



VERMONT CONSORTIUM

for **ADOPTION & GUARDIANSHIP**

Support—Information—Education

FALL NEWSLETTER 2019



In this issue....

- Supporting transracial/transcultural families
- The Journey Continues—what have we learned from families
- Families share their stories and pictures
- And so much more!

It's back to school time so
keep in mind:

*"You're off to great places.
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting, so
get on your way!"*
Dr. Seuss

Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

Welcome to the Vermont Consortium's Fall 2019 Newsletter!

In my household Fall means the garden is pouring in and I'm spending lots of time in the kitchen getting wonderful produce put up! I hope you are also getting to experience a sense of bounty during this



season, however, I know that when we are getting back into the school routine bounty is not always what we are feeling—often it feels more like there is not enough of us to go around!

School conferences, meeting with teachers to make sure they understand your child's needs—and you learning how best to communicate with this year's teacher/s—takes time. Keep in mind that taking the time up front to do this can save you later and make sure your child gets off to a good start and stays in a good place.

Providing some adoption/guardianship education can go a long way in ensuring teachers know how to modify lesson plans before it gets tricky. Instead of traditional family tree activities they can suggest a “bush” of all the special people in the child's life—or instead of having children create a timeline of their life (when your child's timeline might contain some painful periods) the class can create a group timeline where everyone adds some special event from their life—making these suggestions up front can save tears and having your child “called out” as being “different” -



and remember that it isn't just children who were adopted or in guardianship who may struggle—there may be children from divorced families or who have lost a parent in the class—modifying these assignments may benefit many children in the class and support better learning. Good luck as you head into the school year! *Catherine Harris*



Please consider sharing pictures of your family

with the greater community of Vermont families formed through adoption or guardianship. We want to join you in celebrating your wonderful family—playing and working together, as well as those special occasions you celebrate.

Your family pictures would add a lot to future Consortium Newsletters and to the website. Please forward them electronically to:

vtadoption@vermont.gov

And feel free to add a few words or provide a story to accompany the pictures!



Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

Welcome to the Class of 2023....Heading off to College!

By Dr. Karen Hack, PhD



So, your child who you love, cherish, and who was adopted by you so many years ago, just graduated from high school and is going to college! Congratulations! And oh my! This transition brings up all sorts of feelings in any parent. I know because I am one of you – my youngest daughter who was adopted when she was a baby, is now 18, graduated from high school a couple of months ago, and is off to college in Rhode Island this fall. Parents who have adopted can feel so vulnerable only because they

worry about their child's vulnerability. Your child may have some vulnerable characteristics, but remember, they also have many strengths.

While this article will focus on a child going away to college, there are all kinds of positive possibilities after high school including staying at home and working or volunteering or participating in another regular activity that will get them out of the house, moving to their own apartment, taking a year off with the plan of going to college, living at home and going to college. Some children need to give college a try and may decide later that they need to come home. Every child has to find their own path to adulthood. And, many of the suggestions here can apply to the general transition from high school to beyond high school.



Going off to college is a huge time of change for any family and can be particularly challenging for families created through adoption. Going to college is all about change, transition and newness and some loss. These are hard for every child, and can be particularly difficult for children who were adopted. The beginning of their life with you was likely deeply touched by all of these weighty experiences. Remember, love, trust, security and mutual respect also developed and will continue when they move away. They still need you and need to experience independence at the same time. They need time and space to develop their own way of being in the world. Our job changes from more of a director to advisor, from setting consequences to allowing them to experience consequences. Most of us left our family nest and we survived and so did our parents and so did the relationship with our parents. Our main role now is to support-support, listen-listen and pay the tuition!



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Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

.....Heading off to College! (continued from previous page)

Here is some general advice from Dr. Jayne Richmond, Dean of the University College for Academic Success at the University of Rhode Island. She says that the most important thing a parent can do is to validate and assure your child that they can do this. I like that because it secures your place in



your child's life in a most positive way. Also, she advises that you are moving into a more adult to adult relationship with your child. Your student's job is to develop independence so your job as parent is to encourage that. At the same time, you need to continue to establish a sense of trust, something that is a lifetime process for many if not most families who adopted. Another good bit of advice is, be yourself – it's hard, yes, because the relationship is changing, so you are changing. And, who are we when our children leave?? We need to find



our own way so we don't burden our children with our empty nest feelings. And we also don't want them to think we are not interested in them anymore! It can be a delicate balance and every child is different in the specifics of what they need. You know your child well (even if they say you don't!) so trust yourself as to the specifics. She also says, your child will be craving authenticity – let them do this. Ask open ended questions and try not to judge. Be curious. And don't give up when they make poor choices - encourage them to seek help and find role models in their new

environment. Encourage them to fix their own problems. Find out who the key support people are at the school for your child and communicate with them so that if you have a serious concern, you know who to contact. There will be challenges, there will be dips in learning. She emphasizes the importance of setting up intentional communication. Don't call all of the time and know that they will read your texts. You will cry, you probably will have some arguments before they go. It's all normal.

