive adult is able to give a positive reference for a youth, they should make sure a youth has their current contact information so that the supporter can be included on their list of references.

❑ **ADVOCACY**

Sometimes youth have a difficult time speaking up for themselves in court, at school, with government systems, etc. Supportive adults can help a youth organize their thoughts, speak on their behalf, or assist in writing letters.

❑ **INCLUSION IN SOCIAL CIRCLE/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

Often youth in care have difficulty forming new friendships and relationships when they leave care. A supportive adult can extend regular invitations to the youth to attend social and community gatherings as an opportunity to form new friendships and make connections with people. Good opportunities to make new friends include family weddings, hiking trips, garden clubs, community service projects and volunteer opportunities, dances, sporting events, debate groups, community college classes, etc.

❑ **ADOPTION**

Even for many older youth, including those over the age of 18, adoption remains a dream. An adult who is able to offer this ultimate permanent connection for a youth may make an initial offer to adopt through a Permanency Pact. Often youth may have fears about adoption, interpreting adoption to mean loss of contact with bio parents or siblings (this should be taken into consideration when discussing this option). Youth who once declined to be adopted often change their minds, so an adult may want to renew the offer from time to time.

## About FosterClub



*FosterClub is the national network for young people in foster care.*

**Every 2 minutes**, a child’s life changes as they enter the foster care system. There are more than 513,000 young people living in foster care across the country, and FosterClub *is their club* — a place to turn for advice, information, and hope. Our peer support network gives kids in foster care **a new spin on life**.

At FosterClub’s **web sites**, kids are asking questions and getting answers: [www.fosterclub.com](http://www.fosterclub.com) is for young people and [www.fyi3.com](http://www.fyi3.com) is designed for youth transitioning from care. FosterClub’s gateway for adults who support young people in foster care is [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org). Our **publications** supply youth with tools for success and also provide inspiration and perspective from their peers who have successfully emerged from foster care. FosterClub’s **training and events** are held across the country and feature a dynamic group of young foster care alumni called the FosterClub All-Stars. **Outreach tools** designed to improve communication with young people in care and engage them in achieving their own personal success.

The members of FosterClub are resilient young people determined to build a better future for themselves and for other kids coming up through the system behind them. Their success depends on the generosity of concerned individuals and collaborations with partner organizations. If you would like to learn more about FosterClub or how you can support young people in foster care, visit [www.fosterclub.org](http://www.fosterclub.org) or call 503-717-1552. FosterClub is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. EIN 93-1287234.



The pinwheel is an enduring symbol of the happy, carefree childhood all kids deserve. For more than 513,000 youth living in the U.S. foster care system, childhood has been interrupted by abuse, neglect or abandonment. FosterClub’s peer support network gives kids in foster care a new spin on life by providing information, resources, encouragement and hope.

*the national network for young people in foster care*

FOSTERCLUB



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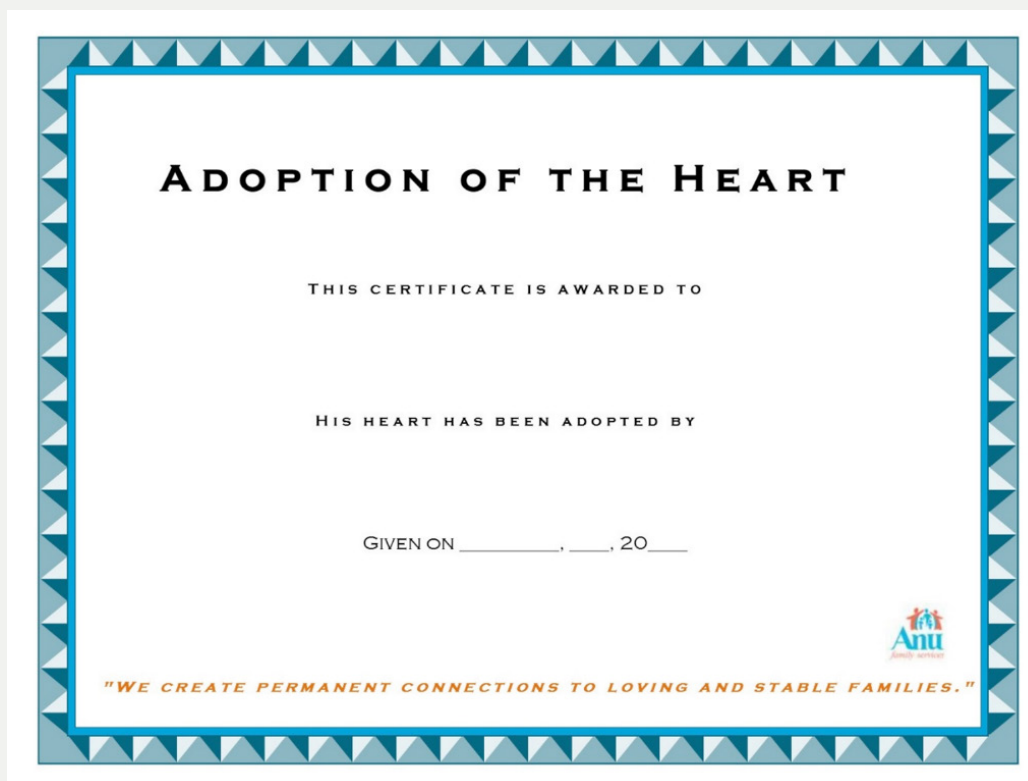
## ADOPTION OF THE HEART

**Purpose:** To create a sense of permanency when formal, legal permanency is not possible. It says, “In my heart, you are mine, even if I can’t legally adopt you.” This can happen for reasons of laws that make foster youth ineligible for benefits once adopted, for Native American youth for whom terminations of parental rights are not culturally appropriate, among other reasons.

**Supplies Needed:** A certificate like the one below. A formal celebration can be conducted, too, including a judge, balloons, a cake, etc. to celebrate the occasion.

**Preparation:** Bring a list of important connections, in case the youth struggles to identify connections, bring supplies listed above, and ensure you will have at least one hour of uninterrupted time with the youth for this activity.

**How to do:** First work with the key adult to ensure they are ready to make this important, life-long commitment. Once those plans are clear and in place, make it a celebration! Bring a camera to make the occasion!



# ADOPTION OF THE HEART

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

HIS HEART HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY

GIVEN ON \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_



*"WE CREATE PERMANENT CONNECTIONS TO LOVING AND STABLE FAMILIES."*



## 8 QUESTIONS/HEALTHY SUPPORT SYSTEMS

**Purpose:** To help youth validate connections to ensure they are healthy and safe.

**Supplies Needed:** Questions below, on a separate sheet

**Preparation:** Bring a list of important connections, in case the youth struggles to identify connections, bring supplies listed above, and ensure you will have at least one hour of uninterrupted time with the youth for this activity.

### How to do:

1. Are the motives and intentions of this person in my best interests?
2. Is this person's support authentic?
3. What am I learning from this person?
4. Does this person's support make me feel good about myself?
5. Is this support healthy?
6. Do I feel empowered by this support?
7. Do I trust this person? Should I?
8. Am I taking advantage of this relationship? Am I really vested?

# The Connectedness Map

Key: Blue = Blood (biological) connection

Red = Heart (love) connection

Purple = Spiritual connection

Green = Mind (mental) connection

Place the child in the center of the page. Ask her to think of all the people (living or deceased) she is connected to. Include family members, friends, teachers, coaches, pastors, rabbis, etc.—anyone with whom she has/had a connection.

