



Stacia Stribling, PhD and Kelly Henderson, PhD  
August 13, 2025

# Who I Am...

- Stacia Stribling -  
Mom; Deputy Director; Part-Time Farmer; Former Elementary School Teacher; Former Assistant Professor, Education at GMU  
[Stacia.Stribling@FormedFamiliesForward.org](mailto:Stacia.Stribling@FormedFamiliesForward.org)



# Who I Am...

- Kelly Henderson- Mom; Executive Director; Adjunct Faculty, Special Education at GMU [Kelly.Henderson@FormedFamiliesForward.org](mailto:Kelly.Henderson@FormedFamiliesForward.org)



# 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 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; webinars; online courses; parenting classes, videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)

Certificates of  
Attendance

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# Upcoming Offerings



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# Support Groups

**Formed Families  
Together**  
Peer Support Groups

We provide a safe space for foster & adoptive parents & kinship caregivers to share their experiences, concerns, frustrations, & resources!

VIRTUAL GROUP MEETS VIA ZOOM  
1ST SUNDAYS  
FROM 7:30 TO 9 PM

IN-PERSON GROUP MEETS  
3RD WEDNESDAYS IN  
FAIRFAX CITY,  
FROM 7 - 8:30 PM

Hosted By  
**FORMED FAMILIES FORWARD**



INTERESTED IN JOINING?  
REGISTER AT  
[HTTPS://BIT.LY/FFGROUPS](https://bit.ly/FFGroups)  
OR LEARN MORE AT  
[FORMEDFAMILIESFORWARD.ORG](https://formedfamiliesforward.org)

Formed Families Together support groups are led by trained peer leaders with personal & professional experience.

Are you raising a child for a family member or friend?

Join other KINSHIP caregivers for FREE support groups!



- Virtual group on first Thursdays of each month, 6:30 - 8 PM
- In-person group at Fairfax County Community Centers on third Thursdays, 6:15 - 8 PM. Dinner and child care provided.
- Learn more and register at <https://bit.ly/FFFkinSG>



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Fairfax Kinship Peer Support Groups are hosted, facilitated and administered by Formed Families Forward, through a contract with Fairfax County Department of Family Services. In-person groups are offered at Fairfax Community Centers, with support from Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services.

FFF is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in its programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations provided upon request.



**FORMED FAMILIES FORWARD**

# Youth and Young Adult Peer Support Group - Fall 2025

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS AGES 14-22

JOIN US FOR  
**STRONGER TOGETHER**  
PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

FALL 2025

Groups are open to youth & young adults who have experience with:

Social services, special education, mental health services, or substance use treatment.

Build new skills and strategies for wellness! Offer and receive peer support!

Mental professionals facilitate the group meetings.

Meets Tuesday evenings Sept. 23 through Nov. 11 from 6 - 7:30 pm Pizza meal served.

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[www.FormedFamiliesForward.org](http://www.FormedFamiliesForward.org) · (703) 539-2904





# Learning Your Way

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Register at [bit.ly/LYWsummerfall25](https://bit.ly/LYWsummerfall25)

- 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

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# FREE POSITIVE PARENTING class in PWC!

CHILD CARE & LUNCH provided



\*Are you parenting young children with big behaviors or strong emotions?

\*Feeling overwhelmed & stressed?

\*Does your child have other special needs?

**Join our *Positive Parenting* class on Saturday, October 18 in Dale City.**

#### WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- Positive ways to address common behavior challenges
- How to manage stress & build family resiliency
- Where to go for additional help if needed



Saturday, October 18  
9 AM - 3 PM  
at The Arc of GPW, Dale City

Register at  
[bit.ly/PosParEngfall25](http://bit.ly/PosParEngfall25)

Hosted by:



With support from:



Potomac Health Foundation

# ¡Clase de CRIANZA POSITIVA GRATUITA en PWC!

Se ofrece cuidado de niños y almuerzo gratis.



¿Está usted criando niños pequeños con grandes conductas o emociones fuertes?