College is like kindergarten in reverse. Many of us had to pry a sobbing child off of us to stay in school by themselves. Now, we are more likely to be the one sobbing, struggling to leave our child to manage this next step in their lives. And some of us had children who walked into school for the first time with no expression of fear and now they are more anxious about going off.



Again, it's is our job to support them to go and communicate faith that they can do it.

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Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

.....Heading off to College! (continued from previous page)

For those of you who like lists, here are some ideas to help make this transition more positive. Some of these ideas came from various college websites and from researchers who study adoption and adolescence. Some are my ideas as a mom and a child psychologist.

- Φ Remember your sense of humor and theirs
- Φ Make a list of your child's strengths to remind you and them about all the wonderful characteristics they have and that they can do this
- Φ Have a direct discussion about possible triggers especially about loss and separation and develop some solutions
- Φ This may be a time that your child wants more information/connection with their birth family – support them with this
- Φ Attend campus events for family members
- Φ Send some care packages once in awhile
- Φ Plan a meaningful activity for after you drop you child off to help with our own sadness
- Φ Maintain open lines of communication
- Φ Celebrate their achievement!



I wish you the best in this next chapter in your and your child's life.

They can do it.

We prepared them!

And we can do it, too!

The **Vermont Consortium for Adoption and Guardianship** invites you to contribute to strengthening and building the adoption/guardianship communities of Vermont by joining a committee!

- ◆ **Conference Planning and Training**
 - ◆ Contribute to the design and dissemination of our “Creating Adoption Sensitive Schools” and “Talking with your Children about Adoption” trainings
- ◆ **Diversity in Adoption**
 - ◆ Contribute to the design and dissemination of our transracial/transcultural trainings and help with creating additional trainings
- ◆ **Library**
 - ◆ Assist with the usability of the library and get the word out about this amazing resource

For more information email Catherine Harris at (802) 241-0901 or email catherine.harris@vermont.gov

Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

THE LAFRANCOIS FAMILY



We are very active in our community! If we're not at a fundraiser event for Relay for life or the walk a mile in her shoes, to raise awareness for domestic violence, we're on the ball field playing or pitching in and cleaning up the fields.

This year dad was a baseball coach for our son who was adopted and he was beyond excited! That was a great experience for him and he had his own one on one time with dad.

Now that summer vacation is finally here, we will take some time to relax and spend some time on the beach or in the pool! From Nancy Parker (6/19/19)



Creating an Adoption Sensitive School

Schools can experience challenges when working with children who have joined their families through adoption or guardianship.

The VT Consortium for Adoption &

Guardianship offers a FREE 2-hour training to assist school staff in more effectively meeting children's learning needs.

Encourage your school to schedule a training!

email vtadoption@vermont.gov or call 802-241-0901

Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

Transracial Adoption: Beyond Unconditional Love

By Simone Coté, MSW

Ever since I can remember, I always envisioned a life where I was raising a family with children of different racial and cultural backgrounds. I still can remember the summer my family hosted a young girl from Colombia through a hosting program called Kidsave in 2008. That summer was a transformative experience for me as it opened my eyes to seeing how a child sees their race and identity living in a small rural community in Vermont. This young girl was constantly pointing out when she saw someone who looked like her. We tried finding books at the local library with children and people who shared the same race but those were few and far between. I still remember trying to find a place where we could take our host child to have her hair done and how difficult it was to even find a place that was able to work with black hair. It was that summer where I was constantly asking myself, is it fair for this child to be raised in a white rural community? Fast forward to ten years later and I found myself being asked that similar question from families hoping to adopt a child from different cultural and racial backgrounds. My response to families who have decided to transracially/transculturally adopt is that there is an additional commitment you make in your family when you become a transracial family. That commitment stems beyond completing the initial requirements of completing trainings.



Author Nicole Chung who recently published the book *All You Can Ever Know* shares her own experiences as an adult transracial adoptee as she navigates searching for her birth family and the complex emotions of loss, love and the lifelong search of understanding her identity. Chung begins her memoir with a couple who is hoping to adopt asking her questions about being raised in a white family. She eloquently discusses that of course her race mattered growing up in a white family despite the fact her parents and extended family always shared that their love was unconditional. She shared that of course she felt loved but she also experienced racism in her school community.



Chung also discusses the evolving process of understanding her identity and teaching her own children about what it means to be Korean. The memoir is a reminder that race, identity, and belonging are constantly evolving. Children and young adults who have been transracially/transculturally adopted should be supported on this journey. Chung writes "no matter how a child joins your family, their presence changes all the rules; they move into your heart" (continued on next page)

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Transracial Adoption: Beyond Unconditional Love

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and build new rooms, knock down walls you never knew existed.” This quote reminds us of what it means to become parents and what it means to be a family. Transracial/ transcultural adoption is filled with love, complexity, challenges, learning, loss, and joys of being a family in our evolving ever changing world.



