

Adolescence to Adulthood - The Changing Role of the Foster and Adoptive Parent



Slides:https://formedfamiliesforward.org/family_resource/adolescence-to-adulthood-the-changing-role-of-the-foster-and-adoptive-parent-webinar-for-loudoun-county-dfs/

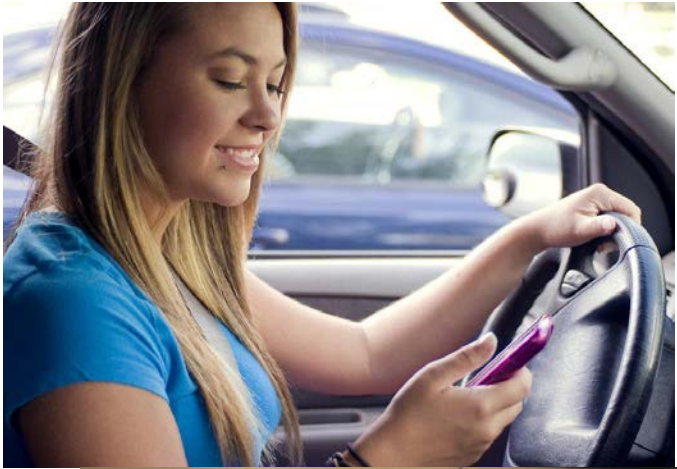
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Formed Families Forward

November 12, 2024

Loudoun Co. DFS

Opening Activity

Adolescence



Formed Families Forward - who we are...

- A family-led resource center in Northern Virginia supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children, youth & young adults with disabilities and other specialized needs, and professionals who work with our families.
- We offer free training, consultations to families, events, resources, and systems navigation. Also - peer support groups; Resource Directory; *Learning Your Way* self-paced classes; parenting classes, videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)

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Fall/Winter Webinars:

Tomorrow- **Functional Behavior Assessments: What Families Should Know** webinar

December 12 -**Making the Most of Your Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP): The '411' on Creating Effective IEP Goals** webinar

Tuesdays, January 7, 14, 21, 29 - **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders** webinar series (registration TBA)

IN-PERSON, December 16 (lunch or dinnertime) in Alexandria city, **Staying Safe and Calm Over Winter Break and Beyond**





Register at
<https://bit.ly/FFFLYWfall24>

- Free, on-line, on-demand learning
- Self-paced & interactive
- Certificates of Completion
- 7 Courses Available:
 - Special Education 101
 - Constructive Communication & Collaboration
 - Special Education Dispute Resolution
 - Trauma 101
 - Kinship Care
 - Other Health Impairment
 - Positive Parenting



Basketball Game with GMU College Buddies

Saturday, November 23, 2 PM at Eagle Bank Arena, GMU Fairfax Campus

Free tickets for children/youth age 7 and older and their parents/caregivers

Children sit with Alpha Xi Delta sisters and then can meet players after game.

Register at

<https://www.zeffy.com/ticketing/basketball-buddies-for-formed-families>

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Today's Plan

- What does 'typical' look like?
- How is identity formed in adolescence?
- What's unique for foster youth during development?
- How can foster families balance youth's needs when a chronological age doesn't match developmental?
- What are appropriate boundaries for teens?
- What parenting and conflict resolution strategies are more effective with youth and young adults?
- Q&A



Areas of Development



The Teenage Brain!



During adolescence, children develop the ability to:

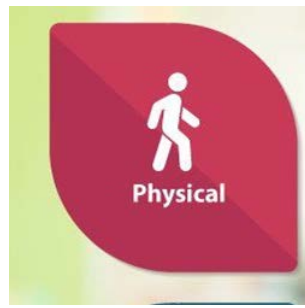
- Comprehend abstract content, such as higher mathematic concepts, and develop moral philosophies, including rights and privileges
- Establish and maintain satisfying personal relationships by learning to share intimacy without inhibition or dread
- Move gradually towards a more mature sense of identity and purpose
- Question old values without a sense of dread or loss of identity