Use one shape to represent males and a different shape to represent females.

Example:  $\Delta$  = Male       $\circ$  = Female

Next to each shape, write the person's name and age (if known).

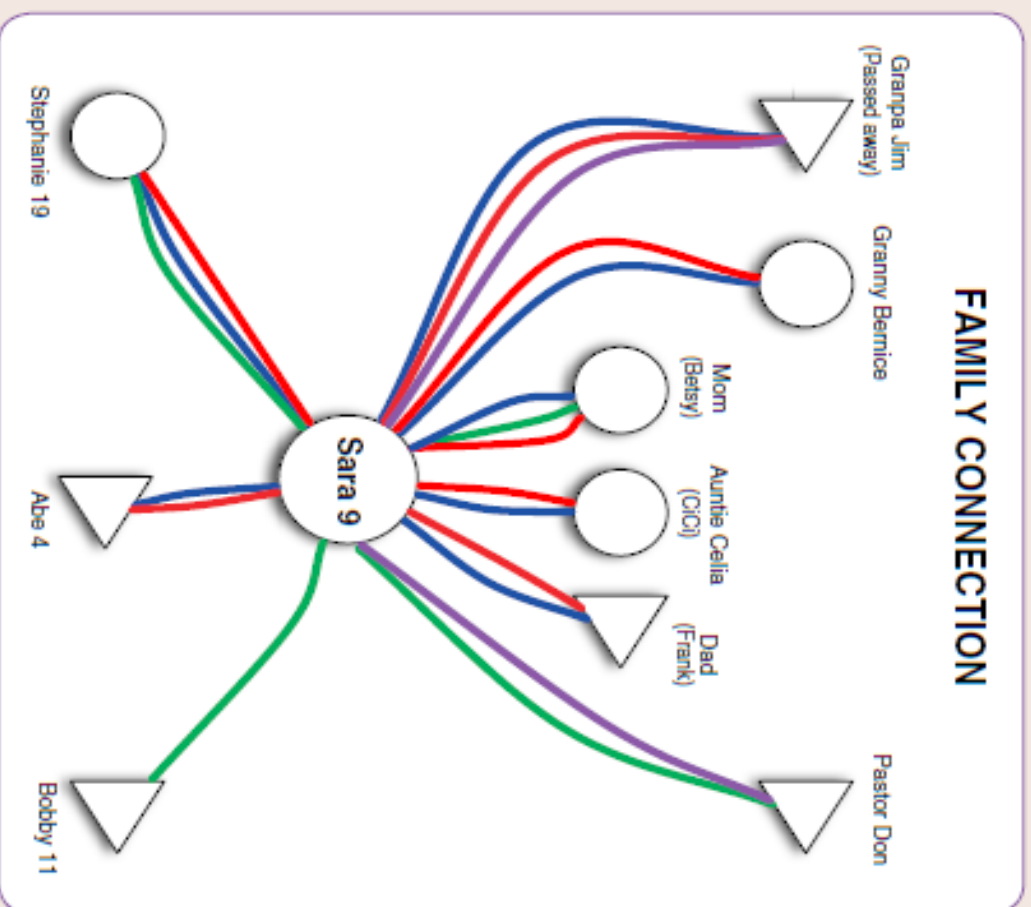
Place individuals who are of similar age to the child on the same level as the child, older people above the child and younger people below to show different generations.

Ask the child how he/she feels connected to each person. **Is this person a blood relative? Does the child love this person? Does this person teach the child, or do they have good, meaningful talks together? Does the child feel a spiritual connection with this person? The child**

should then draw the appropriately-colored line between him/herself and the other person. If there are multiple connections, there will be multiple lines.

When children have completed their connectedness maps, they may want to hang them up in their rooms. This can be a consistent reminder of all the people in the world with whom they are connected.

*Courtesy of the Santa Cruz County CASA Program, CA*



# SUPPORT

## What it means to support youth to learn to regulate

The brains of children and youth who experienced trauma are disorganized and dysregulated. This means that there is little rhythm and ability to find a center or calm. These skills are often learned by the presence of a co-regulating partner, which our children are often missing. When children are young, they are soothed with rocking, singing, bouncing, shhh'ing, hushing, stroking, swinging, etc. This creates an interactive rhythm that brings the child out of dysregulation back into a rhythmic calm. Mirror neurons play a role in this process. To understand mirror neurons, think of when someone around you yawns, you will most likely yawn as well. This illustrates the power of mirror neurons. Another example is when a baby is distressed and their caregiver smiles at them or makes calming sounds, the baby will emulate those actions resulting in a calm baby. In contrast, our children are often left to self-soothe, or were further dysregulated by a rage-filled, overwhelmed, or dysregulated caregiver.

Human beings regulate themselves many times in a typical day. Opportunities for dysregulation occur throughout the day and may include: being stuck in traffic, receiving bad news, changes in plans, etc. Most people experience the stressor and then calm themselves enough to proceed with their day. Most people also demonstrate enough self-awareness to know when something is becoming too overwhelming and they need to act quickly to regulate themselves. For example, two people are in an argument, voices are raised and one can sense things are about to become out of control. Most can stop the situation and walk away or change their tone to prevent things from escalating to a fist fight or other undesired outcome.

Most youth in the foster care system are unable to regulate themselves. Often, they were parented by caregivers who were not able to regulate themselves, leaving youth without a co-regulating partner to teach them the skills needed. This often manifests itself with many eruptions throughout the day, escalating quickly and taking a long time to calm. Often, these eruptions can appear to be unpredictable and unwarranted. Our youth don't have the inner voice telling them to walk away or the common language to let adults know they are about to erupt. It makes for a chaotic and stressful day for youth, and for the teachers, peers, caregivers and other providers in their lives. After an episode of dysregulation, youth are blamed, shamed and punished for their "naughty" behavior; it is interpreted as a willful and intentional act by the youth. If youth could regulate themselves, they would; most youth do not like the sense of being out of control. When youth are dysregulated, they feel fear, out of control, shame for their actions and as though they are inherently bad. Add punishment and shame from others, and it is easy to see the downward spiral and sense of defeat youth can feel each day. When youth learn to self-regulate, they increase their sense of autonomy and competence, resulting in calmer and less reactive responses.

## Supporting regulation supports relationships

Many youth who have experienced early trauma lose their capacity to manage the ambiguity and ups and downs that occur naturally in the course of relationships. When someone feels frustrated in a relationship, or needs space, this can be a significant trigger to youth, who engage their *fight, flight or freeze* response to the perceived danger of a relationship ending. Youth may even act in dysregulated ways to attempt to end a relationship that they fear may end, thinking, “If it’s going to end anyway, I want it to be on my terms.” Or a youth may want to “just get it over with” if they feel ambiguity or tension that they fear may eventually end the relationship.

Supporting youth who have connected or reconnected in relationships involves helping them to understand and tolerate the tensions that can occur when we are in relationship with others. This requires that the youth has the capacity to regulate their emotional responses and trauma triggers. Youth must learn to find their place of center and calm in order to refrain from panicking because the anxiety of a potential loss (which reminds them of past losses) becomes too great to bear. All human relationships have “ups and downs”, and without the ability to sustain through these times of tension, relationships will end. Once youth have formed trust with their healer through learning more about who there are and their identity formation, grieved their past losses, and connected or reconnected with those they’ve loved and lost or to whom they are related (a.k.a. “already-trusted adults”), they must climb this final hurdle of regulation to sustain ongoing relationships. This critical step is done with the support of the healer.

