



# POST-ADOPTION RESOURCE CENTER NEWSLETTER

✱ Volume 7, Issue 3 ✱

## In this issue

|                                                         |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Support group                                           | Page 1 |
| Unconditional Positive Regard                           | Page 2 |
| Felt Safety                                             | Page 3 |
| Growing Beyond Trauma with Positive Nurture and Healing | Page 5 |
| Coloring Page                                           | Page 7 |

**UP KIDS.COM**

Contact a PARC specialist

- ✱ Escanaba 906-523-8927
- ✱ Houghton 906-458-0544
- ✱ Marquette 906-748-0022
- ✱ Chippewa 906-748-0022

## Caregiver Connection Support Group and Parent Chat

Adoptive, foster, kinship, guardianship parents and respite caregivers: please join us for a support group to connect with others and share experiences. This group will offer insight, support and a sense of community.

SUPPORT GROUPS AND EVENTS ARE HELD IN COLLABORATION WITH MDHHS.

Second Tuesday of each month.

7 p.m. EST

Virtually on Teams

Meeting ID: 210 005 769 282

Passcode: f43cY9AC

### For more information and/or to RSVP, contact:

Alysa Sutinen at [alysa@upkids.com](mailto:alysa@upkids.com) or 906-250-0393.  
Shifra Cooper at [shifra@upkids.com](mailto:shifra@upkids.com) or 906-748-0022.  
Tylor Kistler at [tylor@upkids.com](mailto:tylor@upkids.com) or 906-458-0544.  
Beth Mulligan at [bethm@upkids.com](mailto:bethm@upkids.com) or 906-523-8927.

Check out upcoming events, webinars and resources on our Facebook page:  
U.P. Post Adoption Resource Center  
<https://www.facebook.com/906PARC>

---

## Unconditional Positive Regard

**Lauren Meadors**, post-adoption specialist

Unconditional positive regard is a concept defined by the psychologist Carl Rogers. It was an attitude that he applied to his therapy practice that he called “person-centered”. He looked at his clients as inherently good and worthy, while practicing reflective listening. To have unconditional positive regard means to approach somebody with empathy and support regardless of the conditions. It means to value their worth as a person no matter what. Rogers felt that unconditional positive regard was a mindset that therapists should uphold with each of their clients. I would argue that this mindset would not only be beneficial in therapy but also in any relationship that one is involved in; whether that be one’s relationship with themselves or the relationship they have with their friends and family.

Consider the relationship that you have with yourself, unconditional positive regard can make a positive difference. Loving yourself unconditionally is sometimes easier said than done, but that doesn’t change that you are deserving of a loving relationship with yourself, free of conditions or judgement. Even during times when you feel you’ve made a mistake or are disappointed in yourself. Messing up makes us human and doesn’t take away from your worth as an individual. Knowing that deep down you are good and deserving can help you manage negative times.



When it comes to your child, unconditional positive regard may offer additional safety felt within your relationship and home. It can communicate to your children, “I care about you. You have value and you don’t need to prove it. Nothing you do will change my mind.” As trauma-informed educator Alex Venet explains it. Unconditional positive regard can create an environment where your child isn’t as afraid to mess up or come to you with things that they’re struggling with.

If they know that their value in your eyes is secure, fear that they will ruin the relationship with you will be reduced. This is especially important for children who have experienced loss through their adoption process. It can be harder for adopted children to feel secure in their relationships due to past experiences. Making sure they know they are cared for despite the ups and downs can strengthen the relationship and improve their self-image during conflict. Children shouldn’t be held accountable for their harmful behavior. Instead, it means that how discipline or natural consequences are addressed keep value, non-judgement and

---

---

## **Unconditional Positive Regard**, continued

**Lauren Meadors**, post-adoption specialist

support intact. Modeling unconditional positive regard in the home can help your children model this behavior as well, not only improving their felt safety, self-esteem and mental health outcomes, but also boosting their connection with you. By modeling, you can not only support them in improving their felt safety, self-esteem and mental health outcomes, but also boost their connection with you.

Some ways to show unconditional positive regard include:

- Show empathy toward yourself and your children.
- Exhibit reflective listening – repeating back to your child that you hear what they're feeling. This allows them to correct you if what you're hearing is not what they're trying to convey.
- Complimenting your child's strengths.
- Staying mindful of body language by softening posture, maintaining eye contact and keeping a warm tone in your voice. Even initiating physical contact, when appropriate, can help.
- Using laughter to break up serious moments.