Source: umm.edu

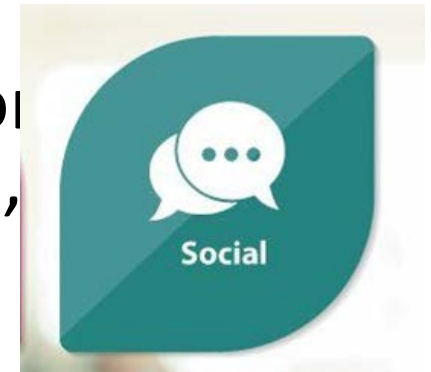


Behavior of Adolescents

- Sudden and rapid **physical changes** lead to self-consciousness, sensitivity and concern over one's own body changes, and excruciating comparisons between oneself and one's peers.
- Because physical changes may not occur in a smooth, regular schedule, adolescents may go through stages of **awkwardness**, both in terms of appearance and physical mobility and coordination.
- It is appropriate for youngsters to begin to **separate from their parents & caregivers** and establish an individual identity.
- As adolescents pull away in a search for identity, the peer group takes on a special significance. Peers can be safe haven, to test new ideas and compare physical and psychological growth.



- In early adolescence, the peer group usually consists of non-romantic friendships, often including "cliques," gangs, clubs. Members of the peer group often attempt to behave alike, dress alike, have secret codes or rituals, and participate in the same activities.
- As the youth moves into mid-adolescence (14 to 16 years) and beyond, the peer group expands to include romantic friendships.
- Mid-to-late adolescence is characterized by a need to establish sexual identity through becoming comfortable with one's own body and sexual feelings. Through romantic friendships, dating, and experimentation, adolescents learn to express and receive intimate or sexual advances in a comfortable manner that is consistent with internalized values.



Realities of Typical Adolescence

- They are **"on stage"** with the attention of others constantly centered upon their appearance or actions. Little things seem big!
- They may consider themselves **indestructible**. This belief feeds that "it will never happen to me, only the other person".
- While the this stage can feed **risky behaviors and mental health issues** are not uncommon, many teens develop healthy and positive habits and strong relationships with adults.





92%

of students **did not consume any alcohol** (and 99% of 6th grade students)



90%

of students **did not use tobacco or other substances** (and 98% of 6th grade students)



12%

of students who **felt stressed** most or all of the time **reported consuming alcohol** (vs. 6% of those who did not feel as much stress)



19%

of those who **felt sad or hopeless** for two or more weeks in a row **used tobacco or other drugs** (vs. 7% of those who did not feel so)



97%

of students whose **parents think smoking marijuana is wrong** **did not use marijuana** (vs. 72% of those whose parents think it's okay)



39%

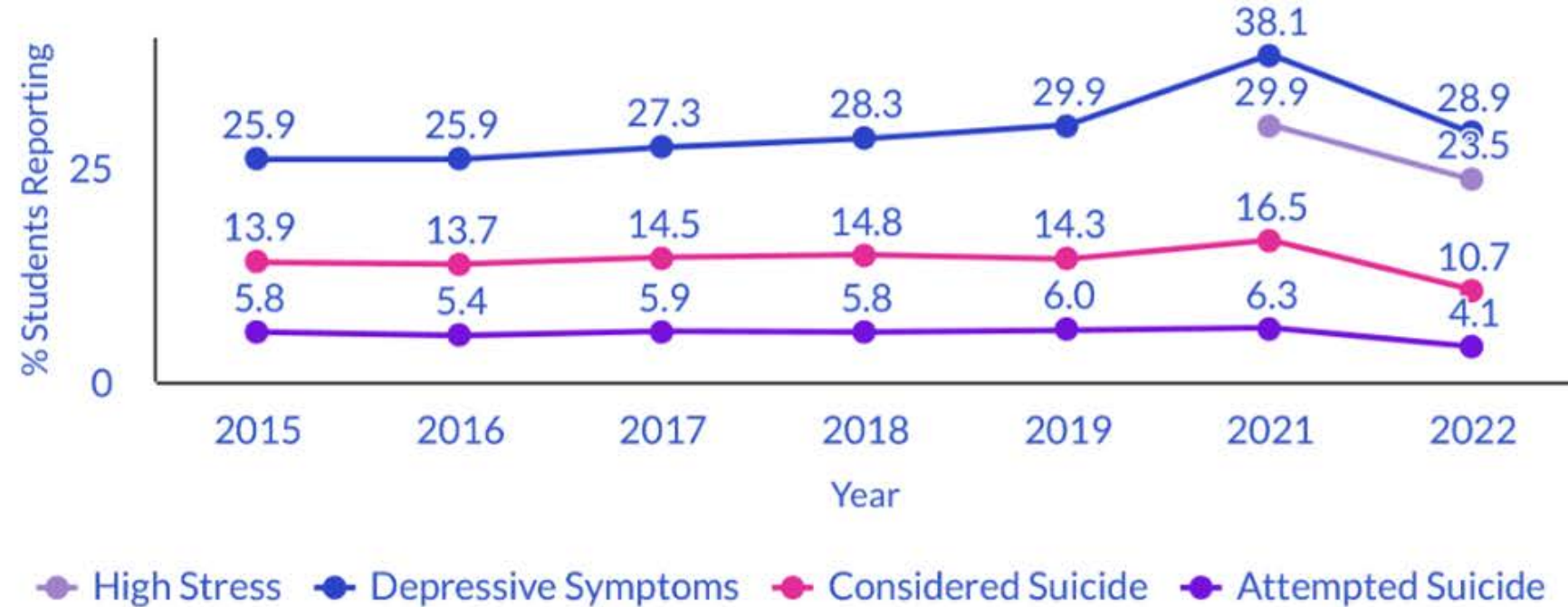
of those who **took prescription painkillers** without a doctor's order also **considered suicide** (vs. 10% of those who did not take prescription painkillers)