¿Te sientes abrumado y estresado?

¿Su hijo tiene otras necesidades especiales?

Únase a nuestra clase de Crianza Positiva el sábado 27 de septiembre en Dale City.

#### LO QUE APRENDERÁS:

- Formas positivas de abordar los desafíos de comportamiento comunes
- Cómo gestionar el estrés y desarrollar la resiliencia familiar
- Dónde acudir para obtener ayuda adicional si es necesario



Sábado 27 de septiembre  
9 a. m. a 3 p. m. en The Arc of GPW, Dale City

Regístrate en  
[bit.ly/PosParEspfall25](http://bit.ly/PosParEspfall25)

Organizado por:



Con el apoyo de:



Potomac Health Foundation

# POLL

Mark all that apply:

- Foster Parent
- Adoptive Parent
- Kinship Caregiver
- Birth or Step Parent
- Professional

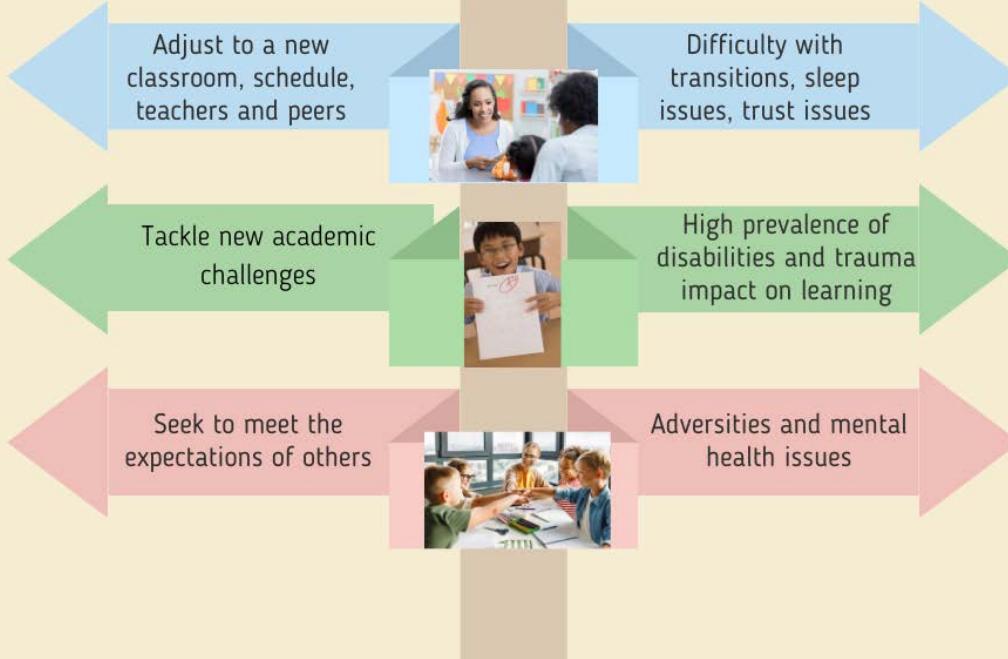


# Overview of the Webinar

- Back to School Challenges
- Creating Effective Routines
- Managing Anxiety & Helping Students Regulate
- Building Effective Working Relationships with School Staff
- All About Me!



