



- 4 The Effects of Early Childhood Trauma on Adolescent Development
- 6 Independent Living Skills and Post-Secondary Planning
- 8 Resources & Activities for Tweens & Teens
- 10 Home to Stay: The Rewards and Challenges – of Parenting Teens
- 12 Resources

Inside

Coalition for Children, Youth & Families
6682 W. Greenfield Avenue
Suite 310
Milwaukee, WI 53214-3151
(414) 475-1246
V/TDD (800) 762-8063
Fax (414) 475-7007
info@coalitionforccyf.org
www.coalitionforccyf.org

Partners is published by the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families, dedicated to recruiting families for Wisconsin children in foster care and providing support to foster and adoptive families. The *Partners* Newsletter is written and compiled by members of the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families staff.

Parenting Strategies for Teens and Tweens that Enhance Development

Adolescence doesn't discriminate between birth children, youth in foster care, or someone who was adopted. When it comes to adolescence, it simply does not matter how a young person came to join his family. The changing hormones and shifting attitudes that characterize this time of life affects all tweens and teens in similar ways. Not only do they experience a lot of physical changes during adolescence, they also experience a variety of social, emotional, and cognitive changes.

The increase in hormones that all tweens and teens experience as they go through puberty means that, more often than not, they begin to feel more self-conscious about everything, especially their image. Emotions tend to run high during adolescence and young people are more susceptible to making decisions based on how they are feeling or the influence from their peers. Tweens and teens rely heavily on their peers for information, guidance, and acceptance. As a result, they have a tendency to adjust what they do based on the reactions, opinions, and expectations of others.

Adolescence is also when young people begin to develop their sense of self and desire for independence. They want to explore different things that might help them to better fit in with certain peer groups, as well as to grow their own self-confidence. Very often teens and tweens do this through trial and error and testing boundaries to see how those around them will react. Sometimes their behavior will gain approval; other times the results won't be quite as favorable. As they push and pull and learn about the positive and negative consequences of their actions, many tweens and teens will continue to make the same mistakes over and over again.

Teens can often seem moody, defiant, irresponsible, indecisive, unpredictable, impulsive, stubborn, and a whole lot more! Many of these behaviors and attitudes are a very typical part of a child's development. And yet, for parents, it's often easy to misinterpret those irrational and non-compliant behaviors to be anything but typical.

You might find yourself feeling that the child you once knew is gone, replaced by a young adult who appears to want nothing to do with you or who will only listen if his friends are nowhere to be seen. You may even begin to feel like parenting a tween or teen is more difficult than you had anticipated.

The teen years can sometimes mean more conflict between parent and child. (Your feelings get hurt and he feels as though you aren't on his side.) You may face more frustrating and challenging days as a parent, but the behavior you may be seeing doesn't and shouldn't define the child who you love and care about.

The vast majority of tweens and teens are energetic and caring individuals who have a profound interest in what they think is fair and right. The tween and teen years are full

From the Corner Office

Happy Spring!

As I write this, there is snow on the ground and cold winds blow me across the parking lot to the office. But I know things will change - especially my life with the Coalition. In 1984, when Camille Shaw (a foster/adoptive parent) called and asked me to lead the Coalition, I was a stay-at-home mom. I had been an adoption worker in Appleton and a school social worker in Racine before mom-hood had me at home. It was great and I loved every minute of staying at home with our children. But I was intrigued; I wanted to see how the Coalition could impact change in our state.

At that time, there were only 50 adoptions a year from child welfare. The families that rallied around this cause had adopted children from foster care, children from Korea, and Vietnam airlift babies, and transracially from other states. They wanted to make waiting children visible. So the dream started in my basement and we went on from there. Thousands of children have been adopted in our state over these years - many of them with the Coalition's help to make them visible. Technology came - and kept coming! Our first website, to email, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, electronic newsletters, and webinars . . . and to think: we started with an Apple 4E computer! From the start, we learned that families that bring children into their homes need support after a placement and after a finalization. This continues to be our goal: helping families whenever they need it and helping our state build the resources for those families.

It has been an amazing journey for me. I have been so humbled by the incredible families I have been fortunate to meet over the years. As foster and/or adoptive families, your dedication, love, and championing of your children is inspiring. I still cannot believe the hard work you all do each and every day! I have celebrated the joys with you and I have been there as you have struggled - with no magic answers, but with a listening ear. My mission over these years has been to listen, learn, and find ways to make steps of improvement to help children have successful, cherished lives. You build strong communities with the investments you all make in your children.

I will be leaving the Coalition at the end of June and starting the next stage of my life - retirement! My husband and I will be moving out to Colorado to be near to one half of our family and grandchildren and enjoying those beautiful Rocky Mountains - and taking frequent trips to Boston to see the other half of the family.