Mental Health Symptoms

Since 2015, the percentage of students who reported depressive symptoms had been steadily climbing, peaked in 2021, and then fell in 2022.

Trends among students in 6th grade followed a similar pattern, peaking in 2021 at 33.1 and then dropping to 29.2 in 2022.



Source: Fairfax Youth Survey

Let's Talk 'Identity'!

Self Concept

Self Esteem

Sexual Orientation & Gender Identification & Gender Expression

Racial & Ethnicity Identity

Political Identity

Vocational & Avocational Identity

Religious Identity



Identity



Why the LGBTQ Focus in Foster Care?

- Rate of LGBTQ+ identity is high among children, youth and young adults in foster care.
- LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to be exposed to physical, emotional and behavioral risks
- Outcomes for some LGBTQ+ youth are poor.



Sexuality vs. Gender

- **Sexual Orientation**
 - An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.
- **Gender Identity**
 - One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves.
 - One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **Gender Expression**
 - External appearances of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.”

Source: Human Rights Campaign

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions>

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Sexuality vs. Gender

Components of Human Identity

This is a friendly infographic that visually represents four components of human identity. The terms associated with each category are ever evolving. Here are just a few:



ASSIGNED SEX

The biological classification of a person as female, male or intersex. It is usually assigned at birth based on a visual assessment of external anatomy.



GENDER EXPRESSION

The way gender is presented and communicated to the world through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of body characteristics and behaviours.



UMBRELLA TERMS

Many terms related to 2SLGBTQI identities fall into more than one category.



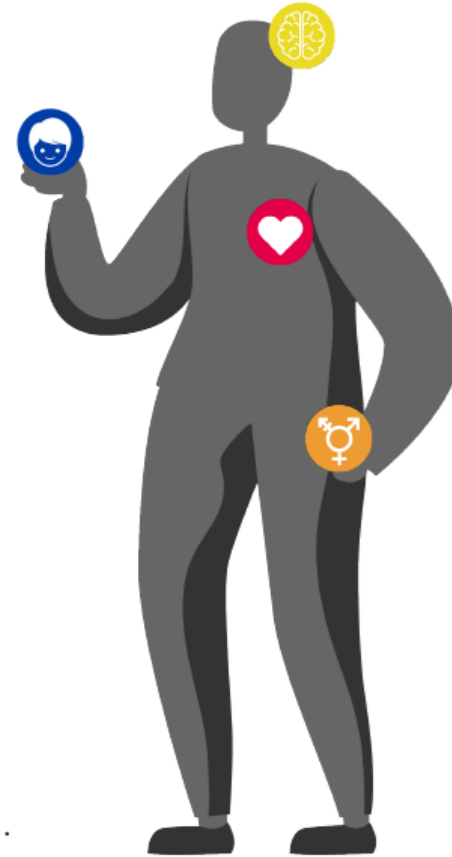
GENDER IDENTITY

A person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is not necessarily visible to others and it may or may not align with what society expects based on assigned sex.



ATTRACTION

Often referred to as a sexual orientation, attraction describes a person's potential for emotional, spiritual, intellectual, intimate, romantic and/or sexual interest in other people and may form the basis for aspects of one's identity and/or behaviour.



