Connecting the Dots for Permanency

An Integrated Approach
To Promoting Healing
And Resilience

with Jan Dick and Michael Yates
Welcome & Introductions

- Overview of how we’ll spend our time
  - Structure of the day

- Agreements
  - Shared learning is valued
  - Integrated approach
  - Think differently – small tests of change
  - Enjoy yourself & have fun
Introductions

- Activity: something on your person that represents CONNECTION to you

- Connects past to present, brings memories and positive experiences of self & identity
In our time together, we will:
Understand adoption as a process
Integrate adoption practice & trauma informed care
Essential importance of teamwork & team resilience
Maximize protective factors to support well-being
Small tests of change
Betterment is a perpetual labor ... to live as a [social worker] is to live so that one’s life is bound up in others’ and in [best practice] and in the messy, complicated connection between the two. The question is ... how does one do such work well. Atul Gawande, Better

“In our work, we camp out in adversity.”
- Jon Ebert

These “small tests of change” are focused on improving processes, practices, and tools in order to positively impact outcomes for children and families. - NCTSN
“We learn at every step, and we continue to learn.” – Blaustein/Kinniburgh
The ACE Study is ongoing collaborative research between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA, and Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, CA.

Trauma-informed approaches can improve child welfare services by 1) openly discussing trauma and 2) addressing parental trauma.

"In my beginning is my end."
T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets
Impact of ACE’s

Having four adverse childhood experiences was associated with a seven-fold increase in alcoholism, a doubling of risk of being diagnosed with cancer, and a four-fold increase in emphysema; an ACE score above six was associated with a 30-fold increase in attempted suicide.
A look into our Rearview

- Reflect on our view of adoption through the Adoption Attitude Survey
- Your role in the Adoption Process
Dimensions of Integration

- integrate
  - [in-ti-greyt]
  1. to bring together or incorporate (parts) into a whole.
  2. to make up, combine, or complete to produce a whole or a larger unit, as parts do.
  3. to unite or combine.
The child’s journey in custody

- What gets “broken apart”, even when we try to provide safety?
- How does each role hold a piece of Wholeness!!
TRAUMA FRAGMENTS

- Ability to trust
- Sense of personal safety
- Attachment relationships
- Normal development
- Emotional regulation
- Sense of self
- Hope for future
Entry into state custody provides SAFETY, but fragments...

- Sibling Relationships
- Daily Parenting
- Cultural Heritage
- Family History & Traditions
- Decision-making
- Identity
Emotional Fragmentation...
System Fragmentation

Region 1
The Fragmented and Labeled Child
The Art of Integration

Cultivate Resilience
Well-being: what does it look like to you?

- Child and youth well-being encompasses multiple dimensions: physical and mental health, educational progress, social and emotional adjustment and healthy relationships.

- For children and youth who have been abused or neglected, the child welfare systems that are responsible for their safety and stability must simultaneously focus on their developmental health and well-being.

- This focus must include attention to the needs, future happiness and success of the children and youth served so that all children can thrive and reach their full potential.

- Ctr for Study of Social Policy, 2013
Well-Being = Resilience

- **Resilience** is the ability to recover from traumatic events
- Protective Factors that can increase resilience:
  - A strong relationship with at least one competent, caring adult
  - Feeling connected to a positive role model/mentor
  - Having talents/abilities recognized and nurtured
  - Feeling some control over one’s life
  - Having a sense of belonging to a community, group, or cause larger than oneself
Table Talk

- How do you keep the “whole child” in mind as you do your work?

- How do you promote resilience for the child ... for yourself?
Trauma Informed Care changes the question from, "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"

This is exactly what the child in custody wants to know, and is the central issue in both trauma-informed care and adoption preparation.
Child’s Journey to Adoption

All children have the right...

- To understand their personal history
- To have the opportunity to grieve past losses
- To understand that the problems that led to the separation were not their fault
- To develop a positive sense of identity
- To have stability, permanency, a sense of belonging..
Integration begins with story
A Treasure Bucket
Preparing children for Permanency: the 3-5-7 Model
Darla L. Henry

- 3 TASKS (Clarification, Integration, Actualization)
- 5 Conceptual Questions:
  - What happened to me? (Loss)
  - Who am I? (Identity)
  - Where am I going? (Attachment)
  - How Will I get there? (Building Relationships)
  - How will I know when I belong? (Claiming)
- 7 critical skill elements – Am I safe enough to take this journey?
7 Critical Elements…

And one critical question: Who will guide the child on the journey?