Ultimately, unconditional positive regard can serve as a great tool on the road to lifelong connection within your relationships.

Resources and references:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK589708/>

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/unconditional-positive-regard/>

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/unconditional-positive-regard.html>



## **Felt Safety**

**Tylor Kistler**, post-adoption resource specialist

When we think about safety, we often think about things like locking our doors, looking both ways when we cross the street, having food to eat and water to drink, or keeping our homes warm. These are examples of physical safety. While it is important to ensure our children are physically safe, it does not mean they feel safe.

The human brain is constantly scanning our environment, using our past experiences to predict what may happen in the present moment. When our current experiences mirror past experiences that made us feel unsafe, our brain may react by creating a fear

---

**Felt Safety, continued**

Taylor Kistler, post-adoption resource specialist

response (fight, flight, freeze), even if the present moment is not inherently unsafe.

When our brain scans our environment, it looks to three different places to determine if we are in an environment that feels safe or unsafe: our inner experience (heart rate, hunger, thirst, tiredness, illness, etc.), our physical environment (noises, smells, sights, etc.), and our relationship with the people we're with. Our brain then takes that information and blends it with our past experiences to predict what may happen and determine safety. For example, if a child has experienced food instability, the internal feeling of hunger may create a fear response, as the feeling of hunger had once been a sign of danger.

When working to increase felt safety for our children, we must consider how their past experiences may color their present and meet them with kindness and understanding. It can be hard to control how a child receives safety cues from their inner experience; however, it is important to ensure they have their basic needs met. Similarly, it may be difficult to control a child's environment at all times, but we can create safety in their home environment by providing predictability through routine, structure, and understanding. It is important to focus on the things we do have control over!



We can also create felt safety for our children by regulating our own emotions. It is difficult to feel safe when those around us do not feel safe themselves. If a child is with an adult who is experiencing fear (even if the fear is related to the child's behavior), it is almost impossible for that child to feel safe. When things get tense (or even before things get tense), check in with yourself. Are you holding tension in your shoulders? Are you raising your voice? Is your heartbeat quickening? If you notice yourself feeling the tension, take a moment to regulate yourself. Do some deep breathing exercises, take a walk or a break from the situation, engage in a meditative exercise, or practice some progressive muscle relaxation. Engage in any activity that will help you regulate and bring yourself back to safety. If your child is also feeling fearful or dysregulated, invite them to join you! A child cannot feel safe or regulated if you yourself are not also feeling safe and regulated.

When we experience fearful events in the past, it is likely that we will feel fear in our present moments, even if our surroundings are not dangerous. As parents, we can help our children



---

**Felt Safety, continued****Tylor Kistler**, post-adoption resource specialist

feel safe by ensuring their needs are met consistently, creating predictability and stability in their home environment, and regulating our own emotions, creating felt safety within ourselves. We can't control everything about our children's environment and experiences; however, there are great strides we can take to help them feel safe at home and with the people they trust.

Gobbel, R. (2024, August 7). Felt-safety? what's that?? {EP 17}. Robyn Gobbel.

<http://robyngobbel.com/feltsafety/>

Earles, S. (2025, October 17). Understanding felt safety: Helping children feel truly safe.

Arizona Family Counseling. <https://arizonafamilycounseling.com/blog/understanding-felt-safety-helping-children-feel-truly-safe/>

**Growing Beyond Trauma with Positive Nurture and Healing****Beth Mulligan**, post-adoption resource specialist**Words we all need to hear**

Throughout life, we all experience moments that shape us; some joyful, others deeply painful. Trauma, in its many forms, touches many of us and has the power to leave us feeling broken or unworthy.

Dr. Arielle Schwartz, clinical psychologist and bestselling author of The Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Workbook, shares three essential truths that can help anyone begin to heal.

**1. You're Not Broken, You're Hurt and Deserving of Care**

Many of us interpret our trauma responses as flaws. But as Schwartz reminds us, we are not broken. We are wounded and those wounds simply need care, compassion, and support. Recognizing your wholeness, even in pain, is the first step toward healing.

**2. You Can Create Safety Within Yourself**

Healing requires a sense of safety in the present. Fortunately, we all have the ability to cultivate that safety from within. Whether through grounding techniques, comforting objects, or visualizing a peaceful inner sanctuary, we can return to a place of steadiness anytime we need it. This inner retreat becomes the doorway to deeper healing.