I recently spent an afternoon with friends who are living as a transracial family in Vermont. The family recounted their experiences going over to their daughter’s country of origin and discussing that they felt it was one of the first times they have ever felt as though they stood out being white. They went on to discuss that they imagine that is what their daughter experiences every single day growing up in Vermont. Of course Ver-



mont presents more challenges of raising a transracial and transcultural family, however it also presents opportunities for families to be advocates for more diversity and experiences in our state to address racism. As parents, it is our responsibility to constantly seek out further opportunities for our children and walk alongside our children as they develop and evolve their identity. We may never fully understand what it means to be a person of color, but we can listen, advocate and learn from our children to empower them.

Taking the Long View: Thriving as a Transracial/Transcultural Family

This training is open to all interested in transracial/transcultural parenting

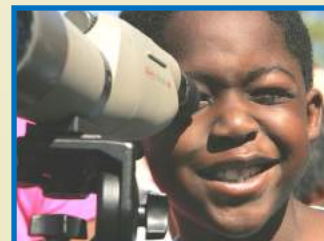
Whether you are an adoptive, pre-adoptive, guardianship, kinship, or foster family—currently parenting an infant, a child, or a teenager—or thinking about it—learn what it takes to thrive as a transracial/transcultural family—and develop parenting strategies that will make your family stronger and more resilient.

This training is being offered in:

- ⇒ **Brattleboro on Saturday, September 21st at the UVM Extension Office**
⇒ <https://brattleborotransracialtransculturaltraining.eventbrite.com>
- ⇒ **Burlington on Saturday, October 12th at the South End City Market**
⇒ <https://burlingtontransracialtransculturaltraining.eventbrite.com>
- ⇒ **Barton on Saturday, November 9th at the Barton Library**
⇒ <https://bartontansracialtransculturaltraining.eventbrite.com>

All Locations: 9:30am-3:30pm - Lunch is provided

Cost is \$25 per individual—\$40 per couple—Scholarships are available



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The Journey Continues Avoiding the Potholes: Lessons Learned from the Vermont Survey on Adoption and Guardianship Lake Morey Resort

Adoptive parents, guardians, and the providers serving them gathered at Lake Morey Resort on August 14th and 15th to find out how Vermont's adoptive and guardianship parents were doing. Fifty-five percent of caregivers around the state who had adopted or assumed guardianship through DCF had completed the Vermont Permanency Survey providing answers to questions about their family and children. What we learned was that:

- ◆ most families formed through adoption or guardianship in Vermont are thriving—98% of them said they were committed to their child for life—no matter what;
- ◆ 98% of children have at least one person outside of their family who is a positive influence on them;
- ◆ And children are cared about in their schools—81% of school-aged children had at least one teacher who understood their needs.

Families told us what services are most important to them:

- ◆ Permanency/family support services
- ◆ Financial supports/services
- ◆ And mental health/disability services.

And what services are most needed but that are hard to get or not available:

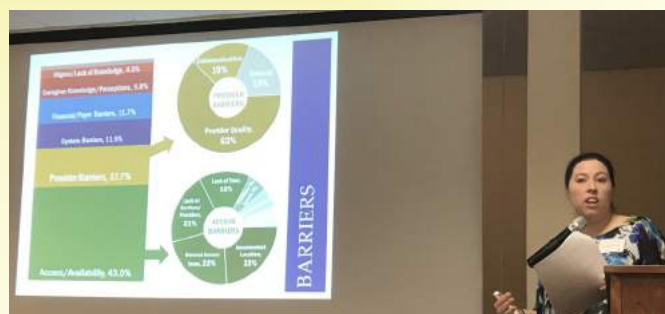
- ◆ Permanency/family support services
- ◆ Mental health. Disability services
- ◆ Childcare services

And what gets in the way? Access/Availability—Quality/Communication—and a system that's hard to navigate.

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Christina Shuma, MSW, Site Implementation Manager for the QIC-AG Project in Vermont presenting results



Dr. Valerie Wood, PhD, Evaluator for the QIC-AG Project in Vermont presenting

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The Journey Continues Avoiding the Potholes: Lessons Learned from the Vermont Survey on Adoption and Guardianship

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Families also let us know that they weren't having much contact with birth family members—even when it was possible. While birth family connections help children resolve issues around identity, loss, and attachment, many caregivers did not view birth family connections as important and did not maintain contact with their child's birth family. Only 55% of children had some kind of contact in the past 6 months with their birth siblings living outside the home, 52% had contact with their birth mother, and 34% had contact with their birth father. This indicates that parents in Vermont need additional training and support on how to talk about adoption, guardianship and birth families with their child. While providers can help families better understand why birth families matter and how to help their child maintain connections.

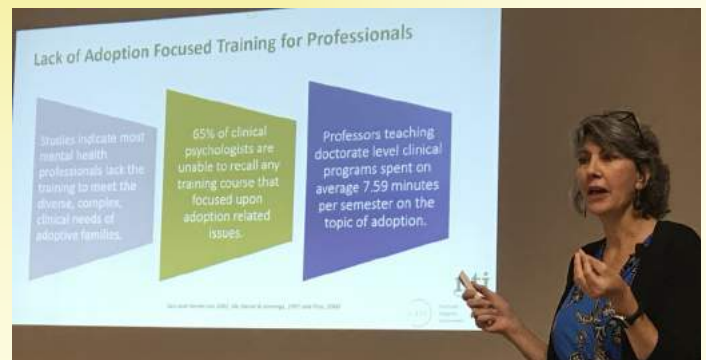
To bring the need for birth family contact to life April Dinwoodie, a nationally recognized thought leader on adoption and foster care and transracially-adopted person provided riveting presentations both days of the conference. She used the calendar as her guide as she explored the beauty and complexity of our closest, most powerful relationships with our families and ourselves and how those relationships impact our identity and place in the world.