Oriana Carey, who has been with us for over 10 years working on foster care and adoption, will lead this organization into its future. Ori is an amazingly passionate person who got our mission from the day she interviewed for her first position with us. We officially moved her to her new role as CEO in November. For my last bit of time, I will be helping her with some of the final transition knowledge of the organization. She will be wonderful and I can't wait to see where this organization will grow.

My thanks for giving me the opportunity to walk with you for 31 years. I will hold you all in my heart.



Colleen M. Ellingson
President

From the Corner Office

Welcome 2015!

I want to begin this, my inaugural letter in *Partners*, by thanking Colleen Ellingson for such a glowing endorsement. Colleen has been a Champion of the Coalition for over 30 years; in that time, she has showed an unwavering commitment and dedication to children, youth, and families. Embracing the mission of the Coalition has been easy, because I am a firm believer that children and youth need families, and families need to feel supported. The challenge that lies ahead for us, is making sure that we continually learn from all of you. We want to meet and exceed your expectations by fulfilling your needs and continually improving our agency's services. The Coalition is committed to researching and sharing the best information. I am honored to have the opportunity to lead the Coalition - and to provide the best possible resources for all of you.

In this issue of *Partners*, we chose to focus on the journey of parenting of tweens and teens. As a mother of a 10- and 16-year-old, I am currently experiencing all the joys and challenges that parenting presents for us all. I have learned firsthand that no two children are the same. With each interesting situation I encounter, I often reflect on the challenges faced by families and youth touched by or involved in foster care and adoption. When we moved, and my children subsequently enrolled in new schools in different school districts, my teenager, who had never experienced any previous issues with her school counselors, became frustrated with the new school's counselor. I thought about all the children who have moved countless times, and how they must have been feeling, and if they, too, felt as if they were being misunderstood. Managing cell phones, social media, new friends, and considering when to trust and when to monitor (and how much to monitor), are additional times when I think about all of you and your families. Just as I do when I am trying to teach independent living skills and encouraging my children to think of the "big picture."

Please know that we at the Coalition want to be here to provide you with the best information and support at every stage of your parenting journey, even the exciting and challenging tween and teen years. We hope the articles we have included in this edition provide you with helpful information and ideas to consider. Please don't hesitate to give us a call if you want us to research something in greater detail. We also know that sometimes you just want someone else to connect with; you have an open invitation to give us a call or visit and like our Facebook page. We are connected to many foster and adoptive parents, and we would be happy to connect you with these families for additional supports and insights.

Best to you all and thank you for letting us serve you,



Oriana Carey, CEO

*Colleen has been a Champion of the Coalition for over 30 years;
in that time, she has showed an unwavering commitment
and dedication to children, youth, and families.*



The Effects of Early Childhood Trauma on Adolescent Development



Working with and caring for children and young adults can teach us a lot of valuable lessons. How to tap into our inner child, how to broach difficult or uncomfortable subjects, how to admit, sometimes, that we just don't know the answer to a question. One amazing lesson is learning how resilient children can be. They seem to continually amaze us with their ability to overcome adversity and trauma. But the lesson of resiliency also includes a warning: don't rely too heavily on a child's ability to "bounce back."

It's important to be careful not to oversimplify the resiliency of children and not to overlook the impact early childhood or prenatal trauma may have had on the development of healthy coping mechanisms. Especially since this impact often becomes more apparent and problematic when a child reaches adolescence. However, the good news is, there is a lot you can do for the children and young adults in your home. The keys are getting a better understanding of early childhood trauma, knowing what to look for, and learning about how you could respond.

Definition of Trauma

Trauma can be the result of a physical or emotional event, and can even occur prenatally. Anything that a child perceives to be life-threatening, including witnessing a caregiver exposed to harm, can be a traumatic experience. And trauma is subjective. People may react to the same event in different ways, depending on what their experiences have been. For

example, as adults, we may know that a loud vacuum poses no actual threat to our wellbeing, but a young child may think differently and therefore respond differently. How we respond is something that develops early in childhood and can be influenced by a number of factors that either strengthen or weaken our resiliency. Those factors include positive coping skills, a bond with a primary caregiver, and other stable supports in a child's life.

Trauma can also occur in multiple layers. For example, a child may have experienced physical or emotional trauma while in the care of his birth parent(s). If he was removed from his parental home and placed into the child welfare system, another layer of trauma, in all likelihood, has been added. Multiple moves, broken attachments, and overall instability can all be traumatic for children and youth. Unfortunately, a child's trauma history is often unknown or incomplete when he enters foster care or has been adopted.

How Trauma Can Impact Development

Without delving into complicated scientific explanations, and leaving out much of the medical jargon, we can summarize that modern neuroscience shows us that trauma actually alters the nervous system. Here's how: when a traumatic experience occurs, perhaps something mentioned previously, messages travel through the brain in a way that carves out paths of least resistance. Those pathways lay the foundation for creating patterns of behavior and thought processing that are different from those who have not experienced trauma. In other words, the brains of children, teens, and adults who have experienced trauma have developed differently.