Egale

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Pronouns

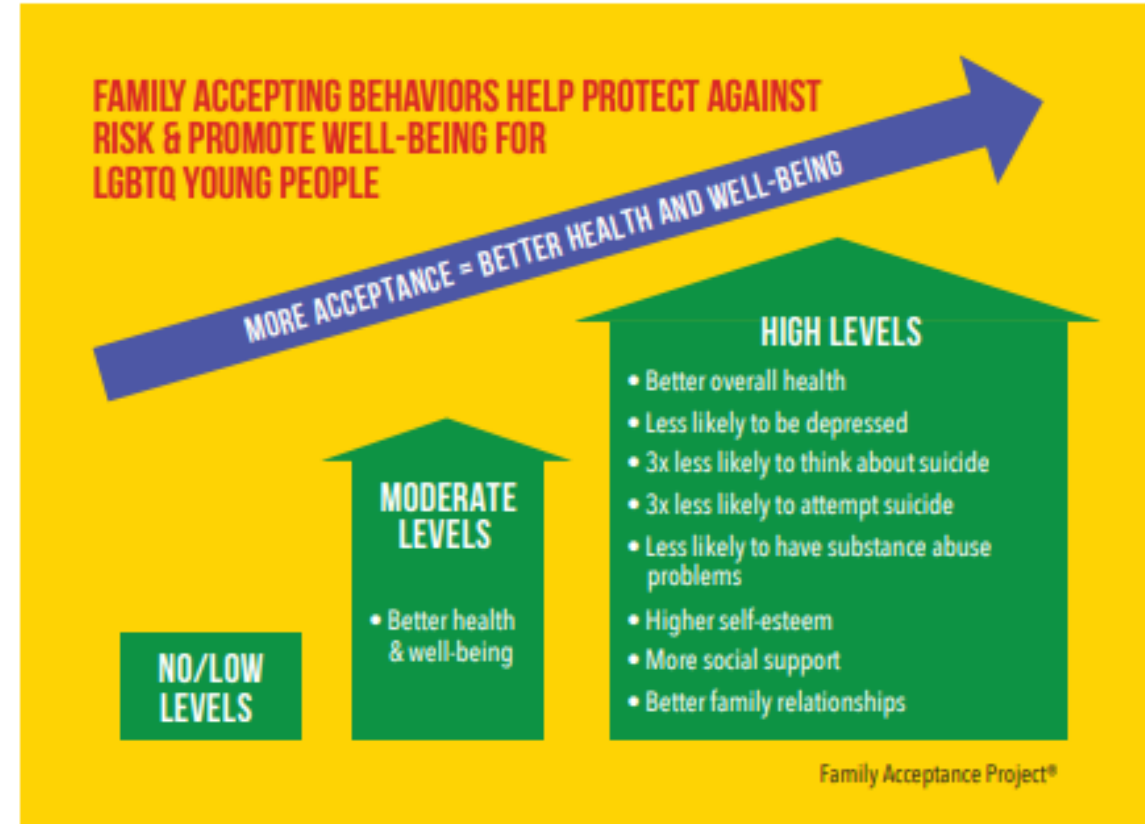
- “Pronouns are important not only because they are used for everyday communication, but also because they are used to convey [one’s] gender identity,” ([National Institutes for Health](#)).
- Using someone's correct pronouns:
 - demonstrates respect
 - creates a more welcoming and tolerant environment
 - affirms someone’s identity
- Transgender and nonbinary youth who reported having pronouns respected by all the people they lived with attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected by anyone with whom they lived. ([Source: Minnesota Department of Health](#))

Protective Factors

LGBTQ youth who live in affirming homes and attend affirming schools have significantly lower rates of attempting suicide, depression and anxiety (The Trevor Project, 2022)