This was followed by a panel of Vermont parents who had formed their families through adoption and young adults who had joined those families

through adoption. Each panel member spoke eloquently of their experiences with birth family connections—the complexities, sorrows, joys, and challenges—and what these connections have meant in their lives.

To finish off the two days Dawn Wilson presented the **National Adoption Competency and Mental Health Training Initiative** which has developed a web-based training to build capacity for mental health providers to more effectively support children, youth, and their foster, adoptive, and guardianship families. This training is expected to be available to Vermont providers free of charge in early October of this year.



With thanks to the 809 families who completed the VT Permanency Survey - we have learned from them and now we're moving forward with trainings and programming that will strengthen families formed through adoption or guardianship in Vermont!

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Join us on October 1st for the Bi-Annual *Vermont Consortium for Adoption and Guardianship Meeting*

**What's next for the Consortium?
What do we want to keep doing
& what do we want to add...**

**All Adoptive and Guardianship Family Members and
the Providers who serve them are Welcome**

Our agenda includes:

- What are our current activities—a brief overview
- What have families told us they need—brief review of lessons learned from the Vermont Permanency Survey
- What can the Consortium do to better meet families' identified needs
- Break into small groups to work on strategies to meet families' needs through:
 - ⇒ Monthly Messages and Newsletters
 - ⇒ Website and Facebook
 - ⇒ Trainings

**Join us from 10:00 – 3:00 at the Berlin UVM Extension
Office,**

327 US Route 302, Suite 1, Berlin, VT 05641

FYI—lunch will be on your own

If you want more information or to RSVP email

vtadoption@vermont.gov

or call 802-241-0901

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The Testimony of how God enlarged our Family

(told by Michelle Ziter)

At the beginning of the school year, I was in Courtney White's first grade classroom. I had 3 IEP students in there, one of them being Jayden. I literally knew nothing about him except that he was placed in emergency foster care with a family in Colchester who had a son that also attended our school, because his former foster parent had died. That is all I knew. The foster dads were talking about adopting him so their son (also an adopted foster child) could have a brother close in age to grow up with.



Six weeks into the school year, there was a HUGE shake up in the special ed. department, and all the paraeducators were pulled from their assigned class-students and moved to other placements. So I was pulled from Jayden. Now, I have been at UMS for 14 years and bonded with a lot of kids. I have loved them all. But Jayden was different. And all the adults at school were noticing that there was a particularly strong bond between he and I. We sought each other out in the hallways. He would yell "MRS. ZITER!!" and bomb down the hallway toward me with a huge hug. Now remember... I knew literally nothing about his history.

One day in the third week of October, Chris Antonicci (our principal) was standing in the hallway by the middle doors taking a picture of some artwork on the wall for our UMS Twitter page. Jayden was coming from one direction, while I was approaching from the direction of the 1st and 2nd grade hallway. Jayden ran up to Chris and hugged him, loudly saying "I love you Mr. Antonicci!" Chris patted his back and said "I love you too buddy." With that, Jayden skipped down the hall smiling and "la-la-la"-ing. I stood there and said to Chris, "Oh my God I love that kid. I could adopt him." (totally didn't actually mean it... about the adopting part). Chris looked at me with a look that seemed to burn a hole through me and said, "Did they talk to you?" (It was kind of creepy). I said, "Who's THEY? And talk to me about what?" And there in the hallway, he proceeded to tell me that the foster family he was with couldn't keep him because their other son was so jealous of sharing the attention that his behavior was regressing rapidly, and that DCF couldn't find any foster home that could take Jayden (he can't be in a home with other young children). I started to cry right in front of Chris, in the middle of the hallway, and proceeded to rehearse to Chris all the reasons why I can't actually do what I just said. 1. I have NO ROOM at my house. Literally.. no bedroom for him. 2. I can't afford that! 3. My husband Jason and I have worked far too hard to get to this point in our lives. Our boys are 18 and 21. We are on the verge of having our lives back, kids gone, go where we want, when we want. Having a 7 year old is NOT in the plan. Chris says, "Oh, ok. I just thought you were serious when you said you could adopt him." And he walked away. That was the beginning of the end.

I was tormented in my heart the rest of the day. I burst into tears without warning several times that day. I called Jason after work and told him everything... sobbing the whole time. Now mind you... Jason for years has told me he wants to foster kids. I was always the one saying NO WAY! No. Way. No Way. NO WAY!!