Left unattended, the patterns of behavior created by traumatic events can make it more difficult for a person to achieve independence or establish healthy relationships as an adult. The good news is that therapies and environmental interventions can help to re-establish healthy pathways in the brain.

What This Means for You and Your Tween or Teen

Teens and tweens are often known for trying to get their needs met in rather creative ways. As a parent, while it may wear on your patience at times, you have probably come to expect some of these challenges. Even so, it can be especially difficult to remember that a teen with a history of trauma requires even more understanding, patience, and support, because his brain has developed differently. You may be quick to chalk up negative behavior, difficulty in school, or unexpected behavior as rebellion. However, by filtering these kinds of behaviors through a trauma-informed perspective, you might find that, rather than trying to be difficult or push your buttons, your child is simply responding in a learned way resulting from past trauma. By reminding yourself that there is often more than meets the eye, you can better provide the support needed, as well as work with him to reduce the amount and intensity of triggers to his trauma responses.

Adolescence can be a challenging time of life – emotionally, socially, and physically. Teens are exploring their sense of identity, their self-esteem is extremely sensitive, and they tend to test boundaries as they move toward independence. Teens who have experienced trauma may reveal feelings of fear and guilt. They might express those feelings through angry outbursts, withdrawing from others, regressing to earlier developmental phases, dissociating, involving themselves in risky behavior, exhibiting self-harm, or isolating themselves socially. In school, they may seem unable to focus, masking their struggle to learn with negative behaviors or an indifferent attitude.

What your child is feeling emotionally may also begin to show up as physical concerns. She may complain of or show symptoms of digestive distress, migraine headaches, inflammatory disorders, unexplained aches or pain, autoimmune disease, as well as additional physical issues. We recommend sharing your concerns about your child's symptoms and trauma history with her pediatrician. You may

also want to consult with a mental health provider who can conduct a formal assessment, if needed.

Younger children might sometimes have a hard time sharing their feelings in a way that we as adults understand. Teens and tweens, however, may be able to express themselves more easily. A great way to learn about how trauma has impacted a teen is to talk to him. These conversations could give you an insight about what he's feeling and thinking, as well as tell you how much he understands about his own behavior. For example, he may not understand that his behavior is inappropriate or in any way harmful to himself in the short or long term. Moreover, you are giving your child the opportunity to express himself in a safe and healthy way, which is an important life skill to have. You could consider having regularly scheduled check-ins with him, as a way to show that this time to talk is important to you. But, you don't need to wait for him to come to you to talk; he may be looking for an opening to share and simply not know how to approach the conversation.

In order to help your child heal, you may want to take an approach that includes several strategies. Your care plan might include:

- a nutritious diet
- school collaboration and support
- developing and maintaining social connections
- regular physical activity
- a safe, secure, and unconditional loving relationship with trusted caregivers
- outlets for creative expression
- helping to explore identity and story of origin
- ways to reconnect with the body, such as dance, martial arts, or yoga
- psychotherapy
- meditation
- sensory therapy
- medical follow-up
- and, if recommended and prescribed by a physician, medications to manage symptoms.

Every child's needs are unique, so every plan for care and healing is different. But the one thing that all such plans need is a trauma-sensitive lens. The suggestions provided above and others that you may discover along your journey will all help strengthen the child in your care. Together, you can work towards a healthier future for your entire family.



PREPARING TO LAUNCH: Independent Living Skills and Post-Secondary Planning

Growing up, leaving the nest, and striking out on your own is definitely one of life's challenges. It's true for all circumstances, for those leaving a birth home or those leaving the foster care system. However, the transition may be especially difficult for a person who has spent time in out-of-home care.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Children & Families, about 450 people age out of foster care in Wisconsin every year. For those young adults, support and help from a family isn't always available. The possibilities of homelessness and joblessness are frighteningly real.

Very often, young people look to follow in their parents' footsteps after high school, using their decisions as a guide to what to do once they graduate or turn 18. For youth in out-of-home care, there may be several sets of footsteps to choose from, multiple parental figures who have had many different experiences and influences in their lives. For these youth, knowing whose example to follow can be confusing.

The thought of making plans for life after high school can seem daunting and confusing for all young people, even those who have never spent time in foster care. There are a lot of options and possibilities to choose from. Following are some of those options.

Entering the work force. For those who have already been working at a job, this transition may be a smooth one. Regardless, you can help a young adult prepare for a first job or a new job by role playing interviews, helping complete a job application, talking about how to dress for an interview and for employment, and reviewing general expectations of a successful employee. (The Coalition has some tip sheets that you and your teen may find helpful; please see the Resource section.)

Some extra ideas to consider:

- **Conduct a social media clean up.** Go online together and search for his name (most people use Google for this). If any less-than-desirable posts, pictures, or content appears, you can work together to remove it from the original site (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). You can find more information on social media clean-ups in the Resource section.