## ALL STUDENTS

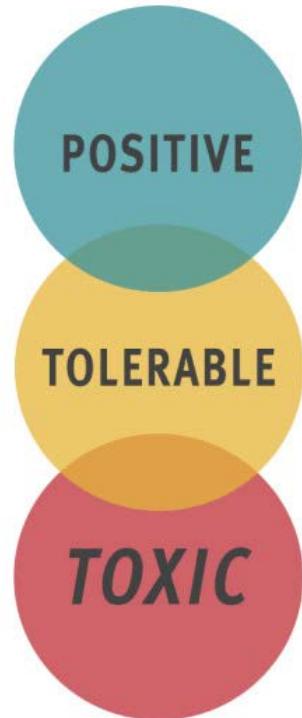


# Back to School Challenges

# The Foster, Adoptive & Kinship Connection

- **Reasons** for entering care are associated with disability. In 1 state, more than a quarter of children over age 5 with **substantiated maltreatment** were identified as having disabilities. (Lightfoot et al., 2011)
- 37% of infants and toddlers in **nonrelative foster care** have developmental delays. 29% of children 3 to 17 years old have identified developmental, cognitive, or academic needs. (Casanueva et al., 2020)
- **Adopted children** are more likely to have ever been diagnosed with depression, ADD/ADHD, or behavior/conduct disorder. (NSAP, 2009)
- Although the rate of intercountry **adoption** is decreasing, the percent of adoptees with a disability is increasing. (Roach, 2023)

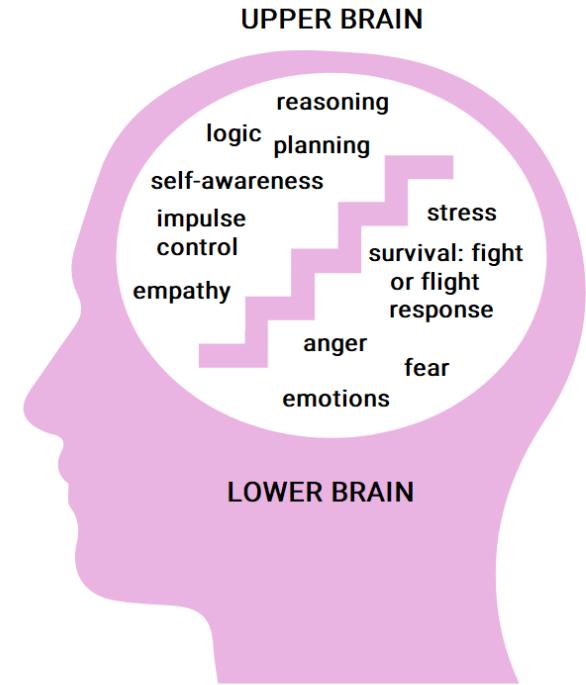
# These Challenges Create Stress



Brief increases in heart rate,  
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Serious, temporary stress responses,  
buffered by supportive relationships.

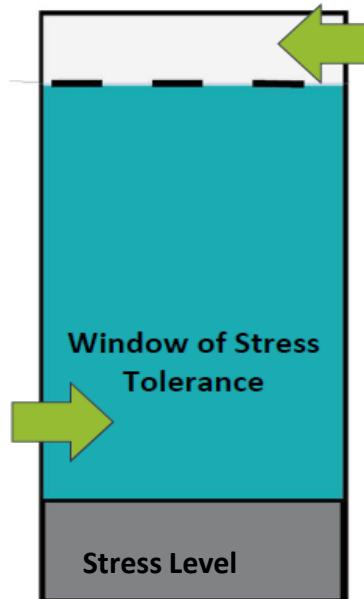
Prolonged activation of stress  
response systems in the absence  
of protective relationships.



# The Window of Stress Tolerance

## Regulated (Within Window)

- The child is able to manage emotions and control impulses
- They are generally able to handle life and school activities
- Functioning from the upstairs brain



## Dysregulated (Above Window)

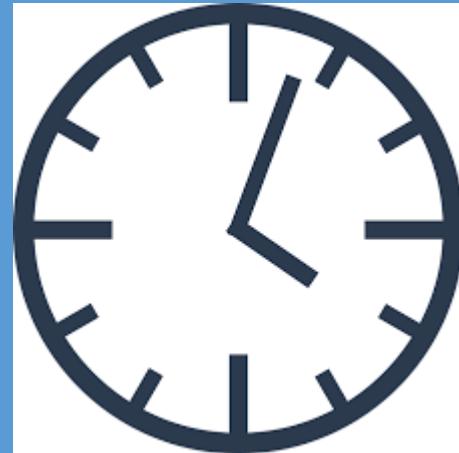
- Stress or sensory input has triggered an alarm state in the child
- Functioning from the downstairs brain
- Child has difficulty listening and comprehending (not in learning mode)
- They will often display maladaptive behavior

Image adapted from South Dakota Statewide Family Engagement Center

# POLL

What creates the most stress for the child(ren) in your care:

- Mornings
- In School - academic subjects
- In School - social situations
- After school - homework
- Bedtime



# Creating Routines

W h a t

- Routine - a regular procedure or sequence of actions regularly followed. Is predictable; typically occurs at a specific time of day or in a specific order.