## How to help youth regulate

Children need access to interactions that restore the human rhythm of calm. These activities, listed later in the toolbox pages, are those activities which put youth back in touch with their bodies or bring a sense of calmness. Regulating activities also provide a sense of reciprocity with other humans, such as singing, group sports, tossing a ball back and forth, turn-taking activities that include first me, then you.

Youth need someone to teach them the skills they were not given; they need a co-regulating partner. This can only be done with someone they established trust with, otherwise, it will appear as if another adult is attempting to control and hurt them. Co-regulating is done within the relationship and has two objectives; first, to help the youth learn to make the connection between their bodies and emotions, and second, to be the calm during their storm helping them come out on the other end unharmed, without shame or punishment.

There are several activities that can be done to help youth reconnect with their bodies. Most of this work is sensory, one example includes youth smelling different essential oils and then helping them to describe what feelings the smell of the oils bring about within their bodies. Body mapping is also a wonderful activity, which helps youth discover where in the body they feel certain emotions. For example, when I am worried I get a stomach ache; when I am angry I feel it in my hands and they clench. Helping youth discover where they are feeling emotions within their body is also helping them discover important cues so they can eventually stop themselves before losing control. This process will also help caregivers identify cues from youth so they can intervene prior to an eruption which will de-escalate the situation.

Helping youth out of the storm or their spiraling emotions is also best done within a trusting relationship. Sitting with youth while they express their pain without trying to control it, stop it or react to it, is difficult, but necessary. Co-regulators are present to validate and bear witness to the pain, to ensure the youth is safe, and to give them comfort when the storm ends. The co-regulator needs to stay calm, keep a low voice tone, make themselves smaller (sit instead of standing), stay out of a youth's personal space and keep reassuring youth they are safe here. Remember to go slower, lower, and softer in your approach. Attempting to intervene by pulling things away, blocking the door, restraining, or yelling to stop are all ways to increase the intensity of the situation. Youth will feel your attempts to control them, and in response, will fight back as if they are fighting for their lives because, in their brains, they are. Their responses could also include running or shutting down; whatever their response, we must choose to stay calm and in the moment.

### **The critical role of regulation for healing parents and caregivers**

Just as healers need to be “breathing” to assist others to “breathe,” the same practice applies for regulating emotions. If the healers of the youth who were traumatized are not regulated themselves, it is impossible for the youth to become regulated. Healers of traumatized children are called to this work for many different reasons. Some feel a spiritual calling; others feel they can connect with the children due to their own trauma they experienced as a child; however, if the latter is the case, what happens when the youth's trauma becomes a trigger for the healer? The healer's untreated trauma can then become detrimental for the traumatized youth; causing even more harm to the youth than they already experienced. Additionally, it is important to have co-regulating partners.

Therefore, healing parents are encouraged to practice their own self-regulation techniques. Some examples of self-regulation techniques that healing parents can engage in are; EMDR, Yoga, Mindfulness, Meditation, Deep Breathing, Movement, Gratitude, Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy, and Post-Induction Therapy (Pia Melody).

Yoga is an effective regulation technique that some healing families have used on an individual basis and then introduced it to the youth in their homes. Healing parents that engage in yoga as part of the bedtime routine calms their minds and bodies to assist in a restful night's sleep. All family members can benefit from yoga.

## Pop-Out Stories:

- ❖ Nighttime can be a time filled with fear and anxiety for youth who experienced trauma. It is dark, quiet, they are isolated, and it's filled with fear of what they perceive can happen to them. Even though the healers in their lives know the youth are safe, the youth do not always perceive this. For example, Samuel was harmed during the night prior to entering his healing home. Additionally, he felt responsible for the safety of not just himself, but of his younger siblings. Therefore, he would not sleep during the night, so that he could ensure that he and his siblings stayed safe. After various trial and errors with natural-based medication, calming and breathing techniques, the family placed the dog Bella's, kennel in his room, and this became her new place to sleep. Samuel witnessed her consistently respond to sounds outside, visitors at the door, etc. When Bella would hear a noise, she would bark. Samuel felt confident that Bella would respond accordingly when she would hear a noise. Therefore, Bella could take on the nighttime role of "protector," so that Samuel could sleep. Once his "co-regulating partner" was placed in his room, he could hand over the responsibility to Bella, because when she was calm and regulated, so was he. If she were alert and barking, because of a noise, he was awake with her. The power of animals and family pets should not be underestimated.
- ❖ Thirteen-year-old Elijah was in and out of group homes for approximately one year due to extreme aggressive pain-based behaviors. Through several sensory activities, Elijah learned that when his stomach started to hurt, it was a sign that he was about to lose control. Because he understood this about himself, he began to let adults in his life know his stomach was hurting, and the adults understood he needed help regulating to prevent an eruption. Adults would usually take him for a walk, or let him do some form of physical activity to help the emotion leave his body, and then they could come back and discuss what was happening just prior to this. As Elijah learned how to regulate himself, he was also gaining self-confidence in his ability to share emotions and advocate for himself when he needed to step away from a situation to regulate himself. Elijah went from having numerous incidents a day - which often resulted in police involvement - to not having one single incident for an entire year. This demonstrates the power of self-regulation which can be achieved through discharge of the youth's emotional distress in a calm and safe environment.



**Key Point:** Regulation is key to the healing process.



### Questions to Ponder:

1. What does it mean to be regulated? Dysregulated?
2. What are three things you can do to help a youth regulate?
3. What are three things you can do to promote your own regulation?
4. Why is not helpful to blame, shame, or punish? What can you do instead?

# SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

# ALL ABOUT ME SUPPORT MAP


**Purpose:** To help youth conduct an inventory of their life to gain a deeper understanding of who they are, challenges they are facing, and needs they have.

**Supplies Needed:** Copies of the Support Map

**Preparation:** A support map, colored pencils, markers, or crayons to decorate, if necessary


**How to do:** Have the youth identify each area and fill in information, such as the information on the sample below.

### Medical




- Assistance w/ appointments, making or attending
- Compiling personal hx
- Collecting biological hx

### Daily Living




- Finding, leasing apartment
- Cooking, budgeting, pay bills)
- Contracts (cell phone, cable, etc)
- Laundry
- Transportation
- Civic duties (i.e. voting, volunteering)

### Spiritual




- Exploring Spiritual and cultural background
- Support with current Spiritual and cultural practices

### Adult Connections




- Who are they: Parents, adult siblings, relatives, therapeutic professionals, school staff, religious leaders, friend, other
- Strength of connection

### Fun & Recreation




- Do fun activities w/
- Participate in sports, leagues, group events w/

### School and Career




- Help w/ job search, career counseling, reference
- Help w/ school (homework, enrollment, application)
- Care packages when away

### Support



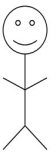
- Emergency place to stay
- \$ in emergency
- Storage for belongings
- Check-in from time to time
- Find/access community resources

### Holidays/ Special Events



- Where to go for holidays
- Occasional family meals

**ME**




By: \_\_\_\_\_

Today is: \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

### I Feel...



- Emotional Readiness Scale: 0 [low]-10[high]
- Grief/Loss
- Identity
- Ability to incorporate new connections
- Desire/sense of hope re: permanence
- Ambiguity/loneliness
- Hopes/Dreams and who share with