- **Create an email address appropriate for job applications,** such as first initial, last name at ____.
- **Record a voice mail message appropriate for potential employers** at the number he is providing on applications. If he is listing a shared number, encourage him to let anyone who may answer the call know that an employer may be calling.

Joining the military. There are many different options when a young adult is considering joining the military. Be it Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard, or the Air Force, each has its own set of requirements, benefits, and sacrifices. Take some time with your child (or the youth in your care and his parents). Together, you can talk about each branch and weigh the options. One way to do this is by visiting websites like usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/a/choosing.htm. Another is to visit the various recruitment offices in your area. In some areas, the offices may even be within the same physical building. Before visiting with a recruiter, you can help by preparing some questions to ask, both general and those specific to the branch of service he is visiting. There is additional information about meeting with a military recruiter in the Resource section of this newsletter.

Enrolling in college or technical training. There is an abundance of information and resources available about choosing the type of post-secondary education that is right for a youth and where to receive it. The first thing a young person may want to consider is if he has a career in mind. If he wants to be a mechanic, a four-year institution may not be the best fit.

Some youth find success in starting with general education classes at a technical college, if they aren't quite sure what to declare as their major. Encourage him to work with the admissions office at any potential university to be sure credits from a technical school will transfer when and if the time comes. Resources do exist to financially help youth (both those in out-of-home care and those not in care) to pursue further educational opportunities.

You may also want to research and discuss the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is the basic

form that must be filled out if a student is interested in federal student aid programs such as Stafford and Perkins loans, as well as Pell Grants. The FAFSA application is free to complete and generally does not require professional preparation. FAFSA applications are due by June 30th of each year.

Independent Living Skills

No matter which path your child or the child in your care chooses, she will need some basic independent living skills. For example, you may want to discuss the following topics:

- **Health and medical needs.** Those who are not covered under a parent's policy or who do not receive coverage intended for youth in care will need to secure health insurance, either through employment or the public sector. It may be helpful to teach her how to advocate for herself by having her make her own medical appointments as early as 16 years old. Help her put together questions for her annual appointments or any other recurring appointments. Medical needs can be the last thing on a young person's mind, so it is important to lead by example and attend your annual medical/dental exams.
- **Household skills.** There are many factors to living successfully on your own for the first time. Some skills are essential, like budgeting and paying bills; others are helpful, such as laundry and cooking. You may want to help your child or the child in your care prepare by having her help with chores as soon as she is developmentally able. If she came to live with you later in life without these skills, it may feel like a rush to get her up to speed! However, young minds are usually fast learners and practice will assist her at acquiring new skills. Other parents have found success, when possible, in visiting the youth in her new environment to continue helping her build her confidence and skills.
- **Transportation.** After leaving your home, will a car be needed? Or will your young adult be able to get to where she needs to go on the bus or by walking? It can be helpful to sit down with her and explore the reality of each of these options by completing a pros and cons list for each. Some items to consider discussing:
 - Round trip distance from home to school or work
 - Being aware of safety concerns in new or unfamiliar neighborhoods
 - Budgeting for gas and maintenance needs, automobile insurance, and/or public transportation costs
 - Budgeting for unexpected expenses
 - Planning for inclement weather.

It can also be beneficial to create a contingency plan together for when her first plan of transportation does not work (a car won't start, she missed a bus), so that such a situation doesn't become a barrier to getting to work, school, or appointments.

- **Engaging in meaningful activities.** This life skill is often forgotten, but is equally as important as those listed above. Encouraging your child to try new things will build her confidence and self-esteem. From volunteering to joining a pick-up basketball game, the period of time right after leaving home is one of the most important for engaging with new people and making new connections. You can help her learn where she can discover opportunities for activities, especially if she will be in a new city.

As you assist your children and other youth in your care with moving towards independence, there will be times when it feels chaotic and never ending. Remember to take care of yourself and talk to other parents who have been through this process. Take on small pieces of this task at a time when possible and plan, plan, plan. Try to keep the lines of communication open, especially considering that times of transition can bring up a lot of emotions and triggers for some young adults. With your help, support, and guidance, your children and the other youth for whom you care will gain the confidence and initiative to succeed far into the future.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Scholarship Program awards scholarship funds for youth who have been in out-of-home care and are entering a degree, license, or certificate program.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for a DCF Scholarship award, the applicant must:

- Have been in out-of-home care (OHC) court ordered (Ch. 48 or 938) placement (kinship, foster home, group home or residential care center) and left OHC at age 18 or older; or
- Have been in OHC placement for at least six months after the age of 15 and went to Ch. 48 or 938 Guardianship or adoption after the age of 16.
- Aged out of OHC placement in another state but has become a permanent resident of Wisconsin prior to attending a Wisconsin postsecondary institution.
- Be accepted into a postsecondary institution (i.e., college, vocational or technical program) at the time the application is submitted.
- Be age 20 or less, unless enrolled in a postsecondary program and receiving the DCF Scholarship on his / her 21st birthday, thus extending eligibility to the student's 23rd birthday.