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Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

The Testimony of how God enlarged our Family (continued from previous page)

So, I finish telling Jason the story, and he's quiet the entire time, just listening. I finish... there is a LOOONG silence on the other end of the line, and he says, "If you decide to do it, I support you 110%." SHUT! UP!! That was not what I wanted to hear. Did you miss the part about not having a bedroom for him? The part about having our life back without kids???

From then on, every time I saw Chris at school, these were the words I heard. "I don't want to pressure you, but..." "Here is the number for the social worker. Just call her and ask questions. You won't be obligated at all." "I don't want to pressure you, but..." "Did you call the social worker yet?"

UGH!

Anyway, the big turning point in this story happened on November 4th, 2017. Our church district does an outreach concert in Littleton, NH every fall, with all the district churches participating in leading worship. The Ziters are there singing/playing every year. Well, this year the format was a little different. Half of the concert was all the churches singing as in years past. The OTHER half of the concert was an internationally known southern gospel group (The Chandlers) who hail from one of our churches in NH (Tim is from Manchester, I believe). I'm not a fan of southern gospel music. But about 2/3 of the way through their set, the wife (Lana Chandler) sings this song called "Reach the Children". Opening line: Mommy's on drugs, Daddy's in jail, somebody's trying to pay my uncle's bail. This is my life, it's all that I know." As she sang, God started to very clearly deal with my heart and speak to me about Jayden. I was sobbing uncontrollably. My husband had no idea what was wrong with me. I knew what was God was saying... I was unwilling to listen. I didn't want to do what He was asking. After the concert, I ran up to Lana and told her the whole story... sobbing the entire time... telling her what God was saying to me. She smiled at me and said, "I look forward to hearing the testimony about how God works this out in your life." And she walked away!

Fast forward one month. Chris comes to my classroom and motions for me to come out into the hallway. He says, "I don't want to pressure you, but..." Jayden's foster family has decided that Jayden needs to be out by Friday, and DCF has nowhere for him to go." Mind you... it's THURSDAY when he's telling me this! I went into autopilot. I called Jason, he said, "Call the social worker and have her meet us at our house at 4:30." The social worker showed up. Whirlwind 2 ½ hour meeting. Family meeting with the boys to be sure they are on board. Prayer with our dear friends Brian and Jody who come over to our house every Thursday evening for Bible study. And WHAM! Just like that... we have a 7 year old!

He arrived on December 15th. All parental rights have already been forever terminated.

He needed someone to love him unconditionally... FOREVER. **God chose us.** We weren't seeking this out. But God made it happen. (continued on next page)



Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

The Testimony of how God enlarged our Family (continued from previous page)



Right after the concert, our oldest son announced to us that he had purchased a plane ticket to South Carolina to go down and check out USC Columbia for nursing school. He came back a week later and said, "I'm moving to SC before Christmas!" (He didn't actually leave until January 5th). That opened up a bedroom for Jayden. God orchestrated everything to the most minute detail. Jayden is a sweet sweet boy! However, the level of trauma in his

little life is devastating, and caring for him is SO HARD. It is emotionally and mentally draining. But God, who promised He would not give us more than we could bear, sustains us and gives us the strength for each day and each challenge. We have been pointing him to Jesus from day one. Jesus is his strength, his healer, his provider, and his hope. On March 5, 2018 (4 months after God spoke to me at the concert), Jayden was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins by Jason. Jayden is a bold witness to the kids in his first grade classroom, telling them that Jesus is real, that He died on the cross for their sin.



God has a plan for Jayden. We are a small part of that plan. We adopted Jayden on September 19th, and he is officially a Ziter! I will be 65 when he graduates from high school. I am excited to see how God will use him between now and then.

Michelle

Link to the song "Reach the Children" by the Chandlers

https://www.timandlanachandler.com/track/1065736/reach-the-children?feature_id=225027



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VERMONT CONSORTIUM

for ADOPTION & GUARDIANSHIP LIBRARY

The Vermont Consortium maintains an extensive library focused on providing resources for families who adopt or provide guardianship, and their children.

Topics include:

- private adoption,
- adopting through child welfare,
- kinship,
- talking with your children about adoption,
- transracial/transcultural adoptions,
- developmental trauma,
- resilience.....
- and then there are picture books for children as well as books for youth!



The library is available to Vermont parents, children, youth, and the professionals who serve them. The library is physically located in the Vermont easterseals office, 641 Comstock Road, Berlin, VT—please call before stopping by: 802-223-4744. The library is also accessible on line at <https://vac.myturn.com> - open up your account, reserve the books you are interested in, and they will be sent to your home with a self addressed stamped envelope for you to return them to the library when they are due back.

Don't miss out on this great support!