## Medical



- Assistance w/ appointments, making or attending
- Compiling personal hx
- Collecting biological hx

## Daily Living



- Finding, leasing apartment
- Cooking, budgeting, pay bills)
- Contracts (cell phone, cable, etc)
- Laundry
- Transportation
- Civic duties (i.e. voting, volunteering)

## Spiritual



- Exploring spiritual and cultural background
- Support with current spiritual and cultural practices



## Adult Connections

- Who are they: Parents, adult siblings, relatives, therapeutic professionals, school staff, religious leaders, friend, other
- Strength of connection



## Fun & Recreation

- Do fun activities w/ leagues, group events w/
- Participate in sports, events w/

**ME**

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## Support

- Emergency place to stay
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- Find/access community resources

## Holidays/ Special Events



- Where to go for holidays
- Occasional family meals

# WELLBEING ACTIVITIES


# WELL-BEING INDICATOR TOOL FOR YOUTH

**Purpose:** A youth-driven assessment of their current levels of wellbeing, meant to help a youth look at themselves as a whole person. The WIT-Y was designed as an inventory for use as a ‘conversation starter’ with youth about their overall wellbeing. It is youth-informed, meaning youth decide what level of wellbeing they have within each domain, as well as ways in which they might want to increase their level of wellbeing.

**Supplies Needed:** A computer to access

**Preparation:** Understand that the youth may not want to share results with you, so you should have a discussion in advance about how they will seek support if a need is identified. You can find more about this activity online at: <https://cascw.umn.edu/portfolio-items/well-being-indicator-tool-for-youth-wit-y/>


**How to do:** You can complete this tool with the youth, or the youth can do this alone; either format is a youth-driven decision.




## WIT-Y Blueprint

Domain to focus on:


**Current Level of well-being** (select one):




In Crisis




Just Surviving



Doing Okay




Doing Good




Doing Great


**Desired Level of well-being** (select one):




In Crisis




Just Surviving



Doing Okay



Doing Good



Doing Great

**Describe what well-being at your desired level would look like.** Remember, there are no right and wrong answers, just describe what that level of well-being would look like in your life.

**Who might be able to help you reach the level of well-being that you want?**  
People might include: siblings, parents, foster parents, staff, social worker, coach, neighbor, teacher, faith leader, boss, etc.

**What do you have to take to achieve your desired level of well-being?**  
What do you need to locate a therapist, join a group, obtain a tutor, or make a park.

**What might make it difficult to have the level of well-being you want?**  
What things like how easy it is to trust people, make new friends, resources or people that will help you.

**What do you think you might need to help reach your desired level?**  
Resources might include things like, money, people, time, or access to things you will likely think of other resources that you have or you need in your life to reach the level you want in your well-being.

**Change often takes time. What do you think is the right amount of time to work on making this change in your well-being?**



# WIT-Y Blueprint

Domain to focus on: \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Level of well-being** (select one):



In Crisis



Just Surviving



Doing Okay



Doing Good



Doing Great



**Desired Level of well-being** (select one):



In Crisis



Just Surviving



Doing Okay



Doing Good



Doing Great



**Describe what well-being at your desired level would look like.** Remember, there are no right and wrong answers, just describe what that level of well-being would look like in your life.

**Who might be able to help you reach the level of well-being that you want?**

People might include: siblings, parents, foster parents, staff, social worker, coach, neighbor, teacher, faith leader, boss, etc.

**What steps do you have to take to achieve your desired level of well-being?**

For example maybe you need to locate a therapist, join a group, obtain a tutor, or make time for walks in the park.



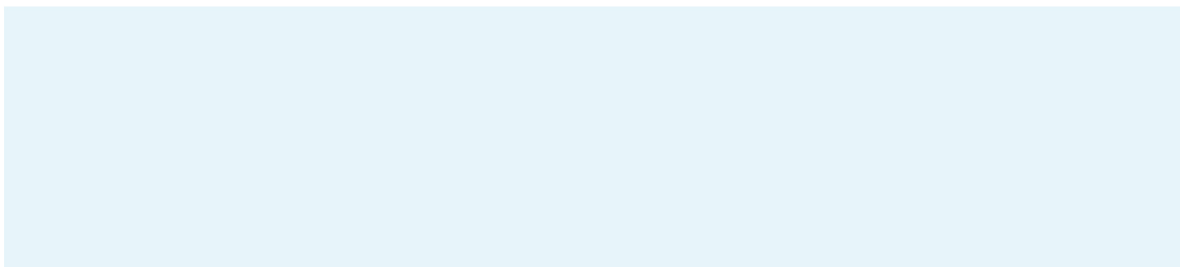
**What challenges might make it difficult to have the level of well-being you want?**

Think about things like how easy it is to trust people, make new friends, ask for help, find resources or people that will help you.

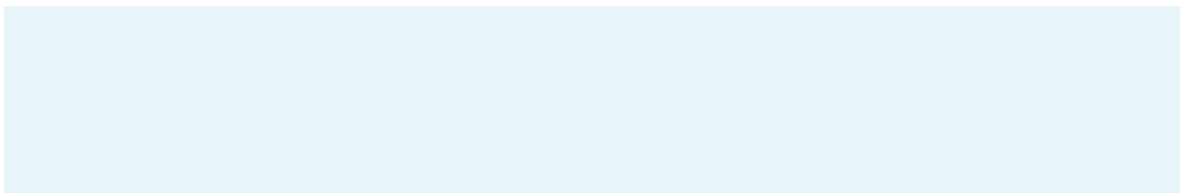


**What resources do you think you might need to help reach your desired level of well-being?**

Resources might include things like, money, people, time, or access to certain places. You will likely think of other resources that you have or you need in your life to make the change you want in your well-being.



**Change often takes time. What do you think is the right amount of time to work on making this change in your well-being?**



# SUPPORT FOR THE HEALERS

## *Wellbeing and Self-care*

### **Self-Care and its Critical Role in Helping**

Self-care for the helping professional is a critical component of helping individuals heal from trauma. Think of self-care as the protective barrier that keeps you safe and allows you to be an effective helper and healer. Self-care requires preparation, practice, vigilance, and the mastering of specific skills. At times, it may feel as though the helper needs to forego their own needs to meet the needs of the youth; however, this should not be the case. In fact, it's vital to pay attention to your own needs on a regular basis to engage in an effective helping relationship.

When we travel by air, we hear the phrase, "Place the mask over your own mouth and nose first, and then assist others." This is a powerful metaphor for helpers in today's world. It illustrates the need for self-preservation when working with individuals who experienced trauma. What lies beneath this is a belief that we should somehow fill others' cups without filling one's own cup. Certainly, one can provide for someone else for the short run while ignoring one's personal needs. But this doesn't work for a sustained period without great cost to the emotional, intellectual, and often physical, wellbeing of the helper. It's not only alright to set aside "me time", it's vital to the helper's mental health to take a break from this most important and challenging job.

## **PROTECT**

Below are some ideas and tools that will allow you to assess your current state of wellbeing so that you can protect your wellbeing and remain an effective helper as you engage in the healing process with clients.

