

POST ADOPTION RESOURCE CENTER

Newsletter

Not Your Average Parenting Book Club

Adoptive, foster, kinship, guardianships parents and respite caregivers! Please join us for a book club to explore books that offer insight, support and a sense of community. Child welfare professionals are also invited and welcome to attend!

Last Tuesday of Each Month

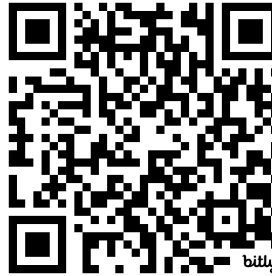
12 p.m. or 6 p.m. Virtually

Link: <https://bit.ly/NYAPBookClub>

6 p.m. in-person option:

205 S. Front Street Marquette, MI

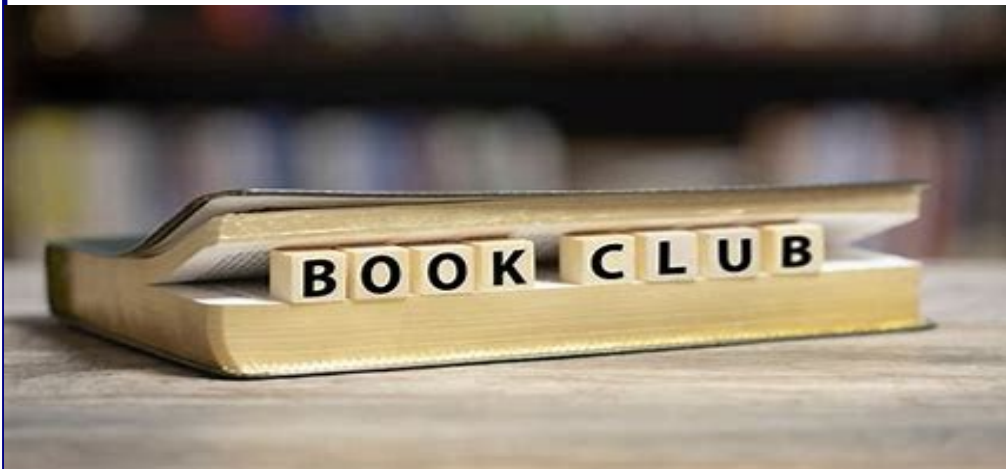
Dinner and childcare provided!



For more information and/or to RSVP, contact:

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UPkids.com

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Check out upcoming events, webinars and resources on our Facebook page:
U.P. Post Adoption Resource Center

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Seven Core Issues of Adoption-Intimacy

By Shifra Cooper, Post Adoption Specialist

Adoption involves complex emotions, healing and growth for everyone involved in the adoption constellation. Sharon Roszia and Allison Davis Maxon's framework: of *The Seven Core Issues of Adoption and Permanency* helps us to understand the complexities of children we foster, adopt, and take care of as well as the impact that adoption has on our families. The next area of the framework is intimacy, the ability to form close, trusting relationships.



Intimacy is at the heart of human experience and is what drives human connection, but it involves risk, vulnerability and the belief that you are valuable, resilient, and worthy of love. Needs are met through human connection. Within intimate attachment relationships, there must be trust, respect, acceptance, empathy, and reciprocity. From the moment we are born, these skills are a part of our experience and development, and we continue to learn intimacy through relationships with caretakers and other relationships throughout our lives.

For children who have experienced trauma, abuse, neglect, and separation from their biological parents/first parents/caregivers/family, intimacy can be intimidating and anxiety provoking. This can make forming secure emotional bonds difficult and love and affection may even feel unsafe.

From the child's perspective: Being close to another may bring up painful memories or feelings of abandonment. This can lead to developing coping mechanisms such as emotional withdrawal to protect themselves. Intimacy may seem like a threat rather than comforting. Trauma lives in the body and can be retriggered when a person feels vulnerable, close, and exposed. At the same time, this is an expected reaction as our experience and emotional memories are embedded into our bodies. These feelings guide our intimate attachment relationships with others in the future.

From the perspective of foster, adoptive, kinship, and guardianship parents: You may feel rejected or uncertain of how to interact with your child's emotional needs. Please remember, the rejection is not a reflection of a lack of love, it is a deep-rooted fear.

From the birth parent's perspective: Birth parents are experiencing a relational crisis as they are losing an intimate relationship with their child. They may experience shame and fear, being judged by others for their actions, inactions, or reactions. This loss creates an immense amount of grief, shame, and guilt.

But healing happens through connection and relationships and that requires...intimacy! Hold on, don't panic. Before we dive into healing, we also need to explore attachment.

Attachment theory is a critical part of understanding intimacy in adoption. Attachment is the emotional bond a child has with their caregiver, and it affects future relationships and intimacy. When children experience early disruptions in attachment, they may have difficulty forming secure attachments with other caregivers, even adopted parents, leading to various attachment styles:

Avoidant attachment: Appearing emotionally distant, avoiding closeness or affection.