Trauma and the Body, A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy

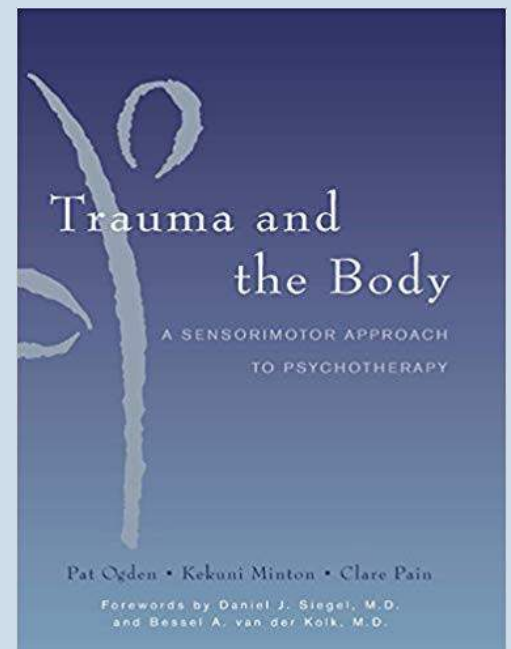
By Pat Ogden, Kekuni Minton, and Clare Pain

Book Review by Stephanie Amyot, Lund Post Permanence Service Provider

When I first began to read Trauma and the Body, I imagined I would be learning about various body-based treatments that can help survivors of trauma to heal, along the lines of Bessel Van der Kolk's The Body Keeps the Score. However, I quickly realized that the book is very focused on one unique approach to healing, which the authors call "Sensorimotor Psychotherapy".

In part one, authors Pat Ogden, Kekuni Minton and Clare Pain detail the research in neuroscience, trauma, dissociation, and attachment theory that points to the need for an integrative mind-body approach to trauma. Part two details the practice, specifically the method's three phases, in a comprehensive, thorough piece detailing the use of this therapeutic method to treat clients who have suffered trauma. They argue for balancing "top-down management of symptoms, insight and understanding" with "bottom up processing of the sensations, arousal, movement and emotions" experienced in the body.

An underlying premise (also discussed at length in Van der Kolk's book) is that the body's ability or inability to respond during a traumatic incident (such as by running away, pushing down an attacker, or lifting a heavy object off of a loved one) (continued on next page)



Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

Trauma and the Body, A Sensorimotor approach to Psychotherapy (continued)

has a dramatic effect on whether the person is able to integrate the trauma and move on in a healthy manner or get stuck in unhealthy patterns of response which can over time inhibit their ability to fully engage in life.

Particularly in childhood trauma, when one is typically helpless and dependent on an abuser, there is often little that can be done to protect oneself or move to safety, leading to dissociation as the only means of escape. However, the need to act remains present in the body, and a trained therapist will notice small vestiges of self-protective impulses as a client talks about their past. This might appear as a tiny movement of the hand lifting toward self-protection, or muscles stiffening to protect the core. Over time, the client is taught to notice these sensations and impulses, which they come to understand as “survival resources that helped them live through inescapable trauma.”

In phase one, the therapist helps the client learn to keep arousal within a window of tolerance by recognizing triggers and learning how to limit their exposure. This includes using mindfulness, tracking and somatic resources, as well as self-care skills.

In phase two, the client focuses on sensory intrusions to discover and pinpoint the movements that can complete the original, thwarted protective response and allow the client to feel a new strength and power that enables healing. As this phase concludes, the client is able to create a narrative that helps them understand the trauma and put it in the past, as a symbolic memory rather than a traumatic, sensory one.

Finally, in phase three the client begins to use new movements, such as straightened posture or a strong stride, that allow them to integrate their strengthened sense of self to support healthy risk taking. The client begins to create the life and responses they want to have, and “discover a new sense of self that is more flexible, adaptive, and capable of pleasure and positive affect”.

Trauma and the Body is a dense read, and functions as a textbook in the sensorimotor therapeutic method. For those with a more casual interest, the prologues alone, written by Dan Siegel and Bessel Van der Kolk, may be enough to understand the methodology and importance of this work on healing trauma. But the most important message contained within this book is that there is a truly hopeful, practical therapy that, with a skilled practitioner, can heal and strengthen those who have suffered all forms of trauma. My greatest hope would be that more and more therapists will be inspired to train in this method and offer this healing to those who most need it.

To find therapists trained in Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, follow this link:

https://www.sensorimotorpsychotherapy.org/home/referral-us/prUSA_VT.html

Donna Mercer shares some family photos ♥



Structure, consistency, and loving support can ease the transition back to school!

Thunder in My Arms! *By Stephanie Amyot, Lund Post Permanence Service Provider*

On June 1st, I attended a powerful, standing-room-only performance at the Stone Church in Brattleboro. There were many other foster and adoptive parents and children there, as well as others in the community who are fans of Singer/Fiddler Lissa Schneckenburger and her band. Lissa and her husband Corey are adoptive parents and asked me to bring some information about Lund's Adoption and Post Permanency Programs to the performance. The event was a celebration of adoption and families as well as a testimony of the love and loss, joy and pain inherent in the adoption journey. I highly recommend listening to the music and feeling the power of her soulful songs. Here is a description of her new album, Thunder in My Arms:

Vermont foster/adoptive parent and musician, Lissa Schneckenburger, has just released a new album called *Thunder in My Arms!* *Thunder in My Arms* is an original song cycle written for foster and adoptive families about attachment, developmental trauma, and resiliency. For a sample of songs from the album, you can view several music videos online: <https://lissafiddle.com/videos/> Families can also pick up their own copy of the album at Lissa's web site, on Spotify, or any of their favorite places to hear music.