- 1. Assess your current lifestyle balance practices.** The "Self-Care and Lifestyle Balance Inventory" provided by Headington Institute ([www.headington-institute.org](http://www.headington-institute.org)) provides an excellent starting point for assessing self-care strengths, as well as areas that could be improved. This tool recognizes that self-care is much more than eating healthy and exercising. The tool focuses on our need to laugh and spend time with others, take vacations and be kind to ourselves when we make a mistake.
  - a. It is recommended that you keep your assessment and repeat the assessment on the first of every month.
  - b. Take note of your score, your strengths and your areas that you would like to improve.
  - c. Find a "self-care buddy" and share this information, so that you create accountability and support as you strive to increase your work-life balance.
  - d. Share your insights with your supervisor during supervision. This will also provide you with accountability and support.
- 2. Create a Self-Care Plan.** Documenting your self-care plan will provide you with insight that you may not be able to consider during a time of crisis.
  - a. Complete the "Self-Care Plan" located on page 74.
  - b. Share your "Self-Care Plan" with a professional contact and a personal contact. This will provide you with a support system during times of need.
  - c. Keep your self-care plan someplace that you can visually see it daily. It will serve as a good reminder to engage in healthy behaviors.
  - d. Update your self-care plan each month when you complete the "Self-Care and Lifestyle Balance Inventory".

3. **Identify your professional boundaries.** Understanding your boundaries is the first step to creating healthy professional boundaries. There are several tools on the web that can assist you in doing so.
  - a. Complete the “Professional Boundaries Self-Assessment Tool”.
  - b. Review your results and determine what changes, if any, you would like to make.
  - c. Share your results with your supervisor and/or someone you trust to give you honest feedback.

## GRIEVE

When we practice self-care, we create the space to enter the difficult work of grieving. Grief is a normal and unavoidable part of life. As helpers, we are impacted by our own losses, as well as the losses experienced by those we help. Additionally, it is not uncommon for helpers to experience unexpected emotions related to past losses while working with a youth. It is important that helpers are open to seeking out professional counseling if grief begins to negatively impact his/her day-to-day functioning.

There are several resources available to assist individuals experiencing grief. Below are just a few:

1. Understanding the grief process is key to identifying times when you experience grief related symptoms. *A Grief Guide & Healing Workbook* by Paul Alexander is designed to help explore the grieving and healing process.
2. The Grief Recovery Institute provides a free e-book title “The Grief Recover Method Guide for Loss”. This free e-book provides 61 tips on the experience of grief and how to get through it. It can be located at: <https://griefrecoverymethod.com>
3. “Identifying Complicated Grief: The Inventory of Complicated Grief” can be located at <https://inhopeagainsthope.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/identifying-complicated-grief.pdf>. This is a self-report instrument that provides an assessment of the severity of complicated grief symptoms and can assist the individual in determining if they need professional assistance to address their grief symptoms.
4. If you find yourself challenged with how to respond to the grief of others, *Stuck for Words: What to Say to Someone Who is Grieving* by Doris Zagdanski provides ideas about how to respond.
5. The Grief Toolbox located at <http://thegrieftoolbox.com> provides insight into some of the myths related to grief and loss, as well as other helpful tools and articles.



**Key Point:** Self-care is critical to being part of a youth’s healing process.



### Questions to Ponder:

1. Did you complete the Headington assessment?
2. Did you complete a self-care plan?
3. Did you review at least two of the grief tools?
4. Did you complete the “Professional Boundaries Self-Assessment Tool”?

## CONNECT

As human beings, our innate need demands human connection. Human connection nourishes and sustains us. Maintaining positive, healthy human connections is critical to nourishing the helper.

Below are several suggestions for maintaining connections that will nourish your wellbeing:

1. Make a list of the positive, supportive people in your life. Let them know how important they are to you and that you seek them out during times of need. Access one or more of these individuals during times of need.
2. Engage in “laugh dates”. Each week schedule a lunch or dinner with someone that you know brings positivity to your world.
3. Interact with individuals with similar interests as you. Engage in a class to learn more about an existing hobby or a new hobby. If there isn't a class out there, then create your own interest group.
4. Practice gratitude. There are several websites and books that provide an overview of the benefits of gratitude and gratitude activities.
  - a. <https://gratefulness.org>
  - b. <https://tinybuddha.com/>
  - c. *Gratitude: A journal* by Catherine
  - d. *The One-Minute Gratitude Journal* by Brenda Nathan
5. The website <https://www.livingupp.com> provides a calendar of 365 self-care challenges including challenges that increase the helper's connections and network.



## REGULATE

Self-regulation skills are critical to the helpers' ability to bounce back after a difficult day, or session with a youth. Self-regulation skills provide the helper with critical tools that assist with establishing emotional wellbeing. Mindfulness and meditation are a few practices that the helper can explore to generate emotional wellbeing.

Below are tools and resources that can be used to assist you on your journey to improving your self-regulation skills:

1. **Just Breathe.** During stressful situations take time to simply slow down and focus on your breathing. Inhale and exhale 5-10 times. Notice how you feel more calm and notice how your thinking becomes clear.
2. **Get adequate sleep.** Eight hours of sleep each night is recommended for optimal daily functioning. Sleep is one of your most important tools to being regulated. The book *Thrive* by Ariana Huffington provides an overview of how to get your sleep back on track.
3. **One-Minute Mindfulness:** *50 Simple Ways to Find Peace, Clarity and New Possibilities in a Stressed Out World* by Donald Altman
4. **Quiet Mind:** *One Minute Mindfulness* by David Kundtz
5. <http://www.the-guided-meditation-site.com/mindfulness-exercises.html> provides numerous activities to assist you on your mindfulness and meditation journey.



**Key Point:** Human connection is vital to our survival.



**Questions to Ponder:**

1. What can you do to build connections in your own life? In the life of a youth?
2. How will you incorporate the practice of gratitude into your life?
3. Which self-care challenges will you see to implement? (start with three)
4. Learn how to breathe deeply using an app or other support.

## SELF-CARE PLAN FOR WELLBEING

1. What are my “red flags” and “warning signs” that signal that I am out of balance? (Please consult with someone close to you, if you are struggling to answer this.)
2. How would I want others to address their concerns with me when I appear “out of balance”? What would I want them to say? What would I not want them to say?
3. Who are the people that help “fill my bucket”?
4. What are the activities that help “fill my bucket”?
5. What is my self-care plan? How do I assure that I am “okay” and “fit for duty”?

### **Professional Boundaries Self-Assessment Quiz**

**Managing the boundaries between you and your clients is a difficult juggling act. This self assessment tool aims to help you think about yourself and the professional boundaries that underpin your work. Choose the answers that are closest to how you think you would respond in real life, then check the scores and see how tight or loose your professional boundaries are**

**Q1** You are walking down the street with your partner and see a client you are currently working with walking towards you.

**Do you:**

- a) Ignore them?
- b) Make eye contact and see what they want to do?
- c) Nod a brief hello to them?
- d) Stop and chat with them?
- e) Stop them and introduce your partner?

**Q2** Your work mobile phone is broken and one of your clients needs to be able to contact you about the outcome of a custody case on a day that you are working out of the office.

**Do you:**

- a) Give them your personal number but tell them it is a one-off and not to use it again.
- b) Give them your personal phone number but tell them it is a new work number.
- c) Tell them to call the office and leave a message.
- d) Say your phone is broken and blame lack of resources.

