

Are You at the End of Your Rope?

*Help for new and old parents
when emotions run high.*

*Know that you aren't alone.
Take time to learn the skills to parent your child.
Connect with others who have similar experiences.
Make time for yourself.*

Advice for new Moms and Dads

Being a parent is the most difficult, yet most important and satisfying work you will ever do. During the busy and exciting days that make up the first weeks of parenting, remember to take good care of yourself as well as your new child. Here are some tips on how to survive the early weeks with your new child:

- Get as much rest as possible. Sleep when the child sleeps, and moms and dads take turns sleeping late on weekend mornings.
- Eat nutritious meals. If a neighbor or friend offers to help, ask him or her to bring you dinner or do your grocery shopping.
- Join a parenting group. You will learn about caring for your child, and you will meet other parents who share your interests and concerns.
- Don't expect too much from yourself. Housework won't always get done, but eventually you will get back to a routine.
- Call your doctor or clinic with any questions or concerns you may have. This will save you from needless worry.
- Visitors can be helpful, but don't let them interrupt your rest or your family time together.
- Dads– don't let mothers have all the fun. Spend lots of time caring for and playing with your child. The rewards are great!
- Be sure your child receives necessary immunizations and visits to the doctor as required.
- When your child joins your family at an older age, remember they have
- If you have other children, be sure to let them know every day that you love them.
- If you find yourself getting frustrated and angry with your child, call for help. Ask a friend, neighbor or relative to take care of the child while you take a break.

Have fun with your child. The first few weeks and months can be the basis for a lifetime of loving and sharing!



EMK Press
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Strategies for Building Attachment

with Your Newly Adopted Child

Prepare

- Learn what you can about the sort of experiences your child might have had pre-adoption, what this might mean for their emotional development, and what sort of caring strategies might be helpful.
- Educate family and friends about how you might need to care for your child post-adoption and how and why this early attachment work is important.
- Talk with family and friends about how they can support you post-placement.
- Plan your move from the self-focused mental attitude of the adoption process, to the child-focused attitude that you'll need post-placement in caring for your child.

Recognize

- Acknowledge the loss and hurt in your child's past, and that the placement in your family was a stressful (or even traumatic) event for them.
- Evaluate that how you were parented will impact your parenting; be prepared to change your beliefs and parenting style if necessary.
- Accept that your child has special needs as a result of their past and that these special needs may be anything from minor and short-term, to major and long term.
- Admit that while it is quite normal to be rejected by your child initially, it is also very difficult!
- Affirm that as the parent you are the expert on your child.
- Believe that 'gut feelings' you have about your child are significant, and should be treated seriously.
- Be aware that others may not understand what you must do to meet your adopted child's needs; you may have to act contrary to the advice of family, friends or health / child care professionals whose opinion you value.
- Realize that your child's emotional age may

be much younger than their chronological age, and that it is appropriate to provide nurture that is in line with their emotional needs.

- Value the hard work that may be involved in meeting your child's needs early on in the relationship, because it will bear fruit in the long-term.

Nurture

- Because new experiences are hard to cope with during stressful times, minimize the stimulation your child receives in the early days post-placement.
- Keep your child close by frequently carrying them (children up to five or six years of age can be carried with the assistance of a sling).
- Control the contact your new child has with others until your child understands the specialness of family; this is especially important if your child is actively seeking to engage others.
- Provide physical closeness during the night via co-sleeping, or other sleep arrangements that keep you within arm's reach and line of sight of your child at night.
- Avoid using devices that place physical distance between yourself and your child, including hard baby carriers, baby seats, high chairs, and strollers.
- Breastfed, or otherwise provide the experience of nurture through food via bottle feeding.
- Provide lots of touch and skin-to-skin contact via massage, swimming together, or co-bathing.
- Respect that your child may initially not want to be close to you, or receive nurture from you, and that it may take some gentle persistence and patience before they are able to tolerate the intimacy involved in nurturing.
- Be responsive in your caregiving; in making decisions about caregiving choose options that encourage closeness rather than distance between your child and yourself.

- Do not ignore your child's cries to avoid 'spoiling' them or to teach them 'good sleep hygiene'; this will be detrimental to their developing trust of you.

Refuel

- Don't be too proud to ask for help if you need it, or too polite to reject offers of help that interfere with parent-child attachment.
- Seek contact via online or face-to-face support groups, with others whose children have similar histories and experiences.
- Prioritize, so your time and resources are spent on what is important.
- Don't expect life to be 'back to normal' soon after placement.