- Predictable structure eliminates “unknowns” and can reduce stress
- Reduces negotiation
- Makes the child AND adult feel more competent

# What are key routines in your home?

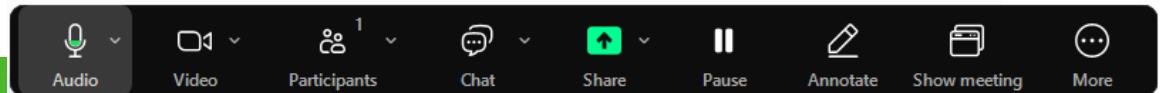
WAKE UP

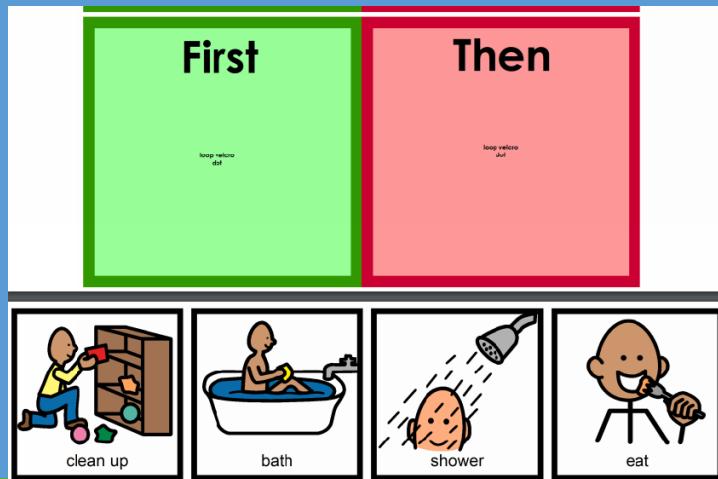
MEAL TIMES

AFTER SCHOOL  
ACTIVITIES/ HW

BEDTIME

ADD OTHERS:





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# Managing Anxiety

“Behavior is the language of trauma. Children will **show** you before they tell you that they are in distress.”

-Micere Keels

- Key strategies are rooted in:
  - Co-regulation
  - Modeling (tools)
  - Connection

I can use words to tell people how I feel.

I say, "I am mad."



I'm mad!

or

"I don't like that."



I don't like that!

## FEELINGS THERMOMETER

How do you feel?



ANGRY, FURIOUS, EXPLOSIVE

► Yelling, Stomping, Meltdown



FRUSTRATED, ANNOYED, IRRITABLE

► Arguing, Refusing, Shutting down



ANXIOUS, WORRIED, UNSETTLED

► Pacing, Avoiding, Clingy



SAD, NEGATIVE, LONELY

► Crying, Withdrawn, Slowed/Disengaged



HAPPY, CALM, CONTENT

► Smiling, Laughing, Engaged

What can you do about it?

- Vigorous physical exercise
- Breathe deep breaths
- Take a warm shower or bath

- Meditate/pray
- Listen to favorite music
- Take a fast-paced walk

- Talk to a family member/friend
- Pay attention to each of your 5 senses
- Focus on what you can control

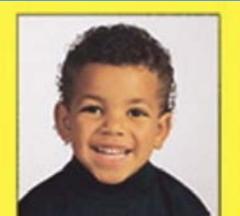
- Set a positive goal for the day
- Call a friend or relative
- Journal about your feelings

- Help someone else
- Notice and enjoy your positive mood
- Engage in an enjoyable activity