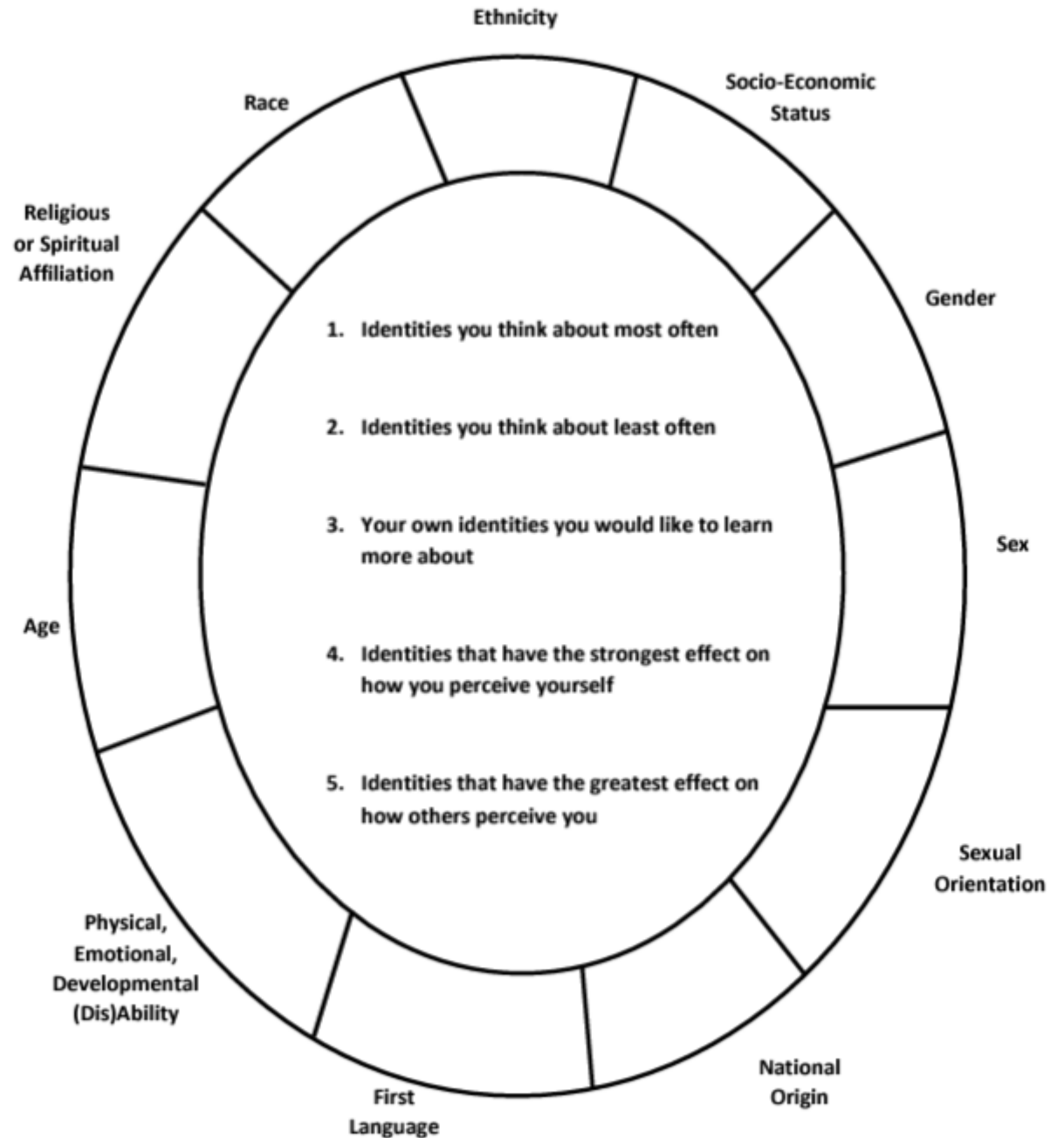
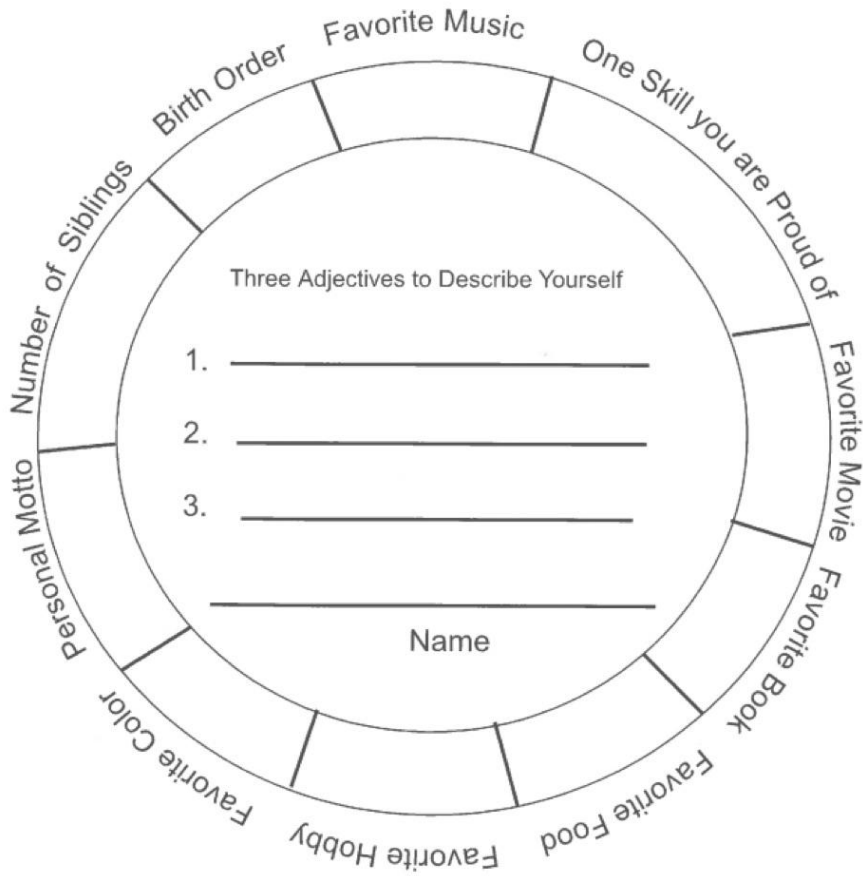
- High levels of general support from their families
- Pronoun respect
- Family members seek out reliable information
- Listen respectfully to your child when they talk about their identify, even if you don't agree