Scholarships may be awarded up to the cost of attendance and may not exceed \$4,000. Funds for all scholarships will be paid directly to the institution. Funds may not be used for outreach, enrichment, special student programs or any other program participation costs. Unused funds will be returned to the DCF.



Community Connections: Resources & Activities for Tweens & Teens

As a parent, you provide love and support at home that is essential to help tweens and teens learn the independent skills necessary to become successful adults. However, helping children and youth become all that they can be extends beyond the home and into the larger community. Research has shown that teens who are connected to and active in their community will do better in school, are more likely to stay out of trouble, and even at less risk for depression and suicide. Teens who become active in their communities will have more opportunities to learn and grow, gain a strong peer support network, and feel a great sense of connectedness and purpose as they transition into adulthood. They may even discover one or more personal passions that will guide them in their future endeavors. There are many ways in which parents can guide young people to explore opportunities to become engaged and active participants in their communities.

Start at School

School is one of the most central communities in the lives of teens and tweens; the majority of your child's friends and social circles come from connections made at school. Beyond the classes and homework that teens are required to attend and complete, many schools offer a wide variety of extra-curricular activities for youth to participate in. School activities offer teens and tweens a chance to develop essential social and life skills, expand their circle of friends, develop passions, and produce well-rounded young adults. In fact, extra-curricular activities are so essential, that many colleges and universities view participation in at least one activity as a critical consideration in their admissions criteria.

Clubs: School clubs typically meet during free periods or after school and are supervised by a faculty member. They can range from Yearbook Committee to Robotics Club. Some clubs, like Student Council, can teach teens leadership and community-building skills, while other clubs, such as photography, can indulge a student's interests and help him develop hobbies and even cultivate a professional passion. Above all else, school clubs are a great opportunity for teens to socialize with likeminded peers in healthy and enriching ways. To help your teen find a club they are interested in, check out your school's website, where a list of active clubs is typically listed. Many schools have a "club day" towards the beginning of the year, where students can check out clubs they may be interested in.

Athletics: Most high schools and middle schools in Wisconsin have organized sports programs for their students, featuring a multitude of advantages to participating. Students involved with athletics are more likely to be at a healthy weight and physically fit, are less likely to be depressed, maintain stronger social connections, and are more likely to have better attendance and achieve graduation. Sports also teach students the value of team work, discipline, work ethics, and the comradery that accompanies shared victory and defeats. School sports programs are available to all youth who have parental consents and can pass a sports physical. Most athletic programs have teams that accommodate a range of skill levels, including Varsity and Junior Varsity.

Performance Arts: If a teen is not interested or unable to participate in sports, but still would like to be part of a larger group, many schools offer a performance arts program. Programs like band, choir, student government, high school debate program, or theatre teach teens many of the same values as sports programs, in addition to helping youth develop the confidence it takes to perform live and in front of large audiences.

Activities in the Larger Community

Youth Development Programs: There are many youth development programs in Wisconsin communities, such as 4-H (Heads, Hearts, Hands and Health), Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, The Boys and Girls Club, and the YMCA. These groups are designed to teach children and teens a set of

values that often include friendship, volunteerism, healthy living, and positive decision making. These types of programs accomplish this through group outdoor activities, group learning, community excursions, and volunteer projects. Many of the programs offer a wide variety of activities for teens to participate in with their peers, which gives teens plenty of opportunities to make friends and try new things.

Every community has unique programs that may appeal to youth. You can look up more information using the search page at www.findyouthinfo.gov. You might also check the University of Wisconsin Exchange page (<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/index.cfm>), or visit your local library or Chamber of Commerce, both of which often have listings of various programs in your community.

Volunteerism: Volunteering is another activity that anyone of any age could do with their spare time. For teens, volunteering will not only help them improve their community, but it will also help them gain new skills, learn responsibility, and gain valuable experience. Volunteering may also help teens discover a passion or career path. For example, a student may develop their passion to help less fortunate community members by volunteering at a soup kitchen, or a food pantry. Another opportunity for a teen who wishes to work with animals would be to volunteer at a humane society. Most communities have non-profit organizations that are always in need of volunteers. Teens may start with organizations like the United Way or the Salvation Army. Local churches, faith-based groups, and community centers are other places to find opportunities to volunteer. Some industrious youth even start their own projects to address causes that are important to them. The potential for youth to serve and benefit their communities is vast, and the rewards can be even greater!