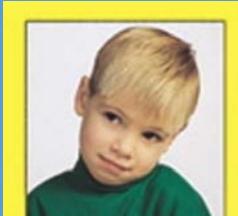


Wisconsin Office of **Children's** Mental Health

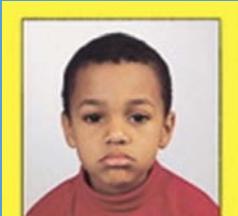
[children.wi.gov](http://children.wi.gov)



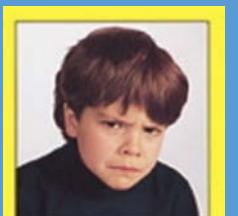
happy



shy



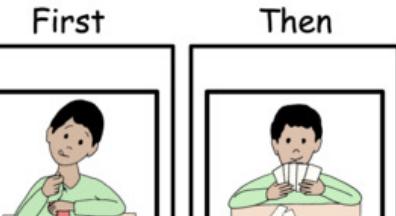
sad



angry



Work



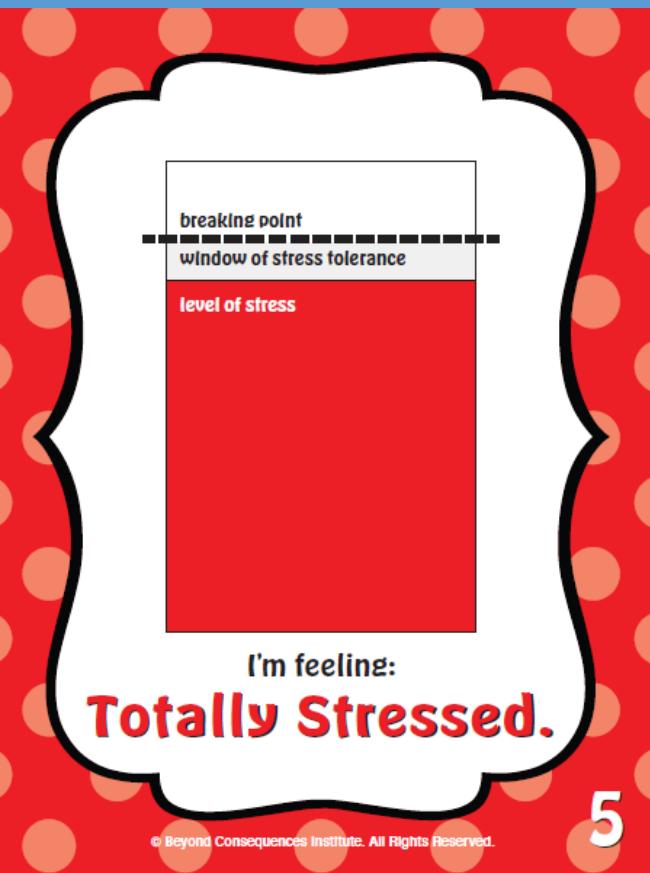
Game

F  
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ARD

First Then Cards

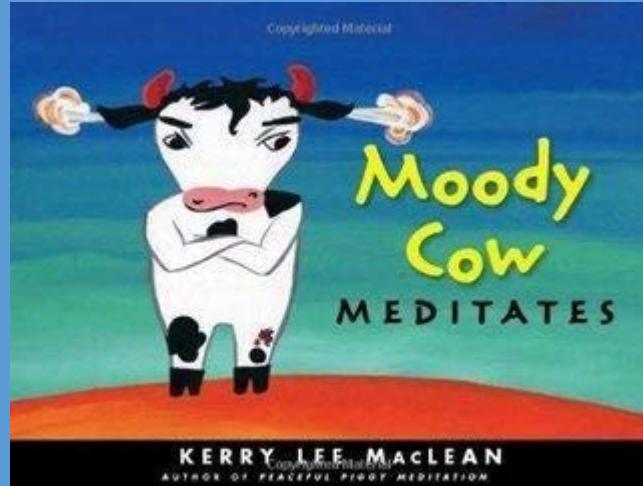
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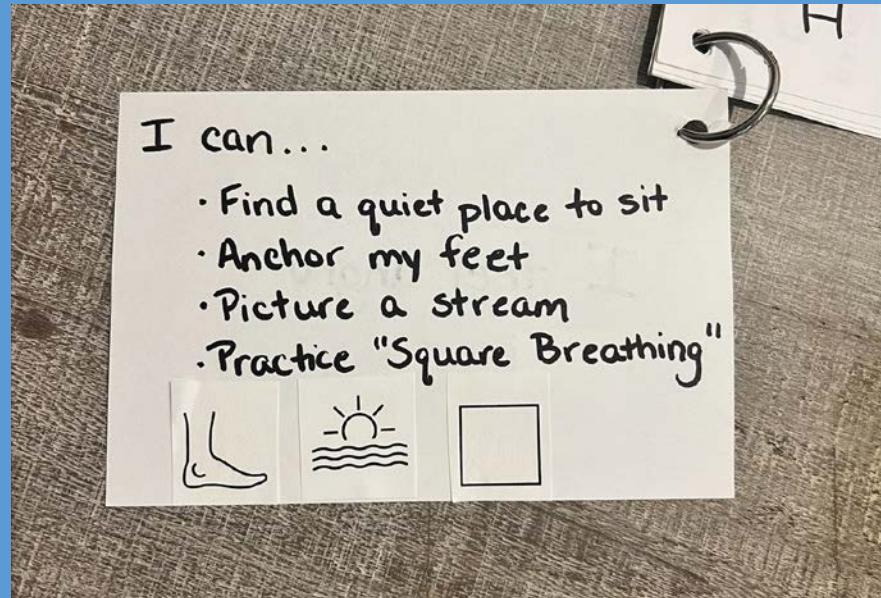
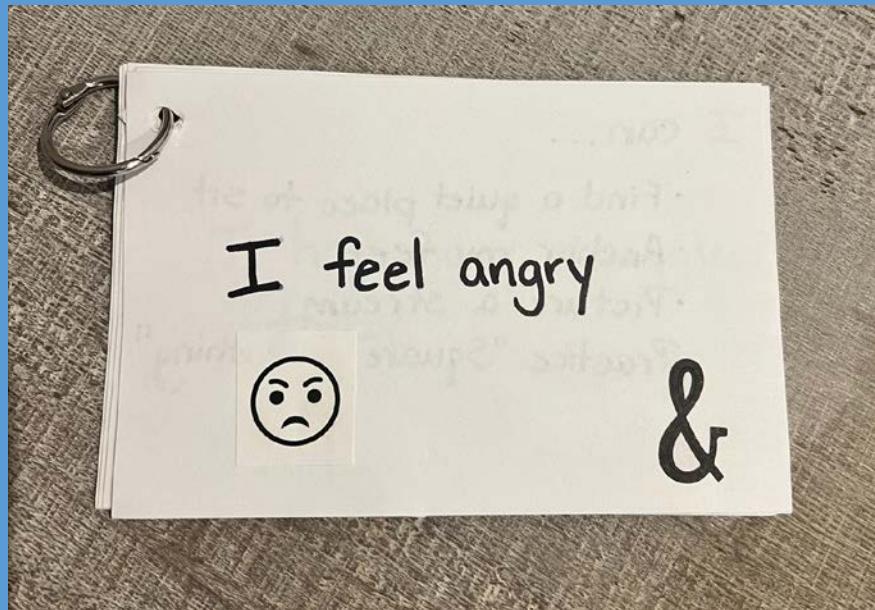
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# I Wonder...

Use “I wonder...” statements to help your child articulate emotions and root causes; prompts ideas to begin brainstorming solutions...

- I wonder if you really like P.E., and you feel sad when this class ends...
- I wonder if writing makes you feel icky and frustrated...
- I wonder if it is hard for you to leave home and start your day at school...
- I wonder if you really want to play with (insert name) and want some help to let them know...
- I wonder if the lunch room is too loud for you, and you would prefer an option to eat in a more quiet space with just one or two friends...

