
Building a Foundation, Building Trust

“PROMISE ME YOU'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER: YOU'RE BRAVER THAN YOU BELIEVE, AND STRONGER THAN YOU SEEM, AND SMARTER THAN YOU THINK.” WINNIE THE POOH

SESSION PARTICIPANTS: Foster-Adoptive Caregivers

SESSION TIME: 90 minutes

Objectives:

1. To build trust through active listening and open communication
2. To learn about the child's perspective as they enter this new relationship with the foster-adoptive caregivers and how the caregiver could best support them
3. To learn a family based four step problem solving method

Materials from the FOCUS on Foster Families App:

- Video: [Advice for foster parents](#)
- Video: [Advice to foster parents from a current foster youth](#)
- Video: [I used to hate everyone building trust took time](#)
- Worksheet: [Effective Communication Skills](#)
- Worksheet: [It's a Good Habit](#)
- Worksheet: [SNAP Problem-Solving Model](#)

Materials for the Participant's Folder from the FOCUS on Foster Families App:

- Worksheet: Effective Communication Skills
- Worksheet: It's a Good Habit
- Worksheet: SNAP Problem-Solving Model

Introduction (10 minutes)

- General welcome and facilitator introductions
- Introduction of today's topic on building trust and a secure attachment
- If conducting in a group format, ask each member of the group to share the following:
 - Name
 - Children's ages
 - Are you fostering or adopting the children? If adopting, where are you at in the process?
 - One parenting goal the group member has for today's session (Note: The facilitator should give a few minutes to think about the goal before asking them to share)

Psychoeducation: Building Trust (20 minutes)

- Provide psychoeducation on foster youth
 - What is attachment?
 - An essential for children is to have safe, consistent, and nurturing relationships in order to lead healthy and productive lives as adults. Child maltreatment often prevents children from being able to form these relationships by reducing their sense of safety and security and causing lasting deleterious psychological effects. When there is an opportunity for a child who has experienced severe maltreatment to form a secure attachment and a sense of safety with an adult, we must advocate for it and support it to fruition. This emotional bond that fosters a sense of security is defined as attachment and serves as a platform for children to enter adolescence and adulthood and lead healthy, productive lives.
 - Four different attachment styles:
 - **Secure attachment:** children feel confident that their caregiver will be available to meet their needs, serve as a safe space for them to be able to explore their environment, and are still there whenever they need them
 - **Avoidant attachment:** children are very independent of their caregiver and do not seek contact with them when they are distressed. They have likely experienced caregivers in the past who have been rejecting of their needs and so they have learned to figure things out their own way
 - **Ambivalent attachment:** children with this attachment style tend to exhibit behaviors of anxiety, clinginess, and dependence. They have difficulty feeling secure in their relationship with their caregivers and are often difficult to soothe. This behavior may be due from past caregivers being inconsistent with their responses and parenting.
 - **Disorganized attachment:** children with this attachment style tend to have unpredictable, erratic behaviors. These behaviors may be due to past caregivers being neglectful, abusive, or parents who have struggled with unresolved trauma of their own.

- What does attachment look like in foster children?
 - Children in foster care often have histories of experiencing such severe maltreatment that they have had to be removed from their homes and their families for their safety. When faced with abuse and neglect, it can be difficult for these children to feel secure and subsequently internalize that sense of safety within them. They are more likely to internalize their fears, withdraw from others, and/or develop behavioral problems making it difficult for them to connect and form secure attachments with an adult caregiver. However, over time this can be resolved by an alternative parental figure providing the child with consistent stability, support, trust, and nurturance. Through these means the child is able to heal from their attachment wounds and form this new attachment, which can ultimately influence his or her quality of life.
- Why does attachment matter for my child?
 - The benefits of forming a healthy and secure attachment are plentiful. Children with secure attachments have been known to have higher self-esteem, higher emotion regulation skills, and an inclination to engage in pro-social behaviors. In general, these qualities are important to instill within all children, but especially critical to cultivate in foster children who have experienced such severe maltreatment that they may not naturally develop these qualities without external support. When a caregiver is able to be that supportive, stable, and secure attachment figure, then it is critical that we notice it and do what is in our power to maintain that relationship in order for the child to have a brighter and healthier future.
- **Exercise 1: Attachment**
 - Ask: *Growing up, what form of attachment did you have with your parents/caregivers?*
 - Ask: *Reflecting on your relationship with child, what form of attachment do you have now?*
 - Ask: *What are things you can do to establish the healthy and secure attachment that your child needs?*

Understanding the foster youth perspective (20 minutes)

- **Exercise 2: Video: Advice for foster parents**

<https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=1135>

Say: Now let's watch videos from former foster youth explaining the qualities they consider important in enhancing their relationship with their foster parent/caregiver.

Description: Annika and Maria (Guardian Scholars) explain the importance of patience as a foster parent or caregiver

Key points: Be patient, be open-minded, do not rush the child into telling you about their history.

Ask: Annika and Maria describe what qualities helped them settle into their new home. They mentioned the importance of being patient and open-minded.