Mentoring: Many studies have shown that the more connected and caring adults there are in a teen's life, the more successful he or she will become as an adult. Connecting teens with a mentor in the community is one way to accomplish this. Mentors guide, teach, and share experience with teens and commit to serving that young person's best interest. Many organizations, such as Boys and Girls Club, offer mentorship programs. If there is no formal mentorship program, you might look for mentors in the community from businesses, churches, and programs that youth might identify and connect with.

Parents are the Key to Teen Success

No one can deny that teens can, at times, be a challenging group to parent. With today's technological distractions permeating the lives of our teens and tweens, keeping youth engaged in the world and community around them is more important than ever. With persistence and encouragement, parents can help young people get connected to and active in the community, which can help them prepare to take the first steps into adulthood.

HOME TO STAY:

The Rewards and Challenges – of Parenting Teens



Cindi Vian has dedicated much of her career to helping others. She has worked in and volunteered for various positions assisting children, youth, and families. But if you ask Cindi, she would tell you that the hardest and most fulfilling job that she has ever done is being a foster/adoptive parent of teenagers.

Cindi's first adopted daughter, Lucy*, was 14 years old when she first came to live with Cindi in 2006. Lucy had spent a great

deal of time in other foster homes before being placed with Cindi. Three years later, the adoption was finalized and Lucy officially became a part of Cindi's family. The story of Cindi and her family does not end here; it contains a lot of twists and turns, but also a lot of laughter along the way.

Prior to her adoption court date, Cindi said that Lucy wanted to be adopted. Cindi now believes that, like most teenagers, Lucy wanted to feel like a typical teen, meaning she wanted to have a family like everyone else. But not long after the adoption finalization, Lucy ran away from home. There was a long period of time during which Cindi did not know where Lucy was or even if she was alive. In the fall of 2012, Lucy contacted Cindi and let her know that she was living with a friend. Lucy came over to Cindi's for Thanksgiving that year, and each person who was there that day talked about what they were thankful for. When it was Lucy's turn to share, she said that she was grateful for her mom (Cindi), because, without her, she would not be alive. Although bittersweet, Cindi is also grateful that Lucy is healthy, living independently, and, most importantly, is alive. Cindi is definitely looking forward to continuing to keep in close contact with her daughter.

Although Cindi and Lucy's relationship has been rocky at times, it hasn't prevented Cindi from pursuing what she believes is her "calling:" working with teenagers. Cindi's family now includes Lilly*, who has been living with Cindi for four years and who she is planning to adopt in the near future. Lilly has been in foster care for over 10 years, and, Cindi says, was anxious, needy, clingy, and irritable when she first came to live with her. She wanted to be next to Cindi all the time. Over time, Cindi says that Lilly has made a tremendous amount of progress.

Lilly frequently moved from one foster home to another when she was younger and, because of that, she missed out

on some typical childhood experiences. Cindi is determined to provide Lilly with those experiences. This past Halloween, Cindi took Lilly trick-or-treating, even though she was older than most children who go out. They were with other foster and adoptive families, and Lilly's biological brother also joined them. Lilly got to spend time with her brother and lots of other children, which gave Cindi opportunity chance to see her having fun and fulfilling her role as a big sister. Cindi believes that it's important for foster parents to help the youth in their care maintain connections with his or her birth family members. Cindi has encouraged Lilly to continue to maintain her relationship and connection with her biological grandmother.

Cindi enjoys Lilly's company and sense of humor. Although Cindi and Lilly have different interests, they find a way to make it work. Cindi loves the theatre and arts, whereas Lilly enjoys rock music and monster truck rallies. Cindi has taken Lilly to monster truck rallies and rock shows, and, in exchange, Cindi asked Lilly to choose between several plays for them to attend together. Much to Cindi's chagrin, Lilly asked which one was the shortest. They ended up seeing *Wicked* and had a wonderful evening together.

So, how did Cindi end up as a single foster/adoptive mother of teens? In order to follow her calling, Cindi decided to go back to school and study counseling. During her time in school, she learned a lot about teen development, including how to manage teen behaviors. Cindi started working in the foster care field, and she ultimately chose to become a foster parent because she felt that, in doing so, she could make more of a difference in and an impact on the lives of teenagers.

Over the years, Cindi has learned that, with teens, you have to pick your battles. Also, teens who have spent time in foster care and/or have a history of trauma, can sometimes feel uncomfortable with too much positive love and attention, because they may think that they don't deserve it. Traditionally, we punish youth for being disrespectful or disobeying rules. But Cindi has discovered that, for youth like Lilly, punishment just proves that she does not deserve love. Cindi is constantly showing her girls that, no matter how they act, she is going to love them unconditionally. She wants them to learn that she is here for them because they are good and they do deserve to be loved.

As a single mother with a busy professional life, Cindi is grateful for the support of family and friends. Cindi's family is encouraging of her foster care and adoption journey; however, they live on the East Coast, so she also relies on her colleagues and other families for support and encouragement. Cindi is a member of the Facebook group Connecting Bridges, and she appreciates the camaraderie and advice from others who have walked in her shoes. Foster and adoptive families who are facing a challenging situation

receive input from other families who have experienced a similar struggle. Despite her experience as a therapist, Cindi sees situations posted that she would not know how to handle, but there always seems to be someone who provides great insight and guidance.