# Ampersand Cards



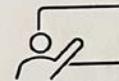
# More Ampersand Cards

I don't know how to  
start my homework

&

I can...

• Ask for help:



- Can you explain that part again?
- Can I show what I know another way?
- Can I talk it through with you first?

# POLL

How would you describe your relationship with your child(ren)'s school:

- Contentious - constant conflict
- Minimal - no news is okay news
- Collaborative - respectful & supportive
- Depends on the day



# Building Relationships with School Partners

- Meet in person - lay the groundwork for a reciprocal relationship - each person brings expertise
- Be proactive - share your child's challenges with teachers BEFORE they become a problem
- Share what works and what doesn't work with your child (and why!)
- Create a culture of problem solving

# All About Me!

- A positive student profile helps quickly and visually orient teachers and other staff with whom your child will be working
- Clarifies important family and other background information
- Clearly states what information is/is not to be shared
- Succinctly states strengths/challenges
- Leaves no room for lack of contact!

# Let's do this!

Form in Word & format guide at  
[https://www.formedfamiliesforward.org/resource\\_category/special-education-advocacy/](https://www.formedfamiliesforward.org/resource_category/special-education-advocacy/)

<b>All About Me</b>	
Name: _____	
You will see me for: (fill in classes, times, periods, etc.) _____	
Photo _____	
<b>I am good at:</b>  <b>Interests</b> <b>Academics</b> <b>Hobbies</b> <b>Sports</b> <b>Personality traits, etc.</b>	<b>I have trouble with:</b>      
You should know: <b>family information, medical information, etc.</b> I <b>do/don't</b> want this information shared with other students.	
<b>What works for me at school:</b>  <b>Physical arrangement of room, lesson preparation/ academic accommodations, assignments, test taking, organization, behavior/ reinforcement, health/medication, home/school communication, etc.</b>	
<b>Contact me by</b>  <b>Student email, cell, home phone; study hall or support periods?</b>	<b>Contact my parents/caregivers by</b>  <b>Email, phones, times of day, preferred frequency of contacts</b>

# Example!

Form in Word & format guide at  
[https://www.formedfamiliesforward.org/resource\\_category/special-education-advocacy/](https://www.formedfamiliesforward.org/resource_category/special-education-advocacy/)

## All About Me

Name: Jillian Smith



You will see me for: Math Studies, 2<sup>nd</sup> block

### I am good at:

- Group activities, I like working with other students, especially other girls
- Fractions are easy for me.
- Talking out problems

### I have trouble with:

- Getting started on work by myself
- Working with too many bossy boys in a group
- Writing long answers to things

### You should know:

- I live with my aunt. It's OK to share this information with other students.
- My mom is in jail until 2027; it is not OK to share this with students.
- I have ADHD and depression; I have a harder time with depression after I visit my sister and brother the first weekend of every month.

### What works for me at school:

- Being able to tell teachers my answers instead of writing it out long.
- Taking a break when I can't focus. I like to read Legendborn Cycle series by Tracy Deonn when I get overwhelmed.

### Contact me by

Text 703-555-8944

### Contact my parents/caregivers by

Aunt Kaye's email is  
[auntkaye@gmail.com](mailto:auntkaye@gmail.com); her cell is  
804-555-9088

# Other Student Profile Formats

- Student Personal Profile (IU)
- Student Introduction Letter (Understood.org)
- Positive Student Profile (UNC)
- Understanding Me: An Individual with FASD (FASD Success)
- Dear Teacher, What I Want You to Know About Me (Embracing the Brain)

# Time to Talk



# Session Evaluation



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# Formed Families Forward – Stay in Touch!

**PLEASE COMPLETE EVALUATION right after we end.**

**\*\*Certificates (only available for those who attended the live session) Email: [Veronica.Ferris@FormedFamiliesForward.org](mailto:Veronica.Ferris@FormedFamiliesForward.org)\*\***

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