Schneckenburger says, "At a certain point I noticed that everyone we turned to for help with parenting was talking about the same thing: finding compassion, synchronicity, and understanding. In my attempts to be a better parent I found plenty of invaluable books and workshops that got that point across, but no songs! Music has this magical way of communicating emotion almost instantly and allows us to synchronize with each other on so many levels. I set out to write songs that would resonate with parents like myself: songs about loneliness, exhaustion, beauty, abandonment, love, loss, and above all, hope."



Talking With Our Children About Adoption

Are you worried about the impact on your child?

Learn what's important to talk about with your child and why.

Practice these conversations so that you are ready when you go home.



♥ **Burlington—September 18th—5:30-7:30pm**

♥ <https://talkingwithourchildrenaboutadoptionburlington.eventbrite.com>

♥ **Hartford—October 1st—7:00-9:00pm**

♥ <https://hartfordtalkingwithourchildren.eventbrite.com>



To Schedule a Training in Your Community email vtadoption@vermont.gov or call 802-241-0901

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VERMONT SUPPORT GROUPS FOR FAMILIES

*"The support group was my **LIFELINE** especially in the early years. My grandson and I were adjusting to a different life. I truly would never have been able to survive had it not been for the people in the support group."*



The following Support Groups are provided by the Vermont Adoption Consortium in collaboration with Post permanence Services (From Lund, Easterseals, or NFI). Some groups are also co-sponsored by community partners or are community based support groups.

Addison County

Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Families held the 4th Tuesday of the month. 5:30-7:00 pm. Please contact Donna Provin for more information and for the location at (802) 343-0565 or email donnap@lundvt.org

Bellows Falls

Circle of Support for Adoptive and Guardianship Families meets the second Wednesday of each month from 6 to 8 pm at the Health Center at Bellows Falls, 1 Hospital Court. Please call Stephanie Amyot for more information (802) 735-5031

Bennington County

3rd Thursday of the month from 7 - 9 pm at the Shaftsbury Methodist Church. For more information contact: Jill C. Bouton at (413) 884-5589

Brattleboro

Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Parents the second Monday of the month, 6:30-8:30 pm. Please contact Danna Bare, M Ed, for more information and for the current location (802) 258-0308

Chittenden County

Chittenden County Circle of Parents Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Families
This group is held the LAST Tuesday of every month from 5:00-6:30pm in South Burlington.
Pre-registration is required. For more information or to RSVP, contact Katherine Boise, BSW, M.Ed at Lund at (802) 864-7467.

Self-Care Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Caregivers: This group meets at the 3rd Friday of the month at Lund (S.Burlington) from 12:00-1:15. It focuses on self-care activities and discussions. To get more information or to RSVP, please call Melissa Appleton at 864-7467 or email kathleeny@lundvt.org

Franklin County

1st Thursday of every month at the Senior Center, 75 Messenger Street, or the Church on the Rock, St. Albans from 5:30-7:30 pm. Dinner and childcare provided at no cost. Please contact Nina Hill (802) 495-6187 or Monica Darrah (802) 495-6535 to RSVP or for more information.

Morrisville

Please contact Pam Montgomery, easterseals of Vermont, (802) 595-5046 for information

St Johnsbury

The Northeast Kingdom Foster and Adoptive Community meets the second Thursday of each month from 5:30-7:00 pm at the Union Baptist Church in Waterford. Please contact Barb Hash for more information (802) 473-6108

Upper Valley

Kinship Care Support Group meets the first Thursday of each month, 12:00-1:30 pm, 2458 Christian Street, Wilder, VT (next to Dothan Brook School on Route 5). For more information contact: Judith Bush, ACSW (802) 356-9393 x 2 or jbush@together.net

Transracial support Groups :

Burlington

Transracial Adoptive Families of Vermont meets up in various locations, generally in the Chittenden Country area. Please contact Jordy Baker for more information jordybaker@me.com

Montpelier

Families of Color, open to all families. Play, eat and discuss issues of adoption, race and multiculturalism. Bring snacks and games to share, and dress for the weather. Third Sundays, 3-5 p.m. Unitarian Church, 130 Main Street, Montpelier.

Alyson, 439-6096 or alyson.mahony@gmail.com

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Self-Care Support Group for Adoptive and Guardianship Caregivers

**Self-Care is a
necessary part of
intensive parenting!**

Research shows that regular self-care can:

- **greatly reduce stress and increase personal effectiveness**
- **fuel your efforts and cultivate internal resources so you can be there for your family**

**Join us for a series
of workshops on:**

- Mindfulness
- EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) Tapping
- Setting self-care goals
- Brainstorming ways to make self-care a priority
- Maintaining resilience
- Sharing and offering mutual support

Times and Topics: July 24th: How Would You Treat a Friend?

September 20th: Changing your Critical Self-Talk

October 18th: Taking Care of the Caregiver

November 15th: Grounding Techniques

December 20th: Understanding and Working With your Window of Tolerance

From Noon – 1:15pm

LOCATION: Lund, 50 Joy Drive, South Burlington

LED BY: Kathy Yanulavich

Bring a lunch, light refreshments provided!