FAMILY ACCEPTING BEHAVIORS PROTECT AGAINST RISK & PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR LGBTQ YOUNG PEOPLE



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Identity Wheels



<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/equitable-teaching/social-identity-wheel/>

Teens in Foster and Adoptive Families

- Issues of Trauma and Attachment
- Normalcy in Foster Care
- Intersection of Foster Care and Disabilities



Trauma Impact on Adolescent Identity Development

“...Just the separation from the biological parents leaves an indelible imprint upon a newborn’s cellular experience, one from which the child may never fully recover. And this is to say nothing of experiences such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse, abandonment, alcohol and drug exposure that children may also have experienced. Adopted children can harbor layered trauma that few adoptive parents or professionals fully grasp.

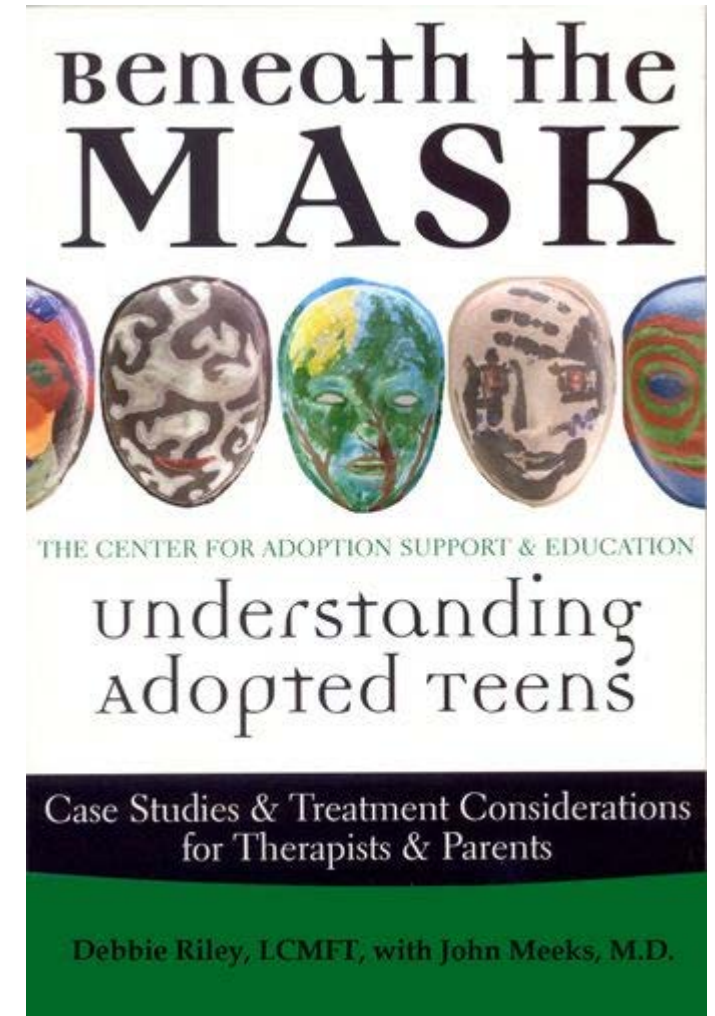
These events may have happened in the past, but they’re still there in the brainstem, our brain’s hard drive; they’re like files that never get fully deleted.