## Growing Beyond Trauma with Positive Nurture and Healing, continued

Beth Mulligan, post-adoption resource specialist

### 3. All Parts of You Are Welcome

Self-acceptance is essential for recovery. Instead of pushing away uncomfortable emotions or judging ourselves harshly, healing begins when we greet every part of ourselves with curiosity and compassion. As Schwartz beautifully states, it is every human's birthright to be loved and accepted exactly as they are, including by ourselves.

### The HEAL Method: A Simple Practice to Rewire Your Brain for Positivity

In today's fast-paced world, our minds are naturally drawn to stress, worry, and negative experiences. This is due to what psychologists call negativity bias, an evolutionary trait designed to keep us alert to danger. But while this bias once protected us, it can now feed anxiety and block our ability to feel calm, joyful, and grounded.

To help counter this, psychologist Dr. Rick Hanson developed the HEAL Method, a simple four-step process that strengthens the brain's ability to absorb and retain positive experiences.

Your brain holds onto negative experiences and lets positive ones slip away. A simple 4-step method practiced daily can rewire this negativity bias and improve your mood.

**Negativity bias is biological:** Your brain evolved to remember threats and

- ✓ criticism while letting compliments and good moments fade quickly, keeping you stuck in negative thought patterns.

**The HEAL method rewires your brain in 10-30 seconds:** Have a positive

- ✓ experience, Enrich it for 5-10 seconds, Absorb it like a sponge, and optionally Link it to negative feelings.

**Results appear within weeks:** Regular practice strengthens positive neural

- ✓ pathways, leading to calmer moods, fewer depressive episodes, and faster recovery from setbacks.



**The HEAL Method invites us to notice, deepen, and internalize the good moments in our daily lives to counter the brain's negativity bias.**

### THE HEAL METHOD

#### Step 1: Have a Positive Experience

Positive experiences are all around us but we often rush past them. A warm cup of coffee, sunlight on your face, a kind message from a friend, or the peaceful moments of a morning walk all count. Notice something good and focus on emotions attached to it. Making time and space for small joys helps balance the emotional intensity that healing can bring.

#### Step 2: Enhance It

Once you notice something good, pause and savor it. Stay with that good feeling for 5 to 10 seconds like a perfect hug. Take in the colors, sounds, textures, or emotions of the moment. If you are connecting with someone, feel the warmth of that connection. Enhancing the experience allows the moment to become richer and more impactful helping your brain anchor itself in feelings of safety, calm, and contentment.

---

## **Growing Beyond Trauma with Positive Nurture and Healing**, continued **Beth Mulligan**, post-adoption resource specialist

### **Step 3: Absorb It**

This step is about letting the positive feeling sink in. Allow warmth, ease, or joy to spread throughout your body. Imagine it settling gently into your nervous system.

Absorbing the experience helps the brain store it as a lasting resource, something you can draw on later during difficult or stressful moments. This step supports the brain's natural ability to integrate positive information and reinforce emotional resilience.

### **Step 4: Link positive and negative material**

This step is optional, people get great results from the first three steps of the HEAL Method. This step involves holding a negative experience in our mind, while gradually letting a more positive experience overtake the negative.

### **Putting the HEAL Method into Practice**

- **Start Small:** Notice tiny moments of joy, like sun streaming in a window, the coziness of a blanket, a smile from someone you love. Help each other recognize the tiny moments of joy or small wins.
- **Create a Routine:** Try practicing HEAL in the morning or before bed to make it a regular part of your day. Conversations in the car or around the dinner table can be a great time to focus on finding a joyful moment.
- **Reflect:** At dinner or during your bedtime routine, take a moment to share one positive moment you had that day. What feeling or emotions were linked to the good stuff?
- **Be Patient:** Like any form of healing, rewiring your brain takes time. Be gentle with yourself. Every small positive moment counts.