- Engage the child in the process
- Listen to the child’s words
- Speak the truth
- Validate the child and the child’s story
- Create a safe space for the child to do the work
- It is never too late to go back in time
- Acknowledge that pain is part of the process

“If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can’t survive.”

Brene Brown
CLARIFICATION

- Assisting the child to understand what “really” happened to them;
- Hearing and reframing child’s view of events, being honest at the child’s developmental level;
- Lifting blame from them and placing it where it belongs
- What happened to you? (the trauma question)
CLARIFICATION: If I could get the answer to one question about myself and my life, it would be ...

- “What happened to me when I got beat up and people threw stuff at me?” Kenny, 8
- “Why did my parents treat me the way they did?” Sarah, 15
- “Why did they throw me away?” Steve, 12
- “Why did my mom go off and leave me?” Mia, 11
- “In 10 whole years, nobody has been able to take care of me!” Levon, 10
Integration

- Acknowledging the child’s membership and emotional ties to many families, and validating that these families had meaning to the child and the child had meaning to them
- Assisting the child in dealing with loyalty conflicts regarding birth family, foster family, adoptive family
- Honoring all the people a child has loved – and allowing the child to GRIEVE.
The Blessing: Integrating Love and Loss...
Trauma Experience Integration

- Work with children
  - to actively explore, process and integrate [past] experiences,
  - into a coherent and comprehensive understanding of self,
  - in order to enhance their capacity to effectively engage in present life.

Blaustein and Kinniburgh, Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents
Sense of safety

Integration via therapy & parenting

Learning to trust and attach

+ id incorporates BF, belonging, unique personal charac.

Critical role of BF acknowledged & honored

Emotions acknowledged & expressed
Actualization

- Visualize, practice, and experience membership in a safe, healing family
- Understand and experience family roles and begin to develop trust in new attachment relationships
- Provide support to foster and adoptive families, so that they can create a “circle of security” for their children and embrace the “whole child”
StoryCorps

npr

STORYCORPS
Adoptive family embraces the whole child

Trauma experiences are being healed with therapy and parenting

Grief and loyalty acknowledged and expressed

Gifts of BF honored

Restoring wholeness...
IMAGINE

A World Where No One is Acting Out of Their Past Wounds
The influential caregiving system for many traumatized children goes beyond the biological parents.

In building a safe environment, attachment work is optimally done at multiple levels of the child’s caregiving system.
Through the Trauma/Adoption Lens

Statistics:
• More than 68% of children and adolescents had experienced a potentially traumatic event by the age of 16
• Rates of PTSD in children who have been maltreated are 20 to 63 percent
• Adoptive families are two to five times more likely to utilize outpatient mental health services than are non-adoptive families
• Adoptive families are four to seven times more likely to place their children in residential treatment centers

Bottom lines:
• Child and family professionals need to be aware that their clients are likely to have been exposed to trauma
• Trauma clinicians are treating children who have been adopted
Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System

- Partner with Agencies and Systems that Interact with Children and Families
- Maximize Physical and Psychological Safety for Children and Families
- Identify Trauma-Related Needs of Children and Families
- Enhance the Well-Being and Resilience of Those Working in the System
- Enhance Child Well-Being and Resilience
- Enhance Family Well-Being and Resilience

Broader Child-Serving System

Child Welfare System

Family

Child

Trauma Training Toolkit
General comments around teaming

When teaming works well, it can literally move mountains; when it doesn’t work well, a team’s fragmentation will compound the child’s fragmentation.

Teaming is to help bring about healing and integration for the child.
Conflict

Denying

Crisis Driven

Assumptions

Unsafe

Blaming

Minimization
Safety in thought, feeling, and difference of opinion is key to the healthy functionality of the team; we must always remember that the child is at the center of our teaming & this may mean that sometimes difficult things are said, heard, and considered. A team’s capacity to discern & decide is only as strong as the safety to be heard.

*How do you feel safety is reinforced or betrayed?*

*Small test of change - what can one person do?*
My Greatest Concern is …

- I am a Team member, preparing for adoption, and my greatest concern is…
- I am the family (mother/father) preparing for adoption, and my greatest concern is…
- I am the child, preparing for adoption, and my greatest concern is…
Clarity of purpose

- What are we doing and why are we doing it.
  - What is the purpose of our team?
  - What are the expected outcomes of our time together?
- Why am I part of this team?