These files—these traumas—are stored away, just waiting to be accidentally opened by various triggers, revealing a past experience of fear and pain that colors the lens of the person, thereby changing everything they see and hear in the new moment.

Taking the new and making it old.” -Brian Post

Trauma Impact in Teens

- Ambiguous Loss
- Identity formation includes separating from birth and foster/adoptive family
- Integration of increased cognitive development & problem solving with realities of the reasons for entering care
- Sense of being different than peers



Normalcy

Special Considerations:

- » Foster youth with disabilities shall be provided with an equal opportunity to participate in activities.
- » Confidentiality requirements for department records shall not restrict the child's participation in customary activities appropriate for the child's age and developmental level.

Consistent with the child's foster care plan, the child shall be given permission/encouragement to:

- » Have opportunities to spend his or her own money
- » Have access to a phone
- » Have reasonable curfews
- » Travel with other youth or adults
- » Have his or her picture taken for publication in a newspaper or yearbook
- » Receive public recognition for accomplishments
- » Participate in school or after-school organizations or clubs
- » Participate in community events



Children should be provided with information when it is appropriate regarding:

- » Teen sexuality issues
- » Drug and alcohol use and abuse
- » Runaway prevention
- » Health services
- » Community involvement
- » Locating available resources
- » Identifying legal issues
- » Understanding his or her legal rights
- » Accessing specific legal advice

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT
DSS.VIRGINIA.GOV/FAMILY/FC

When Developmental Expectations Don't Match Chronological Age

- Can't vs. Won't
- Developmental age, not chronological age (Age, not Stage)
- *Inter*dependence, not necessarily independence