### **Why the HEAL Method Works**

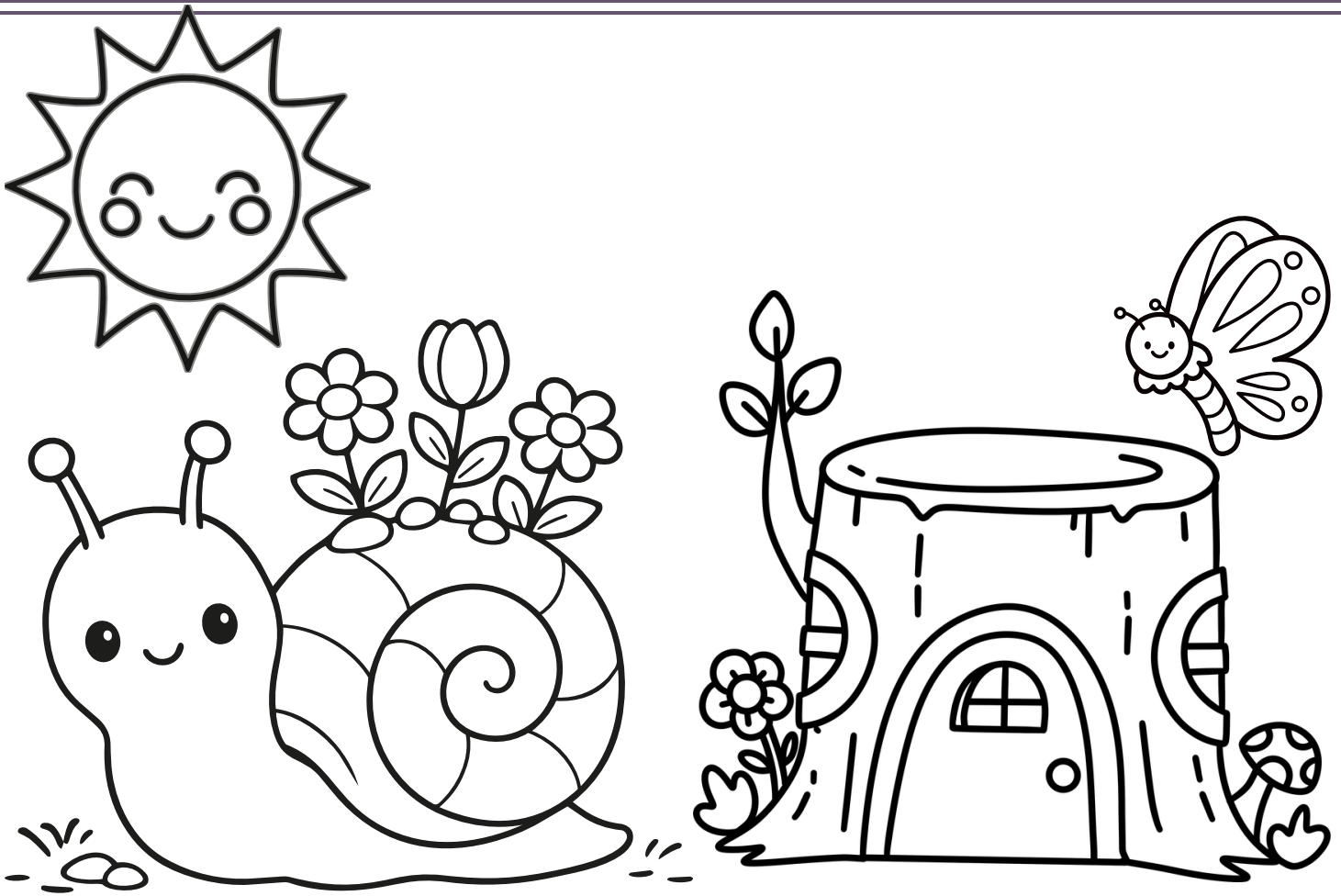
Our brains are naturally wired to cling to negativity. Over time this can fuel anxiety, stress, and emotionally overwhelm. The HEAL Method counteracts this by helping us build a well of positive memories, a reservoir we can rely on when life feels overwhelming.

By practicing HEAL, you're not ignoring difficult emotions. Instead, you are strengthening your capacity for joy, balance, and resilience. For those walking through trauma recovery, these positive experiences can become essential anchor points to help you feel grounded, supported, and safe.

### **Sources:**

Strong Solutions Therapy: "The HEAL Method for Creating Positive Experiences." Strong Solutions Therapy, <https://www.strongsolutionstherapy.com/blog/2025/8/4/the-heal-method-for-creating-positive-experiences>.

The Tapping Solution: "3 Things We All Need to Hear from Dr. Arielle Schwartz." The Tapping Solution, <https://www.thetappingsolution.com/blog/3-things-we-all-need-to-hear-from-dr-arielle-schwartz/>



**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.