Throughout her journey these past few years, Cindi has learned a lot about teens. She echoes what a lot of other parents have shared with us; that no matter how much experience you have or how many books you have read, you don't always know what the best response is to each and every situation. On the other hand, Cindi claims that, when you parent teens, you learn a lot about the meaning of love. Teens may be challenging at times, but they can help teach you about love, selflessness, and compassion. In addition, another advantage of parenting teens is that her daughter is old enough to stay home by herself if Cindi wants to get out of the house to recharge!

Like any parent, Cindi has good days and not so good days. Those good days are what remind Cindi of why she started fostering teens in the first place, and what keeps her going on this challenging but incredibly rewarding journey.

Cindi's family participated in the Jockey Being Family® Home to Stay™ program. If you have recently completed an adoption from the child welfare system and would like to take part in the Home to Stay program, please contact us at 414-475-1246 or 800-762-8063.

** Names have been changed to protect the privacy of those in the story*

Continued from front page

of experiences and learning moments that are significant in shaping who they will become as adults. As a parent, the goal is to not give up; to continue to love them unconditionally; to keep believing in your child in order to see him transition to adulthood. Flexibility and adaptability can be two of the most beneficial tools in your parenting tool box.

In order to help with this mission, following are eight ideas for you to consider with your tween or teen. Perhaps some of these suggestions can help you feel more empowered as the parent of a tween or teen:

1. **Agree on and establish reasonable household rules** and limits by incorporating some of your tween or teen's ideas and help her work within those boundaries. This will show her that you value her input and help encourage her to "get on board" with not only following the rules, but accepting the consequences of breaking them.
2. **Put expectations in writing and display them in your home** where they are visible and can be quickly referenced if needed. The use of visuals, such as a flowchart, can help with clearly identifying rules, consequences, chores, allowed activities, goals, etc.
3. **Be specific and consistent.** Explain things by breaking details down to the basics and asking your child if she has any questions. This will help you both determine if there is mutual understanding of whatever is being discussed.
4. **Find a healthy balance between being firm and consistent,** but also nurturing and loving towards your tweens and teens. You can achieve this by demonstrating a willingness to be understanding and flexible, while maintaining structure and consistency in the home setting.

5. **Give praise and encouragement often and consistently** to help your tween or teen build up his self-confidence and self-esteem. He will learn to believe in himself and his abilities, if you show him how to exercise his potential in a positive way.
6. **Model positive behavior.** Help your tween or teen set realistic and attainable short-term and long-term goals for herself and teach her how to be independent through independent living and life skills training.
7. **Be relatable and open to having personal conversations with your child,** without forcing conversation if he is not ready. Speak with him at his level, using language he understands. This will help to create a comfortable environment that allows your child to feel safe enough to open up and be honest about what's driving his behaviors.
8. **When you feel like you are frustrated or overwhelmed, try to remember that what works for one child might not work for another.** Be prepared for numerous periods of trial and error. When all else fails, don't be afraid to think outside of the box and try new things. Talking with other parents who have teenagers can provide you with additional ideas or approaches to situations that arise.

Resources

From the Coalition

- **Tip sheet: What's Behind These Behaviors?** wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- **Tip sheet: Fostering Older Youth** wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- **Tip sheet: The 411 on Social Media, Networking and Texting** wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- **Tip sheet: Supporting Youth Who Transition Out of the Foster Care System at Age 18** wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- **Tip sheet: Working with Children Who Have Been Traumatized** wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- **Tip sheet: Parenting Children Who Are Sexualized** wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- **Tip sheet: Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Youth in Care** wiadopt.org/resources/tipsheets
- **Tip sheet: Furnishing Your First Apartment** wifostercareandadoption/youth/tipsheets for youth
- **Tip sheet: Keys to Independence: Finding Your First Apartment** wifostercareandadoption/youth/tipsheets for youth
- **Tip sheet: How to Ace Your Job Interview** wifostercareandadoption/youth/tipsheets for youth
- **Tip sheet: Tips for Filling Out a Job Application Form** wifostercareandadoption/youth/tipsheets for youth
- **Tip sheet: Financial Aid Awareness & Assistance** wifostercareandadoption/youth/tipsheets for youth
- **Tip sheet: Great! You Got a Job! Now What?** wifostercareandadoption/youth/tipsheets for youth