Anxious Attachment: Seeking constant reassurance or becoming overly dependent.

Disorganized attachment: Inconsistent behaviors, contradictory responses.

As a caregiver or parent to children who have experienced trauma and disruption, an understanding of their attachment style can help you approach your child's needs with empathy and patience.

So, where do you start? Building intimacy requires empathy, consistency, and time.

Consistency and predictability: Children, in general and who have experienced trauma, benefit from stable routines. Build consistency in daily activities and clear expectations. Predictable environments create a sense of safety and security which is essential in developing intimacy.

Building trust through empathy: As discussed before, trust is an essential part of intimacy. You can build trust by listening to your child's feelings, validating their emotions, and offering comfort. Often, we have the need to correct a child's feeling or emotions so be aware of how validation happens. Comfort may be rejected, and that's okay! Allow this to occur at your child's pace and respond to their needs with empathy to help them feel safe and understood.



Create a safe space for vulnerability: Sharing feelings is scary, isn't it? Work on giving your child space to express themselves without a fear of judgement. Being aware of your verbal (tone and words) and non-verbal reactions is important in creating a judgement-free space and is vital in helping children experience emotional safety and comfortability so that intimacy can be developed.

Create daily connection rituals: Create connection through time spent, conversation, and/or sharing with one another. Sharing is powerful and communicating daily supports the skill of non-defensive listening while strengthening bonds and attachment. Take a few minutes to check in one-on-one to create that connection. Need more family connection? Chit-Chat-Chew, a daily conversation starter at the dinner table, has been discussed at multiple support groups over the last couple of years and is a great way to create daily connections as a family!

Prompts to consider:

- What was something you found challenging about your day?
- What was something you enjoyed about your day?
- What is something you are looking forward to?
- What is something good?

Nurturing and gentle touch: “Loving touch is the foundation of our human connections.” (Roszia & Maxon, 2019) Hugs, cuddles, snuggles, massages, high fives, and playing with hair are all examples of nurturing and gentle touches. Touch creates connection, trust, and security.

Reconnection and repair after disruption: It’s important to reconnect and repair relationships when a disruption occurs. The process of mending and restoring the relationship between yourself and your child after there has been a breakdown or conflict is vital in building trust, safety, and security in a relationship. Steps to repair:

1. Acknowledge conflict, disruption, or that something negative has happened.
2. Express empathy and understanding.
3. Apologize and take responsibility if needed. If you have overreacted, a genuine apology is necessary. Modeling vulnerability and taking responsibility teaches children accountability.
4. Repair the connection and focus on reconnection and use nurturing touch, a calming conversation, or quality time together.
5. Create a learning opportunity and get curious. Discuss what went wrong, why it went wrong, and what can be done differently in the future.
6. Reaffirm love and support! We all need to hear that after a conflict, the love and support for each other is unchanged. This helps the child feel secure and builds emotional resilience.

It is so important to note that relationships that are repaired after rupture, grow stronger!

Creating intimacy is a process that requires patience, empathy, and consistency. For children who have experienced trauma the process can feel unsafe at first but with consistency, they can begin to form meaningful connections. By creating a stable, nurturing environment, caregivers can foster emotional safety and healing, helping children feel valued, heard, and loved. Ultimately, intimacy is about creating a space where connection can grow, despite the challenges.



How to Foster Healthy Eating Habits in Children

Eve Giraud-Prosser, Post Adoption Specialist

Nutrition plays a crucial role in the growth, development, and health of children. From infancy to adolescence, children need specific nutrients to support physical growth, brain development, and immune function. Proper nutrition not only supports immediate health but also prevents long-term chronic conditions like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Let's explore key aspects of healthy nutrition for children, including recommended dietary guidelines, the importance of modeling healthy eating habits, and fun ways to implement them.

Nutritional Guidelines for Children

Each age group requires different amounts of food from various food groups daily to ensure balanced nutrition.

Vegetables:

- Ages 12-23 months: 2/3 to 1 cup.
- Ages 2-4 years: 1 to 2 cups.
- Ages 5-8 years: 1 ½ to 2 ½ cups.
- Ages 9-13 years: 1 ½ to 3 cups (girls), 2 to 3 ½ cups (boys).
- Ages 14-18 years: 2 ½ to 3 cups (girls), 2 ½ to 4 cups (boys).

Fruit:

- Ages 12-23 months: ½ to 1 cup.
- Ages 2-4 years: 1 to 1 ½ cups.
- Ages 5-8 years: 1 to 2 cups.
- Ages 9-13 years: 1 ½ to 2 cups.
- Ages 14-18 years: 1 ½ to 2 cups (both girls and boys).

Grains:

- Ages 12-23 months: 1 ¾ to 3 ounces (oz).
- Ages 2-4 years: 3 to 5 oz.
- Ages 5-8 years: 4 to 6 oz.
- Ages 9-13 years: 5 to 7 oz (girls), 5 to 9 oz (boys).
- Ages 14-18 years: 5 to 8 oz (girls), 5 to 9 oz (boys).