~ By Karleen Gribble, BRurSc, PhD, Adjunct Research Fellow in the School of Nursing, Family and Community Health at the University of Western Sydney, NSW, Australia and adoptive mom. ©2006, EMK Press. Reprinted from the book Adoption Parenting: Creating a Toolbox, Building Connections

Adoption Learning Partners – online parenting courses for adoptive families www.adoptionlearningpartners.org

Ain't Misbehavin': Discipline and the Adopted Child

Creating an Adoption Profile that Works: Express Yourself and Connect with Birthparents

Conspicuous Families: Race, Culture, and Adoption

Lifebooks

Let's Talk Adoption: A Lifetime of Family Conversations

The Journey of Attachment

Finding the Missing Pieces: Helping Adopted Children Cope with Grief and Loss

Adopting the Older Child

Medical Issues in International Adoption

Foster Family to Forever Family

With Eyes Wide Open: A Preparation Guide to International Adoption

Forming the bonds of attachment are important to children new to your family. It doesn't happen overnight and will take some conscious parenting on your part. Some resources and websites to help you get started:

Why Grandma Can't Pick up the Baby (just yet) www.emkpress.com/whygrandma.html

A Different Perspective Imagine for a moment.....

www.emkpress.com/perspective.html

Ten Tips for Successful First Year Parenting

by Deborah Gray, MSW, MPA

www.emkpress.com/Toptengray.html

A 4 Ever Family attachment resources

(www.a4everfamily.org)

www.attach-china.org (attachment information/e-list not just for children from China)

Attachment and Trauma Network

(www.radzebra.org)

Association for Treatment and Training in the Attachment of Children

(www.attach.org)

Books to help

Adoption-Parenting: Creating a Toolbox, Building Connections edited by Sheena Macrae and Jean MacLeod (2006)

Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for Today's Parents by Deborah Gray (2002)

Attachment-Focused Parenting: Effective Strategies to Care for Children

by Daniel A. Hughes, Ph.D. (2009)

Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love by

Robert Karen, PhD (1998)

Nurturing Adoptions: Creating Resilience After Neglect and Trauma

by Deborah D. Gray (2007)

Toddler Adoption: The Weaver's Craft

by Mary Hopkins-Best (1998)

Baby Blues can happen to Adoptive Parents too.

The ups and downs of the adoption process can leave you emotionally spent. If you feel depressed post-adoption, you may be experiencing something called Post Adoptive Depression Syndrome (PADS). When the reality of the child who has come to you to parent crashes into what you thought it would be like, you might feel guilty about feelings of ambivalence, resentment, or anger towards that new child. June Bond, in an article for Roots and Wings Magazine in 1995, first coined the term PAD.

People talk about “Love at first sight” or “instant bonding” which can be an unrealistic belief. Falling in love is a process that takes time. Think back to when you fell in love. It often takes from two to six months for a real feeling of attachment to blossom. Dealing with depression around those feelings can make things even harder. So read more about the topic if you feel you or your spouse might be struggling and reach out to a trusted friend, therapist, doctor or social worker who can help.

Symptoms of Depression

Diagnostic Criteria From DSM-IV

Five or more symptoms in a two week period are cause for concern.

1. Depressed mood most of the day, everyday (feeling sad, empty, or tearful) or feeling exceptionally irritable.
2. Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all or almost all activities.
3. Significant weight loss or weight gain, increase or decrease in appetite.
4. Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day.
5. Psycho motor agitation or retardation nearly every day observable by others (restlessness or being slowed down).
6. Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
7. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day.
8. Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness nearly every day.
9. Suicidal thoughts or ideation.

“I thought

I was the failure:

that I couldn't

mother well.

*In fact, neither I
nor my child was the*

problem. Each of us

was coping with the

transition to family

as best we could...”

*Sheena Macrae,
editor Adoption
Parenting: Creating a
Toolbox, Building
Connections*

Not Love at First Sight?

Post Adoption Depression can happen to anyone (and not just moms!)

For more information:

Post Adoption Depression, The Unacknowledged Hazard

by Harriet McCarthy

(www.postadoptinfo.org/articles/07_05_depression.html)

Stressed, Depressed and Parenting? How do we Cope with Ourselves and Parent as Well?

by S.M. Macrae, PhD

(www.emkpress.com/PADS3.html)

The Post-Adoption Blues: Overcoming the Unforeseen Challenges of Adoption

by Karen J. Foli, PhD and John R. Thompson, MD (2004)

Adoptive Families Magazine has a number of great articles on their site
www.adoptivefamilies.com

www.rainbowkids.com also has resources for many topics related to adoption.