**Q3** One of your clients notices you are reading a book by their favorite author. You have just finished the book and can tell they would love to read it.

**Do you:**

- a) Give them the book?
- b) Hurriedly put the book away?
- c) Discuss the ideas and themes of the book with them?

- d) Suggest they join the local library?
- e) Offer to lend them the book?

**Q4** A client asks if you have a partner and children.

Do you:

- a) Give a totally honest answer?
- b) Tell them it's none of their business?
- c) Acknowledge your situation without giving too much information away?
- d) Get out your family photos?
- e) Have a moan about your partner/lack of partner?

**Q5** A client confides in you that they smoke cannabis to help them deal with their issues. They are not a chronic user, it does not appear to be doing them any harm, and they feel it helps them relax.

**Do you:**

- a) Suggest that they keep an eye on any side-effects on their mental or physical health?
- b) Warn them strongly about the dangers of cannabis?
- c) Suggest that they attend a drugs rehabilitation program?
- d) Ask further questions about their use?
- e) Say that it seems that cannabis is the least of their problems?
- f) Say that many people do self-medicate with cannabis and, as long as they don't smoke too much, they should be fine?

**Q6A** client you have been working with stops engaging with you and rejects your attempts to support them.

**How do you feel?**

- a) Sad.
- b) Annoyed.

- c) Disappointed.
- d) Angry.
- e) Not bothered.

**Q7** A client tells you that you really "get" them, that no-one else understands them, and that they think you are a wonderful person.

**Do you:**

- a) Thank them and say that they are a special person too?
- b) Act pleased but modest?
- c) Explain that you are just doing your job?
- d) Tell them to stop being soft?
- e) Give them a hug?

**Q8** A client gets engaged and promises to invite you to their wedding, saying they would really like you to be there after everything you have been through together.

**Do you:**

- a) Say you will start looking for an outfit.
- b) Tell them that you don't think it is appropriate for you to go.
- c) Tell them you would love to go but professional boundaries mean that you can't.
- d) Be vague, but intending not to go.

**Q9** You are working with an elderly client who is unable to leave the house. At the end of a home visit, they ask you to pop to the shops for them because they have no food in the house. It is outside your job description and your hours of work.

**Do you:**

- a) Take the money offered and go to the shops for them "just this once"?
- b) Say you are unable to go for them?
- c) Offer to do the shopping on a regular basis for them?

- d) Ring your organization and get clearance to do the shopping?
- e) Don't do the shopping this time but arrange adequate support for the future?

**Q10** You are working with a client who flirts with you in one-to-one sessions. You believe they are becoming sexually attracted to you.

**Do you:**

- a) Speak to your manager about the situation?
- b) Play along with them so you don't hurt their feelings?
- c) Tell them that this is a professional relationship and that they should not be so over-friendly?
- d) Get them transferred to another worker?
- e) Stop booking one-to-one sessions with them?
- f) Book a home visit to discuss the situation?

**Q11** One of your clients used to be a financial adviser. While chatting, they tell you about some stocks and shares you should buy now to make lots of money. You currently have some money you are looking to invest.

**Do you:**

- a) Tell them that you are here to advise them, not the other way round?
- b) Tell them you don't invest in the stock market, but follow their advice secretly?
- c) Be polite but disinterested and ignore the advice?
- d) Ask them for more details so you can check it out later?

**Q12** A new client spontaneously gives you a hug at the end of a particularly positive session.

**Do you:**

- a) Hug them back and tell them what a positive session it was?
- b) Let them hug you but don't really engage?
- c) Avoid the hug and tell them that it is not appropriate?
- d) Accept the hug and tell them it is not appropriate?

e) Tell them to never touch you?

**Q13** You turn up for a home visit and your client answers the door wrapped in a towel.

**Do you:**

- a) Refuse to enter the house or to start the session?
- b) Tell them to put some clothes on and wait outside while they do?
- c) Laugh it off and go in anyway?
- d) Suggest they need to put some clothes on before starting the session?

**Q14** You turn up to meet your friends for a drink in the pub. You see one of your current clients there with some of her friends and she looks slightly drunk.

**Do you:**

- a) Ignore your client all night?
- b) Speak to your client and suggest they leave the pub?
- c) Ask your friends to leave with you to another pub?
- d) Have a word with your client and suggest that you ignore each other?
- e) Buy your client a drink?

**Q15** One of your clients brings you an expensive bottle of perfume/aftershave as a gift towards the end of your time working with them.

**Do you:**

- a) Accept the gift with thanks?
- b) Refuse the gift as inappropriate?
- c) Accept the gift but say you will have to share it with the team?
- d) Accept the gift, document it and report it to your manager?

**Q16** While chatting with a client, they mention your favorite band/musician/composer and talk about how much they love them

**Do you:**

- a) Listen and ask them questions?
- b) Say how much you like the artiste?
- c) Start chatting in depth about the music/lyrics?
- d) Talk about the time you saw them play live?
- e) Change the topic of conversation?

**Q17** You are chatting with a group of clients when one of them tells a racist joke. All the other clients laugh and, although tasteless, the joke makes you want to giggle.

**Do you**

- a) Smile to yourself but walk away?
- b) Keep a straight face and say nothing?
- c) Challenge the clients directly about the implicit racism?
- d) Say that you find the joke offensive?
- e) Remind them of the rules about racist language?
- f) Laugh (but not too loud)?

*This article is published in the 10 September 2009 edition of Community Care magazine under the headline "How tight (or loose) are your professional boundaries?"*



<b>Boundaries Self Assessment Tool – scoring table</b>						
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Q1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Q2</b>	5	3	2	4		
<b>Q3</b>	4	1	3	2	4	
<b>Q4</b>	3	1	2	4	5	
<b>Q5</b>	3	2	1	2	4	5
<b>Q6</b>	3	3	3	5	1	
<b>Q7</b>	4	3	2	1	5	
<b>Q8</b>	5	2	4	3		
<b>Q9</b>	3	1	4	2	1	
<b>Q10</b>	3	4	2	1	2	5
<b>Q11</b>	1	3	2	5		
<b>Q12</b>	4	3	2	3	1	
<b>Q13</b>	1	2	5	3		
<b>Q14</b>	4	1	2	3	5	
<b>Q15</b>	5	2	3	3		
<b>Q16</b>	2	3	4	5	1	
<b>Q17</b>	3	4	2	2	2	5

Total score \_\_\_\_\_

**21 – 33**

Your boundaries are very tight. You should loosen up a bit and try to see things from your clients' point of view.

**34 – 52**

You're nice and safe. You could stretch yourself and explore the boundaries of your relationships with clients.

**53 – 70**

You are treading a fine line. If you do it with enough consideration, judgement and caution, you will be fine. If you are not careful enough, you will cause problems for yourself, your team or your clients.

**71 – 76**

Your boundaries are very loose. You are setting up yourself or your clients to fail. Have a good think about your motivations and personal boundaries.

**77 – 82**

Your boundaries are non-existent. You need to tighten them fast before you cause some serious problems.

Quiz compiled by Frank Cooper, List of Life Ltd, [www.listoflife.com/events](http://www.listoflife.com/events)



Medical



Daily Living



Spiritual



Adult Connections




Fun & Recreation



School and Career

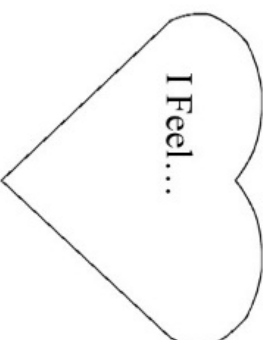
ME



By: \_\_\_\_\_

Today is: \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.