Protein:

- Ages 12-23 months: 2 oz.
- Ages 2-4 years: 2 to 5 oz.
- Ages 5-8 years: 3 to 5 ½ oz.
- Ages 9-13 years: 4 to 6 oz (girls), 5 to 6 ½ oz (boys).
- Ages 14-18 years: 5 to 6 ½ oz (girls), 5 ½ to 7 oz (boys).

Following these guidelines helps ensure children receive the nutrients needed for growth and health.



Sugar Intake

Excessive sugar intake can lead to various health issues, including insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes. It is important to limit added sugars and opt for natural sugars from fruits and vegetables whenever possible.

Modeling Healthy Eating Habits

Parents are vital in shaping their children's eating behaviors. Children who see their parents eating healthy meals are more likely to follow suit. By having balanced meals as a family and offering healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables, and yogurt, parents set an example. Additionally, keeping healthy foods easily accessible at home encourages children to make better choices when they're hungry.

**Making Healthy Eating Fun**

Making mealtimes enjoyable can encourage children to eat healthy foods. One idea is to cut fruits and vegetables into fun shapes or create “food art” by arranging items into patterns or characters. These visually appealing meals, combined with a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, not only entice children but also provide a broad range of nutrients. Pairing familiar foods with new ones can help children accept new tastes, such as combining yellow corn with yellow bell peppers to make the latter seem more approachable.

Involving Children in Meal Preparation

Involving children in meal preparation increases their interest in healthy eating. Allowing them to help with grocery shopping and meal prep fosters a sense of independence. Tasks like washing produce or stirring ingredients make them more engaged and likely to enjoy meals they've helped create. Serving family-style meals, where children serve themselves, also empowers them to make healthy food choices.

Creating Healthy Snacks

Snacks are a great opportunity to add more fruits and vegetables to a child's diet. Smoothies and homemade popsicles are both healthy and fun. Blending fruits with Greek yogurt creates a naturally sweet smoothie, while adding vegetables like spinach or kale boosts the nutrition. Freezing vegetable-based smoothies into popsicle molds provides a refreshing treat that's both healthy and enjoyable.

Encouraging healthy eating habits in children is essential for their long-term health and development. Parents can promote these habits by modeling healthy behaviors, making mealtime fun, and offering age-appropriate portions. By involving children in meal prep, and offering colorful foods, parents can help their children form lasting healthy eating habits. These strategies not only nourish their bodies but also lay the foundation for a positive relationship with food that will benefit them throughout their lives.

For more information you can visit: <https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/kids>.

Protect Young Eyes Training

Dana Munn, Post-Adoption Specialist

The Post-Adoption Resource Center recently hosted Chris McKenna from Protect Young Eyes, who shared practical strategies families can use to stay safe and smart online. His presentation focused on creating a healthier relationship with technology through intentional habits and proactive parenting.

McKenna highlighted five key practices for managing technology use at home:

Model the right behaviors: Children often mimic what they see. When parents manage their own screen time well, it sets a strong example.

Pursue authentic connection: Technology should never replace real conversations and quality time. Make sure there are regular moments of true connection.

Encourage work and play: Help kids balance their time by supporting both productivity and creativity away from screens.

Delay all addictive technology: Hold off on smartphones, social media, and other high-engagement tools allows kids to build maturity before navigating complex digital spaces.

Diligently prevent harm: Use filters, parental controls, and ongoing conversations to reduce risks and keep kids safe. McKenna emphasized that screen time shouldn't be isolating. Families are encouraged to use technology together, create clear boundaries around time and content, and talk openly about what children are seeing and doing online. Mistakes are inevitable—from both kids and adults—but when addressed with empathy and patience, they can become valuable learning moments.

Chris also tackled the difficult topic of online pornography, noting that even children's games can expose kids to harmful content. He shared tools and resources for navigating these conversations and for setting up protections on smartphones, gaming systems, tablets, and TVs.

More support and practical tools are available at protectyoungeyes.com, a comprehensive site offering guidance on parental controls, digital safety tips, and current research on kids and technology.





Activities for Sibling Bonding

These activities foster stronger sibling relationships!

Collaborative Games
Encourage teamwork with activities like scavenger hunts and Parents vs. Kids games



Art Projects
Work together on a big canvas to boost cooperation



Bedtime Routine
End the day with gratitude by sharing kind words and reading together



Family Time
Involve siblings in tasks like cooking or setting the table



Meaningful Conversations
Discuss the importance of having a sibling as a lifelong friend



Source: <https://kiindred.co/parenthood/activities-for-sibling-bonding/>

We Are Here For You!

- Let us know how we can help!
- What training topics interest you?
- What activities would you like us to host for your family?
- How can we help you through our support groups?
 - Do you have ideas or suggestions?
- Contact us through email, phone, or our Facebook page.