Twelve Alternatives to Lashing Out at Your Child

The next time everyday pressures build up
to the point where you feel like lashing out–

STOP!

Try any of these simple alternatives. You'll feel better... and so will your child.

- Take a deep breath... and another. Then remember you are the adult.
- Close your eyes and imagine you're hearing what your child is about to hear.
- Press your lips together and count to 10... or better yet, to 20.
- Put your child in a time-out chair (remember this rule: one time-out minute for each year of age.)
- Put yourself in a time-out chair. Think about why you are angry: is it your child, or is your child simply a convenient target for your anger?
- Phone a friend.
- If someone can watch the children, go outside and take a walk.
- Take a hot bath or splash cold water on your face.
- Hug a pillow.
- Turn on some music. Maybe even sing along.
- Pick up a pencil and write down as many helpful words as you can think of. Save the list.
- Call for prevention information: 1-800-CHILDREN

National Child Abuse Hotline

The number below is free and an expert will be able to help you to get the help you need:

1-800-4-A-CHILD

(1-800-422-4453)

You can call anytime, day or night. Your call is confidential, the hotline is anonymous, and it won't show up on your phone bill.

(If you call from a mobile phone, the call may appear on the bill)

www.childhelpusa.org

Help Your Child Ward Off a Mad Attack

Things for Parents to Say

- “Stop and think. Make a good choice.”
- “Remember to breathe when your tummy gets tight. Breathe. Let’s breathe together.”
- “Use your words, not your fists. People are not for hurting.”
- “You can do it. I know you can get your mads under control.”
- “I understand, right now you are feeling mad. Still, you can’t hurt people, things or yourself.”
- “You are the kind of kid who can take care of his own bad feelings.”
- “Go to a safe place and draw out your mads.”
- “You have a choice: Talk out your feelings or go to time out and get your mads under control.”
- “Well, I’m feeling mad right now myself. I’m going to go cool off, then we’ll talk.”
- “I know how you feel. Sometimes I get mad myself. Then I tell myself, that it is OK to be mad if you are nice about it.”
- “Thanks for sharing your angry feelings. Good choice in using your words!”
- “We are learning to be a ‘Speak your feelings’ kind of family. No more ‘Mad Family’ for us.”
- “I believe in you. Sometimes it’s tough, isn’t it?”
- “You are one terrific kid!”

~ Excerpted from *The Mad Family Gets Their Mads Out* by Lynne Namka, EdD.

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www.angriesout.com

Being with Your Child in Public Places

Change Your Perspective on Tantrums and Change Your Child’s Behavior

We live in a society that has a demanding and judgmental attitude toward parents and young children. Often, the attitude toward children in public is that they should be seen and not heard, that the parent should be ‘in control’ of the child’s behavior, and that children who are having feelings in public are a nuisance. In short, children are not really welcome. Their freshness, curiosity, and frank expressions of feelings are not seen as a gift.

In addition, the child rearing tradition that has been handed down to most of us sets us against our children when their behavior isn’t convenient for adults. In the eyes of others, we are expected to criticize, grow cold, use harsh words and gestures, punish, isolate, shame, threaten, or physically attack a child who is ‘misbehaving’. No parent really wants to act like an adversary to the child they love. We treat our beloved children in these ways when we can’t think of anything else to do, or when we fear the disapproval of others.

There are certain situations in which young children often become emotionally charged. These situations include:

- Being with several people—with the whole family at dinner, at a family gathering, a meeting, a birthday party, the grocery store, church, or temple.
- Moving from one activity to another—leaving home for day care, leaving day care for home, stopping play for dinner, going to bed.
- Being with a parent who is under stress—you can supply your own examples!
- At the end of any especially close or fun-filled time—after a trip to the park, after a good friend leaves, after wrestling and chasing and laughing with Mom or Dad.

When children become emotionally charged, they can’t think.

They simply can’t function normally. They become rigid and unreasonable in what they want, and are unsatisfied with your attempts to give them what they want. They can’t listen, and the slightest thing brings them to tears or tantrums. Their minds are full of upset, and they can’t get out of that state without help from you.