Support



Holidays/  
Special Events

## Medical



- Assistance w/ appointments, making or attending
- Compiling personal hx
- Collecting biological hx

## Daily Living



- Finding, leasing apartment
- Cooking, budgeting, pay bills)
- Contracts (cell phone, cable, etc)
- Laundry
- Transportation
- Civic duties (i.e. voting, volunteering)

## Spiritual



- Exploring spiritual and cultural background
- Support with current spiritual and cultural practices



## Adult Connections

- Who are they: Parents, adult siblings, relatives, therapeutic professionals, school staff, religious leaders, friend, other
- Strength of connection



## Fun & Recreation

- Do fun activities w/ leagues, group events w/
- Participate in sports, events w/

**ME**

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Today is: \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I Feel...

- Emotional Readiness Scale:: 0 [low]-10[high]
- Grief/Loss
- Identity
- Ability to incorporate new connections
- Desire/sense of hope re: permanence
- Ambiguity/loneliness
- Hopes/Dreams and who share with



## School and Career

- Help w/ job search, career counseling, reference
- Help w/ school (homework, enrollment, application)
- Care packages when away



## Support

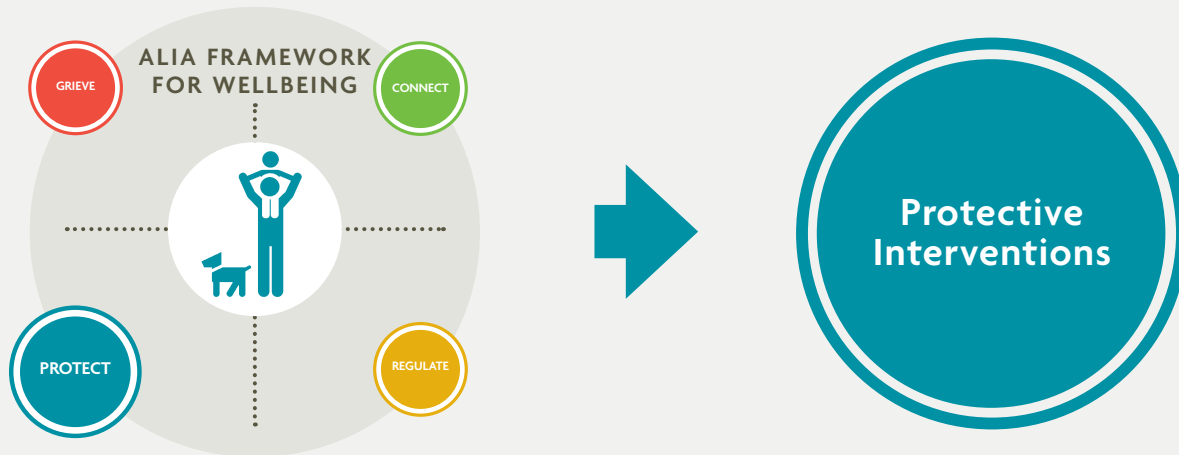
- Emergency place to stay
- \$ in emergency
- Storage for belongings
- Check-in from time to time
- Find/access community resources

## Holidays/ Special Events



- Where to go for holidays
- Occasional family meals

# NEW TOOLBOX



## Ensure protection by:

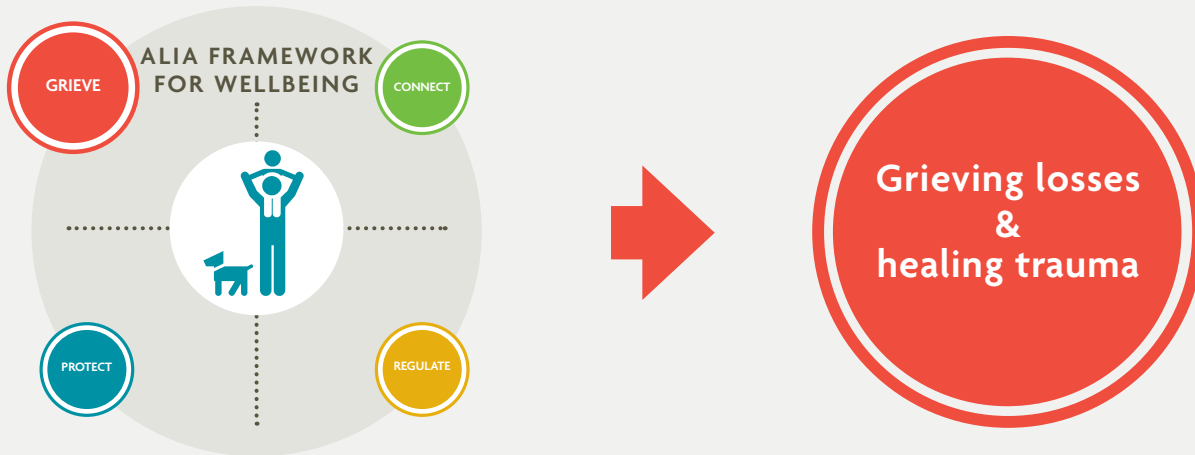
- helping youth feel safe—physically and psychologically
- keeping youth safe by promoting protective factors and resilience
- providing permanence and cultivating a sense of belonging and security
- parenting in a trauma-informed way; understanding pain-based behaviors and not using punishment
- cultivating a sense of safety
- cultivating a sense of pleasure
- cultivating a sense of agency
- cultivating a sense of support
- cultivating a sense of empowerment
- cultivating a sense of boundaries and expectations
- cultivating a sense of constructive use of time
- cultivating a sense of commitment to learning
- cultivating a sense of positive values
- cultivating a sense of positive identity
- cultivating a sense of competency
- cultivating a sense of community and culture
- cultivating a sense of spirituality and hope

## Build Resilience through cultivating:

- **a secure base** –a sense of belonging and security
- **a sense of self-efficacy** – a sense of mastery and control, along with an accurate understanding of personal strengths and limitations
- **self-esteem** – an internal sense of worth and competence
- **at least one secure attachment** relationship
- **extended family and friend supports**
- **positive community experiences** (nursery, school, etc.).