Additional Resources

- **Job Interview Tips for Teens** snagajob.com/resources/job-interview-tips-for-teens/
- **Teen Interview Tips** jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewsnetworking/a/teeninterview.htm
- **College Student Guide to Professional Social Profiles** affordablecollegesonline.org/spotlight/college-students-clean-up-your-online-profiles-now/
- **Scan, Clean, and Secure Your Social Network Content** socioclean.com/
- **Things to Consider When Choosing Which Military Service to Join** usmilitary.about.com/od/joiningthemilitary/a/choosing.htm
- **10 Tips for Visiting the Recruiting Office** military.com/join-armed-forces/recruiting-10-tips.html
- **Federal Student Aid – FAFSA** <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>
- **The National Child Traumatic Stress Network** www.nctsn.org/
- **Child Trauma Academy** childtrauma.org/
- **The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES)** acestudy.org/
- **TED Talk: Building Resilience Key to Overcoming Childhood Trauma by Dr. Robert Ross** youtube.com/watch?v=dsCNuB_KBUw

Books

- *Parenting At The Speed Of Teens: Positive Tips On Everyday Issues*, by Peter Benson
- *Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, by David Walsh
- *Analyze This! - A Teen Guide to Therapy and Getting Help*, by Youth Communication
- *For When I'm Famous: A Teen Foster/Adopt Lifebook*, by Adoption Works
- *It Happened to Me - Adopted: The Ultimate Teen Guide*, by Suzanne Buckingham Slade
- *Child Trauma Handbook: A Guide for Helping Trauma-Exposed Children and Adolescents*, by Ricky Greenwald
- *Adoptive Parent, Intentional Parent: A Formula for Building & Maintaining Your Child's Safety Net*, by Stacy Manning
- *Traumatic Experiences and the Brain*, by Dave Ziegler
- **VIDEO: Healing Children Through Trust and Relationships by TCU Institute of Child Development**
- **VIDEO: The Legacy of Childhood Trauma – Not Always Who They Seem** by Research Press
- **VIDEO: Early Childhood & Brain Development: How Experience Shapes Child, Community & Culture** by Child Trauma Academy

Having Critical Conversations with Children and Youth about Racism

Thursday, February 26, 2015 | 6-8pm

\$20/person or \$80/agency group

The Coalition for Children, Youth and Families

Or attend via webinar

Register online at <https://addressingracism.eventbrite.com> or

contact info@coalitionforcyf.org or call 414-475-1246



Racism can take on a lot of forms: a youth being harassed at school, a person not getting a job because of their name, someone dismissing a story or incident, ignoring cultural norms, obvious and subtle, even through seemingly innocent questions. Regardless of your own experiences with racism, it can be hard to know how and when to talk about it; especially what to do for and say to the youth in your care.

About the Trainer

Warren Scherer is the Director for the Inclusive Excellence Center at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In this role, he offers trainings about equity and topics between cultures for the campus community.



Coalition for Children, Youth & Families

6682 West Greenfield Avenue
Suite 310
Milwaukee WI 53214

T/TTY 414.475.1246
FAX 414.475.7007
TOLL FREE 1.800.762.8063
info@coalitionforcyf.org

Family of websites:

coalitionforcyf.org
wiadopt.org
wifostercareandadoption.org
wiadoptioninfocenter.org

An umbrella of services over foster care and adoption; information and referral; recruitment; training, education and support for families and professionals.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Larry Burnett	Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren sc
Vice President	Steve Lilly	Cortina Asset Management
Secretary	Richard Larsen	Community Volunteer
Treasurer	Steve Volz	Reilly, Penner, Benton
Past President	Bruce Miller	National Insurance Services
	Joan Bruce	Community Volunteer
	Ross W. Draegert	Community Volunteer
	Nicole Druckrey	Quarles & Brady
	Mike Giunta	Celera Systems
	Tameica Greene	Community Volunteer
	Jeff Hart	CPC Logistics
	Leah Delaney Karge	Management Consultant
	Dennis Krakau	Associated Bank
	Maria Kreiter	Godfrey & Kahn S.C.
	Thomas W. Lacy	Robert W. Baird Co.
	David Osswald	Miller Coors
	Troy Peterson	HY Connect
	Tom Richtman	U.S. Bank.
	Joseph Rock	KPMG LLP
	Robert Stubbe	Madison National Life Insurance
	Mark Volz	Tri City National Bank
	Joseph Wall	U.S. Department of Justice
	Cyd Walters, CPA	C.L. Walters, Inc.

STAFF

Oriana Carey, Chief Executive Officer
Colleen Ellingson, President
H. Monte Crumble, Director of Administration & Finance
Michael Heath, Director of Outreach & Advancement
Tiffany Meredith, Director of Programs & Quality Assurance
Amy Bottin, Project Coordinator
Kevin Curley, Resource Specialist
Jenna Czaplowski, Communication & Development Coordinator
Cindy Diaz, Program Support Specialist
Rachel Goeden, Resource Specialist
Mai Her-Lee, Lead Resource Specialist
Jade Johnson, Lead Resource Specialist
Kim Richfield, Resource Specialist
Anne Scallon, Administrative Assistant