The help your child needs at this time is to have you set kind, sensible limits, and then for you to listen while he bursts out with the intense feelings he has. This spilling of feelings, together with your kind attention and patience, is the most effective way to speed your child’s return to his sensible, loving self. A good, vigorous tantrum, or a hearty, deeply felt cry

will clear your child's mind of the emotion that was driving him 'off track' and will enable him to relax again and make the best of the situation he is in.

How are we parents supposed to listen to a screaming, flailing child in the middle of the supermarket? Several adjustments of our expectations are necessary before we can allow ourselves to be on our children's side as they do what they need to do in a public place.

Every good child falls apart, often in public places. This is, for some reason, the way children are built!

Our society has trained people to disapprove of children doing what is healthy and natural. People disapprove of horseplay, of noise, of exuberance, of too much laughter, of tantrums, of crying, of children asking for the attention they need.

As parents, it's our job to treat our child well. When other adults criticize him, it makes sense to do what we can to be on our child's side.

Being parents means that we will have to advocate for our children in many settings. We need to advocate when we are with doctors and nurses, with teachers, with relatives, and with strangers.

Acknowledge that children legitimately need far more attention than it is comfortable to give. Adults who gave less attention to their own children, or who got little attention themselves as children, will be upset when they see you giving undivided attention to your child. We can expect these upsets, but we don't have to be ruled by them.

What do I do when my child falls apart in the supermarket aisle, or at the grandparents' house?

Spend one-on-one time with your child before you take him to a public place. Ensure that you and he are connected with each other before heading into a challenging situation. Then, stay connected. Use eye contact, touch, your voice, and short touches of your attention to stay with your child. This contact is deeply reassuring, and can sometimes defuse situations that your child often finds difficult.

When you see an upset beginning, immediately make real contact. See if you can find a way to play, so that your child can laugh. Laughter relieves children's tensions, and allows them to feel more and more connected. If, when you make contact, your child begins to cry or tantrum, do what you can to allow him to continue. His upset will heal if the feelings are allowed to drain.

Slow down the action, and listen. If getting into the car seat has triggered tears, then stay there, seat belt not yet done, and let the tears flow. Listen until he is done. Because of this cry, your whole day, and his, will improve.

If necessary, move to a more socially acceptable place. Go to the back bedroom, or move your grocery cart out the exit to the sidewalk. Do this as calmly as you can. Your child isn't doing anything wrong. It's sort of like a car alarm going off accidentally—loud, but not harmful to anyone. These things happen!

Plan what you will say to people who express their opinions or concern. It's hard to come up with a comment that says, "We're OK—don't worry!" in the middle of wild things happening, so think ahead. You can adopt some phrase like, "We seem to be having technical difficulties," or, "My daughter really knows how to rip!" or, "It's that kind of a day!" or, "After he's finished, it's my turn!" or simply, "We're OK. I don't think this will last all day." A comment like this reassures others, and gives the message that you are in charge.

As one parent I know put it, "I've finally figured out that it's my job to set a limit when he's going 'nuts', and it's his job to get the bad feelings out. As I listen to him, people might not be able to tell that I'm doing my job and he's doing his, but at least I know that's what's going on."

~ By Patty Wipfler, founder of Parents Leadership Institute (PLI) and Parenting by Connection. Parenting by Connection is the PLI approach to fostering close, responsive relationships between parents and children (www.parentleaders.org)

Teaching Children Discipline

- Remember the purpose of discipline. It is to teach your child socially acceptable ways of expressing natural desires and drives. Discipline guides your child into adulthood.
- Successful discipline is geared to the child's developmental stage. Don't expect a child of any age to perform something he or she is not ready for.
- Children need positive reinforcement. Reward your child for doing right with smiles, hugs, attention, praise and thanks. Rewards do not need to be toys or candy.
- Never hit or shake a child. Hitting is not a useful discipline tool for your children. Hitting and other physical punishment are not effective because they teach a child that it is okay to hit people, make children much too angry to be sorry for what they've done and can hurt a child physically.
- Discipline is best taught by example. The lessons you teach your child come from what your child sees you do – not what you say.
- If what you are doing is not working, change it! Your best efforts, even those that worked in the past, may break down.

Try to keep sight of your basic principles and always cherish your relationship with your child. The important thing is not whether your child behaves in the next few minutes or today or this week. The really important thing is how your child turns out 5, 10, or 20 years from now.

Used with permission from Prevent Child Abuse America
www.preventchildabuse.org

Online Groups Can Help You Connect!