*See: Search Institute Developmental Assets; National Indian Child Welfare Association; Jane Glover for more information.*

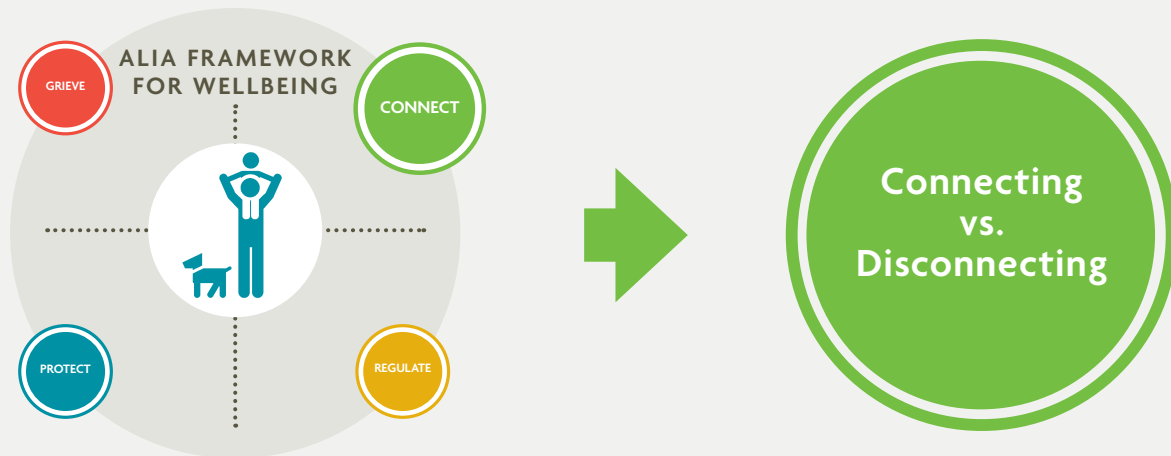
# NEW TOOLBOX



## Grieve losses by:

- letting youth tell their own story and be the boss of their own grief work; let youth determine the pace and path of their grief work.
- understanding that you cannot rush grief work, and it must be done to heal.
- providing safe spaces and sanctuaries to grieve losses.
- normalizing grief, loss, and the grieving process.
- providing psycho-social education about grief.
- understanding that many behaviors we see from youth are normal responses to grief and loss, and these behaviors should not be pathologized.
- telling the youth about their own story, when they are ready, as appropriate for their developmental level.
- telling the youth the truth about their story, when they ask, as appropriate for their developmental level.
- not confronting denial in grief work; that will come naturally when healing happens.
- creating space for them to tell their story while LISTENING (they cannot process when we are talking); be comfortable with silence.
- letting youth tell their story in pieces and parts, in drawings and in song, or whatever is most meaningful to them.
- collecting all you can about what they have lost: reconnect or find people and things to heal those losses.
- engaging tools like life/loss lines, lifebooks, and others to help youth grieve their past losses.
- letting them know we see them and hear them by validating their experience.
- helping youth understand they deserved to get things they did not get as a younger child.
- helping youth understand things that happened to them were not their fault and they could do nothing to change that (e.g., relieve them of their guilt and shame).
- providing a safe, consistent, nurturing place to do this work.
- helping youth be in touch with their bodies and places where they hold their trauma.
- helping youth understand their trauma-triggers and trauma-responses and learn new patterns of response.
- helping youth understand the link between their current behavior and their past experience.
- teaching new responses to help youth avoid trauma-responses in order to respond in the present moment.

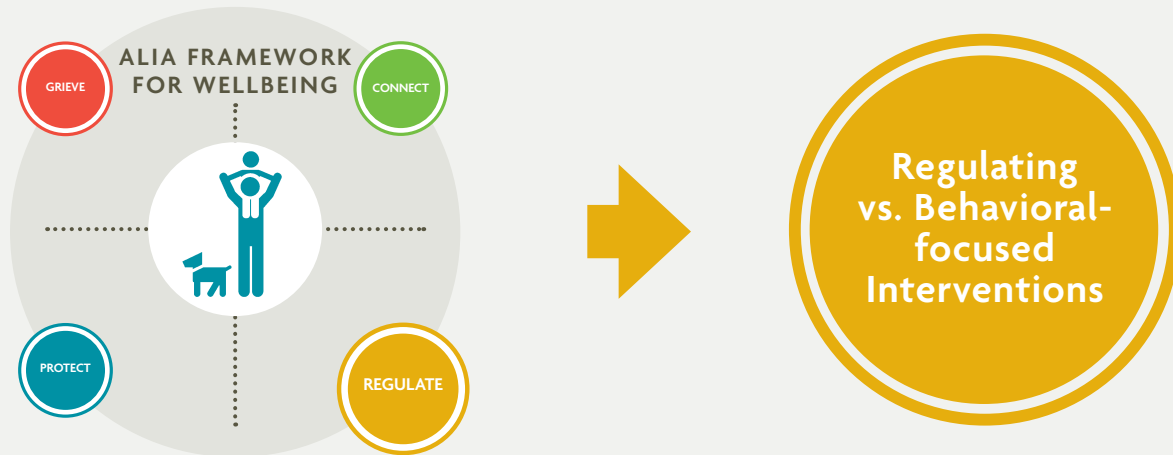
# NEW TOOLBOX



## Build connections by:

- exhaustively searching to find permanent, stable, loving connections.
- finding and connecting youth to those they have loved and lost through out-of-home care: both kin and fictive kin.
- building strong networks of support including kin, fictive kin, peers, supportive adults and school connections.
- building connections to others who have shared similar losses and grief, similar histories, and who have gone from surviving to thriving.
- using interventions that CONNECT, not DISCONNECT (“time-in”, not “time-out”, heartfelt gratitude for desired behavior, not yelling or giving attention to undesirable behavior, not removing contact with others as a form of punishment).
- anchoring them to the family, their room, their school by finding ways to connect them through ritual, decorating their space, putting their picture on the wall, and other acts that say “you belong with us” and you are SAFE.
- understanding behaviors are often not willful, rather are trauma-responses, and responding with compassion and empathy, because punishment exacerbates trauma.
- understanding many behaviors are developmentally appropriate or normal, healthy responses to grief, loss and trauma, and delighting in the youth meeting normal developmental milestones or responses as a sign of resilience; also explaining these to the youth.
- providing consistent, repetitive, healing responses to challenging behavior that mirrors the attachment cycle.
- being a co-regulating partner and modeling self-regulation to build attachment.
- focusing attention on what you want to see more of, using heartfelt gratitude, to hard wire positive messages and behaviors such as “I’m a good kid,” which builds connection to caregiver.
- valuing and appreciating the child’s strengths and resilience, which fosters a sense of awe and admiration; everyone deserves to have someone think they’re “awesome”—especially their caregiver.
- fostering connections to their history and the story of where they came from and their sense of identity: including their personal story of resilience, their family history, stories of strength from their family, their community and culture (including art, poetry, stories, dance, music, etc.).
- fostering a connection to current community and the child’s role in membership or citizenship of serving and BELONGING.
- fostering a connection to something bigger than themselves: a higher purpose, calling or being.

# NEW TOOLBOX



**Assist in regulation and healing by allowing youth to be involved in integrative, regulating and organizing interventions, which have evidence bases or are promising practices such as:**

- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Art therapy
- Audio Visual Entrainment (AVE)
- Bike riding
- Bi-lateral brain stimulation
- Post-induction therapy and other experiential inner child work
- Brainspotting
- Chanting
- Cranio-sacral therapy
- Creative artistic expression
- Cultural practices & connections
- Drumming
- EMDR—eye movement desensitization and reprocessing
- Emotional Freedom - Tapping
- Equine-Assisted Therapy
- Experiences in nature as therapeutic
- Hypnotherapy
- Jumping
- Martial arts
- Massage
- MBSR--mindfulness based stress reduction
- Meditation
- Mindfulness practices such as Learning2Breathe
- Music therapy
- Neuro-feedback
- Neurological reorganization
- Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics (Perry)
- Pet therapy
- Playing catch
- Playing musical instruments
- Qigong
- Reiki
- Running
- Sensory integration therapy
- Singing in a choir
- Swimming
- Swinging
- Team sports
- Walking
- Yoga
- Zillions more, too!

*This list is a sample of available options, and is not meant to infer endorsement; please consult a professional for child-specific recommendations.*

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