Many, if not most, of the challenges faced are a result of a lack of clarity of purpose and process. The result is that people are working in a fragmented and sometimes divide manner. - Lab Work
Roles and Responsibilities

- What roles and responsibilities are necessary for the purpose?
- What do we know about each other?
- How can the group develop trust and safety in order to talk about roles?

The roles require definition and clarity to increase mutual understanding of role and function. With mutual understanding comes value and respect. True collaboration happens when each person in a functional role can contribute their expertise and listen to that of others and create a more comprehensive way of moving forward. - Lab Work
6 Key Principles to a trauma-informed approach of interacting with care giving system

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach
Family Protective Factors

- Nurturing & Attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and childhood development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Create supports
Protective Factors for Adoptive Families

- Formal & informal supports
- Communicative openness
- Positive parenting style
- Realistic expectations & preparation

Susan Smith, Center for Adoption & Education, 2013
(Almost)
Everything I Need to Know About Being a Parent in 25 Words or less

• *Always*: be BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND.
• *Whenever possible*: follow your child’s need.
• *Whenever necessary*: take charge.

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**CIRCLE OF SECURITY®**

**PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD’S NEEDS**

- **Secure Base**
  - Support My Exploration
  - I need you to...
    - Watch over me
    - Delight in me
    - Help me
    - Enjoy with me

- **Safe Haven**
  - Welcome My Coming To You
  - I need you to...
  - Protect me
  - Comfort me
  - Delight in me
  - Organize my feelings

**Always:** be BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND.

**Whenever possible:** follow my child’s need.

**Whenever necessary:** take charge.
From a youth point of view
Traveling the circle as a parent

CIRCLE OF SECURITY
Attending to Adoptive Parent’s Need during Full Disclosure Process

The Team
- Family Service
- Worker
- Resource Parent
- Support
- TL/TC
- Permanency Specialist
- Private Provider
- Therapist

Secure Base
- Welcome my questions and listen
- Validate & encourage my discernment
- Help clarify & organize my concerns
- Communicate with me
- Support my reflection
- Support my decision

Safe Haven
- Support my discernment & the full disclosure process
- Elicit hopes & concerns
- Explore future needs of child
- Help me interact with child’s story
- Encourage me
- Support me relationally

Always: The Team should be committed, encouraging, supportive, and wise. Whenever possible: follow the parent’s need. Whenever necessary: take responsibility.

Welcome My Coming To You
When I become...
- Anxious
- Confused
- Worried
- Fearful
- Frustrated
- Upset

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To what extent can the levers of best practice and child welfare system mirror the safety and security required in parenting children from hard places?
What about vicarious trauma?
How do you go about managing the fear of disruption?
How do you deal with the huge responsibility?
How do you deal with strong emotional burdens?
Supporting each other at work!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
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<td>1. I have good friends who support me.</td>
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<td>2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.</td>
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<td>3. I provide support to others.</td>
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<td>4. I am empathetic to others.</td>
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<td>5. I trust my close friends.</td>
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<td><strong>Internal Beliefs</strong></td>
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<td>1. My role as a caregiver is important.</td>
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<td>2. I have personal strengths.</td>
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<td>3. I am creative.</td>
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<td>4. I have strong beliefs.</td>
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<td>5. I am hopeful about the future.</td>
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<td>6. I am lovable.</td>
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<td><strong>Initiative</strong></td>
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<td>1. I communicate effectively with those around me.</td>
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<td>2. I try many different ways to solve a problem.</td>
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<td>3. I have a hobby that I engage in.</td>
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<td>4. I seek out new knowledge.</td>
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<td>5. I am open to new ideas.</td>
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<td>6. I laugh often.</td>
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<td>7. I am able to say no.</td>
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<td>8. I can ask for help.</td>
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<td><strong>Self-Control</strong></td>
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<td>1. I express my emotions.</td>
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<td>2. I set limits for myself.</td>
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<td>3. I am flexible.</td>
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<td>4. I can calm myself down.</td>
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Parting Ideas & Thoughts

- Do differently so that you practice differently ... and permanency is better

- ✤ What small test of change are you willing to do in your work?

- ✤ What are takeaways to having an integrated approach to permanency?

- ✤ What are takeaways to better understanding of the importance of teamwork?
In our time together, we have:

- Understood adoption as a process
- Integrated adoption practice & trauma informed care
- Emphasized importance of teamwork & team resilience
- Emphasized protective factors to support well-being
- Intro small tests of change