Connect with others who understand your circumstances. Many agencies have online forums, also yahoogroups has a number of groups specific to your family situation.

One group sponsored by EMK Press is a topic driven list called AdoptionParenting. Every two weeks a specific topic is posted with resources and discussion questions. In existence since 2003, this list has almost 4,000 members and lots of great advice and multiple perspectives.

Find it here:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/adoptionparenting/>

Child Trauma Academy has free online courses to help understand how children cope with traumatic events

www.childtraumaacademy.com

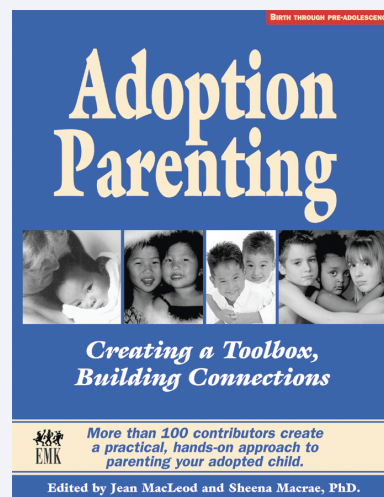
Courses they offer:

- The Amazing Human Brain and Human Development
- Surviving Childhood: An Introduction to the Impact of Trauma
- The Cost of Caring: Secondary Traumatic Stress and the Impact of Working with High-Risk Children and Families
- Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children

The Post Institute offers help for stressed and overwhelmed parents using the Stress Model™

www.postinstitute.com

Below is a great tool that covers a ton of information for the newly formed family to school years and beyond. Find it at www.emkpress.com



Strategies to Deal with Anger and Power Struggles

Try lowering your voice instead of raising it. Imagine the impact on the child of hearing the parent gently say, “If the trash is not taken out in the next five minutes, I will put the video games in storage for a week.” If a parent yells this, it sounds threatening. If, on the other hand, it is said in a matter-of-fact tone, the child receives the message, “Do as you will. I’m not going to battle with you. I trust you know the consequence for not complying.”

Recognize when you are most vulnerable. If you are likely to be rushed, tired, or on edge on certain days or at certain times, this increases the chance you will get angry and reactive at those moments. What can you do to add a buffer during these times? How can you reduce the stress? Will it help to wake up earlier, avoid cooking on certain nights, or tell your partner you need more of their help? Will you need to set limits in advance with your child, such as saying, ‘No TV’ or ‘No friends at the house’ during those times?

Don’t forget to breathe. When I’m angry, I hate hearing that one. But it really does work. Taking one second to breathe deeply or counting to five shifts the brain from ‘fight or flight’, to ‘focus’ (thinking of more rational responses). Remind yourself to breathe, focus attention, and to carefully think through what your reaction to stress/conflict will be.

Anticipate your child’s triggers. Oftentimes, it is possible to predict when your child will get angry. This might be on Monday morning when they have to shift away from weekend mode, on anniversaries or holidays due to the memories they raise, at bedtime, at mealtime, or when they have to do homework. When you can anticipate these events, you are in a better position to think of how to defuse conflict before it arises. This might include giving the child advanced notice, such as, “I know tomorrow is your brother’s birthday and it seems like that is always a rough day for you. What can we do in advance, to help make it a better day for all of us?”

Follow through afterward. Whether the conflict, power struggle, or rage episode with your child was major or minor, and whether it was expected (He always fights with me at bedtime) or unexpected, it is important to talk with your child about what happened. But do it after the tension has settled. For example, while bathing your child, tucking her in, or folding clothes together you can say, “You were really mad at me earlier when I said you couldn’t have ice cream.” Permit your child to share their thoughts or feelings, but try to educate him or her about the impact their words or actions have on others: “When you throw things like you did, it scares the dog and that’s why he doesn’t want to sleep in your bed.” “It hurt my feelings when you called me that name. Clearly, you wanted me to feel bad and you succeeded.” “That ice cream was your father’s and he had been waiting all night to have it. It’s important that we share in this family. Tomorrow, we’ll go out and buy treats that we can all have.” “I’m sorry I called you a brat. I don’t think badly of you. Your behavior makes me crazy at times, but I still think you’re the best kid in the world.”

~by Christopher J. Alexander, PhD a child psychologist, specializing in the treatment of foster and adopted children and the author of

Welcome Home: A Guide for Adoptive, Foster, and Treatment Foster Parents. This is excerpted from Adoption Parenting: Creating a Toolbox, Building Connections, ©2006 EMK Press.