Besides the ones mentioned, what other qualities do you think are important in helping build trust with your child and helping them settle into a new environment?

What are ways/examples of implementing those qualities in your home (i.e., the quality of being patient can be translated into giving them time to become accustomed to the new house/new rules)?

- **Exercise 3: Video: Advice to foster parents from a current foster youth**

<https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=1139>

Description: Edwardo (first year UCLA Guardian Scholar) provides foster/adoptive parents with advice

Key point: Many foster youths have experienced adversities, therefore it is important for caregivers to be supportive and good role models

Ask: You may never fully know what adversities your child has faced when they enter your home, but what are ways you can talk to them about it and their past experiences?

Skill of the Day: Building Trust (30 minutes)

- **Exercise 4: Video: I used to hate everyone, building trust took time**

<https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=1138>

Description: Sarah (first year UCLA Guardian Scholar) talks about how building a relationship does not happen overnight and reminds foster/adoptive parents to create a positive environment through open communication.

- *Ask: Sarah mentions how you can build trust with your child by doing activities like going window shopping, go to the park, or letting them control the car radio station. What are activities you could do with your child to be able to build that trust?*

- **Exercise 5: Worksheet: Effective Communication Skills**

https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/EffectiveCommunicationSkills.pdf

- Say: Your ability to communicate with your child greatly affects the success of your relationship. This worksheet provides simple steps to improve your communication skills
- Say: Let's pick one or two types of effective communication and do a role play. First, I would like for us to have a conversation and I will demonstrate an example of **paraphrasing** what you just said in response to my question.
- Second, I would like you to practice **asking for more information** as I speak with you.
- Ask: What was it like for you when I paraphrased what you said? What was it like for you when you asked me for more information? What was helpful about this exercise? What is one effective communication style you would need to work on more?

- **Exercise 6: Worksheet: It's a Good Habit**

https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/Itsagoodhabit.pdf

- Say: This is a great exercise to help caregivers and children have a discussion about expectations and responsibilities.
- Say: This is also a helpful way to establish ground rules in your house to make sure you and your child are on the same page. Children thrive on structure and consistency and modeling this for them both in your relationship and at home is important in enhancing that secure attachment.
- Ask: What are your expectations for (one of the areas on the It's A Good Habit worksheet)? What do you think your child's interpretation of your expectations might be? How could you have a conversation with your child about this?
- Ask: Rewards could be used to encourage your child's full participation in these rules. What are some rewards you could provide your child with? (Ex: family outings, reading together, etc.)
- Ask if they are a new foster/adoptive caregiver: This worksheet lists a number of routines. In order to not overwhelm your child when they first move in with you, what are the main areas that you could focus on?

- **Exercise 7: Worksheet: S.N.A.P. Problem-Solving Model**

https://learn.dpbh.ucla.edu/pluginfile.php/2443/mod_folder/content/0/SNAPProblemSolving_0.pdf

- Say: *This is a great problem solving tool that requires us to utilize the skills we have learned (communication and establishing ground rules) as we consider what we will choose to do about a problem that we are trying to solve. As a foster/adoptive parent, you will be creating a new family and there may be problems that may arise that can cause conflict in the home. We emphasize a team approach in solving problems as a way of not only bonding with your family, but making sure that every voice is heard. Please identify a current problem that is going on in your home. Examples could include your child having difficulty cleaning their room or doing their homework in the evenings:*

- *We use the acronym **S.N.A.P.** to help us problem solve in four steps:*

S State the problem

N Name the goal (realistic and specific in one sentence)

A All possible actions (make a list of all the possible actions you could take; make sure to have options proposed by both the caregiver(s) and the child. The goal here is to be creative, so even wacky solutions should be included in the list).

P Pick the best one and try it out (evaluate the pros and cons of each options, reach a decision about which action you want to try, try it and review it)

- Example of S.N.A.P.:
 - State the problem: Leaving toys out in the backyard
 - Name the goal: By the end of the week all the toys will be put away in the backyard
 - Actions:
 - Use a magic vacuum to scoop up all the toys
 - Put toys away after you play with them
 - The whole family helps clean up the toys in the backyard on Fridays and gets pizza as a reward
 - One person cleans the backyard every week
 - Buy storage bins and leave them in the backyard to remind us to clean up the toys
 - Pick the best one and try it out: The whole family helps clean up the toys in the backyard on Fridays and gets pizza as a reward
- Encourage the caregiver to share this tool with their family. Ask them how they feel about teaching it and how they think their child might respond.

Wrap Up (10 minutes)

- Remind the caregiver of the key takeaways of this session:
 - It is critical to provide the child with consistent stability, support, trust, and nurturance in order to develop a secure attachment
 - Although times can get challenging, consider the child's experience in order to gain perspective
 - Utilize the Effective Communication Skills, It's a Good Habit, and SNAP Problem-Solving Model to assist in building attachment
- Ask the caregiver to set and share a parenting goal to practice during the next week
- Ask the caregiver to discuss one thing they will take away from today's session