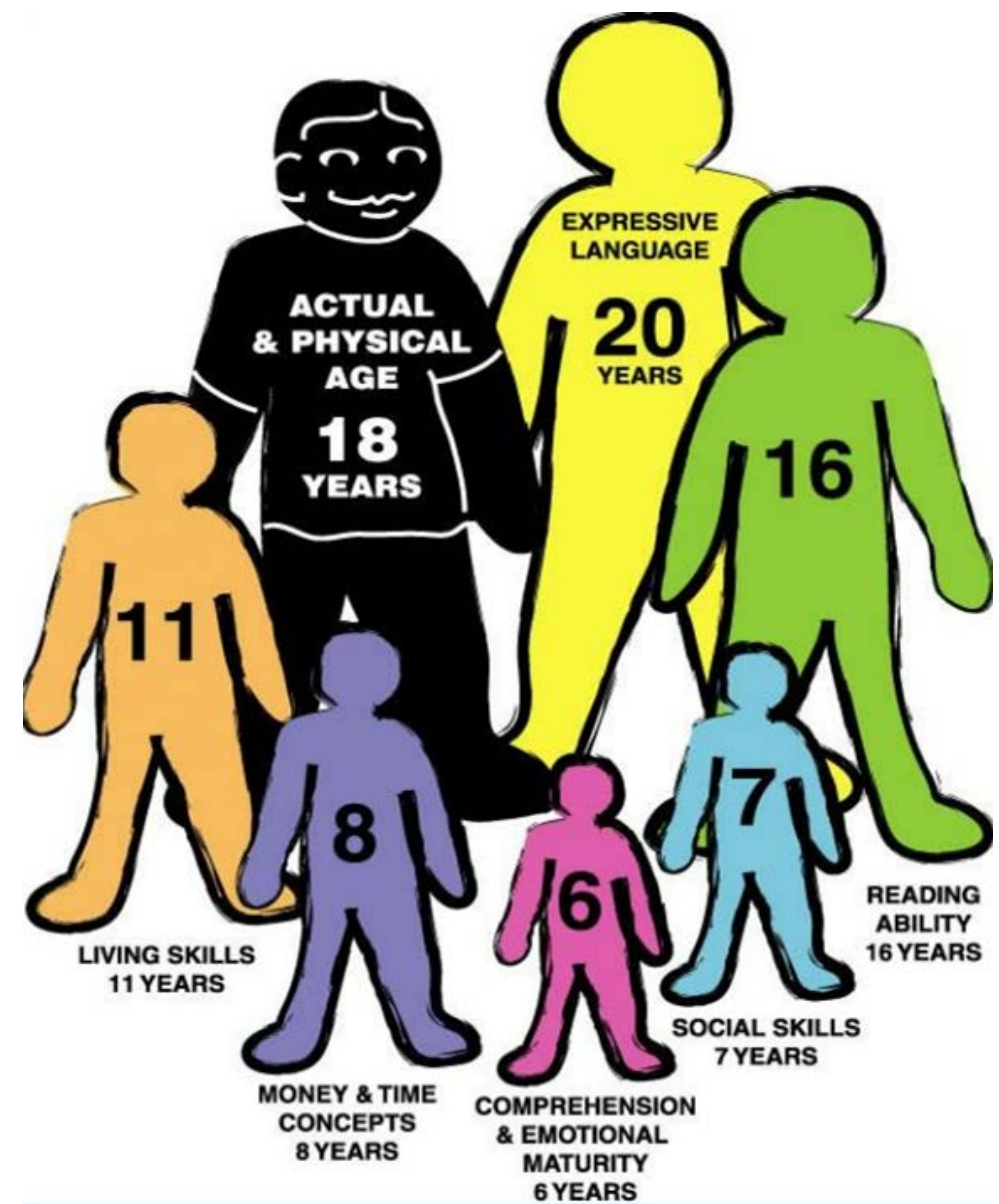


Image: Jodee Kulp, betterendings.org

Critical Crossroads English & Spanish Resources

Short videos on:

- The Impact of Trauma on Children with Disabilities
- Trauma-Informed Care for Children with Disabilities

Checklists on:

- Trauma-Informed Student Evaluations
- Trauma-Informed IEPs

Infographic on:

- How Trauma-Informed Care Benefits Children and Youth with Disabilities

Find Resources at:

Web Address - <http://bit.ly/3Gzg1J1>



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So, what do we do?



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What families can do during emerging teen identity?

"I feel different from other kids..."

- Play an important role advocating for safe spaces where their child can explore interests without judgment or stereotypes.
- Support diverse friendships and **social involvement** without focusing on expectations around race, culture, gender.
- Provide exposure to people working and enjoying activities outside of conventional expectations and parental comfort zone.
- Engage in conversations and check regularly with teens about their interests, friend groups, romantic attractions and any **bullying** or teasing that may be taking place.

adapted from AAP

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Parenting Approaches to Dysregulation



Why the VCR Approach?

Some traditional parenting responses provoke “C” reactions

- Challenging
- Confronting
- Criticizing
- Correcting

Tune out/ Adults more concerned with ruling than relating

Not Helpful; do not correct

Instead, promotes shame and worthlessness

So instead... VCR approach

(Hardy & Laszloffy, 2005/2007)



Validation- before all else, youth need to be validated; sends message that “I understand your perspective”

Challenging- AFTER appropriate and adequate validation, its possible to challenge troubling youth thoughts & behaviors


Requesting- make a request; translate feedback received into positive, concrete action

VCR Guiding Principles

(Hardy & Laszloffy, 2005/2007)

- Validation must PRECEDE any form of challenge or confrontation; goal is replace spontaneous challenge/criticism with spontaneous validation.
- The youth (recipient of validation) determines when validation is sufficient
- Validation, challenge AND request must all be centered around same topic/theme.
- Communicate with “I...” messages. Use “and”, not “but”
- Avoid asking questions, especially when high levels of rage and anger





✱ Empathy \neq Agreement

✱ Empathy \neq Justification

Image: David Palmiter, Ph.D., ABPP

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VCR Role Plays

Validation- before all else, youth need to be validated; sends message that “I understand your perspective”

Challenging- AFTER appropriate and adequate validation, its possible to challenge troubling youth thoughts & behaviors

Requesting- make a request; translate feedback received into positive, concrete action

Scenarios

1. Your 12-year-old has been arguing whenever you give a direction, talking back more. You asked them to set their completed homework out at bedtime so you can review it before school tomorrow and they respond “I am not a baby; you need to let me handle my own homework! Leave me alone.”
2. Your 15-year-old asks to borrow clothes of a parent or sibling who is of a gender opposite of their birth gender and asks to be addressed by a new name.
3. Your 17-year-old who has been in your home 4 years, is beginning to share information about their birth family including their race and ethnicity with others outside your home. They tell you their plans go by themselves and meet up with unnamed ‘friends’ to attend a rally in DC and return late at night. You are concerned about their safety and say no. They become upset and tell you they will find a way to attend, one way or another. They say you are not their parents and can’t stop them.

Formed Families Forward – Stay in Touch

Please complete the evaluation!!!



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