

Tips on providing basic trauma-informed care



What is trauma?

Trauma and PTSD are very common among foster children. This trauma, which may result from physical, emotional, or psychological damage in the younger years, can affect these children for the rest of their lives if left unacknowledged and untreated. Luckily, the neuroplasticity of our brains ensures that with support and repeated exposure to healthy practices and a loving caregiver, change and growth are always possible!

Communication is key!

- Take the time to explain events, environments, rules, feelings, etc. openly with the child in order to build trust.
- Constantly reassure the child of their safety and worth!
- Provide opportunities for the child to open up and accept the big emotions they might be facing.
- In order for language and social skills to be developed, it is important that nonverbal children or infants are exposed to language frequently.
- Discuss upcoming changes with the child and offer helpful reminders as the change approaches to avoid alarm later.
- Repetition, repetition, repetition!

Engage!

- Get on their level and in proximity to the child when interacting.
- Use eye contact to ensure a better connection and focus during interactions.
- Use a strong, but affectionate voice.
- Engage in child-led play while matching their behaviors.

Keep in Mind...

- Trauma changes the brain. Thus, children who have experienced trauma may be a few years to half their age behind developmentally. Align your expectations of the child accordingly.
- Children who have experienced trauma usually take 7-12 seconds to process information. This is the result of an enlarged corpus callosum slowing down communication between their left brain and right brain.
- Healthy touch can be a valuable tool in establishing connection with a child, but must be permitted by the child (see SPD page) to be beneficial.
- When a child 'acts out,' consider their past and any present circumstances that may have triggered that response. Often, you can find a reason for their behavior that is related to fear and survival techniques they had to develop earlier in their life.

Don't forget nutrition!

- A well balanced diet and plenty of water allow a child's body to function properly and better help them cope when difficult situations arise.
- Play and exercise allow a child to release stress that has built up inside.

It is our goal, as an organization to acknowledge, respect, and help with the healing process concerning trauma in children. We also make it our goal to help make our volunteers aware of foster care etiquette and provide information on trauma informed care