For more information or to reserve your spot, call 448-3710 and ask for Melissa

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Upcoming RPC+ Classes – Fall 2019

Designated Agencies and FSD offices around the state are busy preparing for RPC+ classes this coming fall and/or spring. A statewide calendar will be available soon!!

RPC+ TIPS for Tuning In is a 10-week long FREE workshop that educates foster, adoptive and kin caregivers about the impact of trauma on the development, attachment, emotions and behaviors of the children in their care. The workshop provides a safe space for caregivers to access compassionate training, learn concrete strategies to manage daily and ongoing challenges, enhance relationships with their children and build a network of support and connections with fellow caregivers.

If you are interested in taking the class please email Amy.Bielawski-Branch@uvm.edu with your **NAME, EMAIL address and LOCATION** that you/they would like to take the class in.



Quotes from graduates of Vermont RPC+:

Foster mom of young children: *“By increasing our understanding of trauma and being positive, sometimes it takes a bit more for these traumatized children in our care. As we are reminded in this class, the more positive feedback and praise given, the more the behavior will change. Turn things around and you will be surprised on how well it really does work! This class reminded me to look for the positive and by giving these kids more control. They will feel safe and comfortable, and will act in a more positive way. I've been practicing it and it works!”*

Foster father of teen boys: *“It's easy for us who have not lived through trauma to forget that something innocuous can ignite the fuse to a ticking time bomb, it's classes like this that help us defuse that bomb or help to put the pieces back after it has gone off.”*

Pre--Adoptive Parent: *“I thoroughly enjoyed this class, it was much better than I was expecting. Usually I don't go to these kinds of trainings because I think they are boring and your sitting behind a desk all day not retaining the information. This course was not like that,*

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POST PERMANENCY SERVICES FOR FAMILIES



Families formed by adoption or guardianship may need support and those needs usually change over time as children and families grow and change. Post Permanency Services address the normal issues adoptive and guardianship families face as well as more significant issues that can arise when raising a child who has experienced a traumatic start in life.

Supports offered include:

- ◆ In-home adjusted parent education, identifying strengths and challenges and developing plans that foster growth
- ◆ Consultation to treatment teams and advocacy, providing education supports within schools and collaborating with treatment teams
- ◆ Referrals to community resources
- ◆ General adoption/guardianship information
- ◆ inship placement support



These services are provided by a Post Permanency Service Provider meeting with the family and working with them to assess and determine what services are needed. Together a plan will be made and goals set for these services. To support the family in meeting their goals the Post Permanency provider will be meeting with the family monthly in their home as well as attending any meetings that the family identifies—such as treatment team meetings and school meetings.



*“I would like to **thank** the Post Permanency Services staff they have been wonderful people to work with who are a wealth of knowledge and support. Whether just listening to me vent and bounce ideas off of, or to giving me advice on how to deal with difficult birth family members, or how to deal with school staff. They have given us awesome contacts to help with these struggles. Thank you all for that you do. I wouldn't know where I'd be today without you.”*

Post Permanency Services are available to families formed by adoptive and guardianship . For information regarding services in your area please contact:

**BARRE, BENNINGTON, HARTFORD,
MORRISVILLE, ST. JOHNSBURY &
RUTLAND AHS Districts**
EASTERSEALS

14 North Main Street, Ste 3004, Barre. VT 05641
Lynn Bessette, Program Manager (802) 279-
4241 lbessette@eastersealsvt.org

**BRATTLEBORO, BURLINGTON, MIDDLEBURY,
NEWPORT & SPRINGFIELD AHS Districts**

LUND

P.O. Box 4009, Burlington, VT 05401
Melissa Appleton, Supervisor (802) 864-7467 X2019 C:
782-3311 melissaa@lundvt.org

ST ALBANS AHS District
NFI, Northeast Family Institute

12 Fairfield Hill Road, St. Albans, VT 05478
Kriss Lococo, Regional Manager, (802) 524-1700
Kristenlococo@nafi.com

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Announcing the 15th Annual Vermont Kin As Parents Conference Parenting Revisited: Families Are Changing?

Keynote: "Kinship Care: 3 Strategies to Engage Families"

by Adrian M. McLamore

Adrian has the unique perspective of growing up in the foster care system and later providing kinship care to his niece and nephew. He shares his experiences with both systems and explains why he believes kinship care is the better option.



Workshops through the day include:

- Social Media Understanding
- Blueprint for Kinship Caregivers
- Loss-When a Child Leaves your Home
- The Faces of ACES
- Downstream—the movie and panel discussion
- Talking with your Children about Guardianship/Adoption
- Domestic Violence effects on Children
- Mentoring
- Conditional Custody Orders
- LBGTQ Transgender
- Practical Mindfulness

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

8:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Delta Hotels by Marriott Burlington

1117 Williston Road,

South Burlington, VT 05403

To find out more and/or register go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/parenting-revisited-families-are-changing-tickets-62571507062> or just put Eventbrite in your browser and search for “Parenting Revisited Families are Changing”

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