



coordinated care™

Apple Health Core Connections™

Attachment & Bonding

BEYOND INFANCY

8/10/2021

Training Objectives



- To learn about
 - attachment and why is it important
 - bonding considerations for children
 - the cycle of healthy and unhealthy attachment

What is Attachment?

It is the foundation of all we do in relationship to others, in both children and adults.

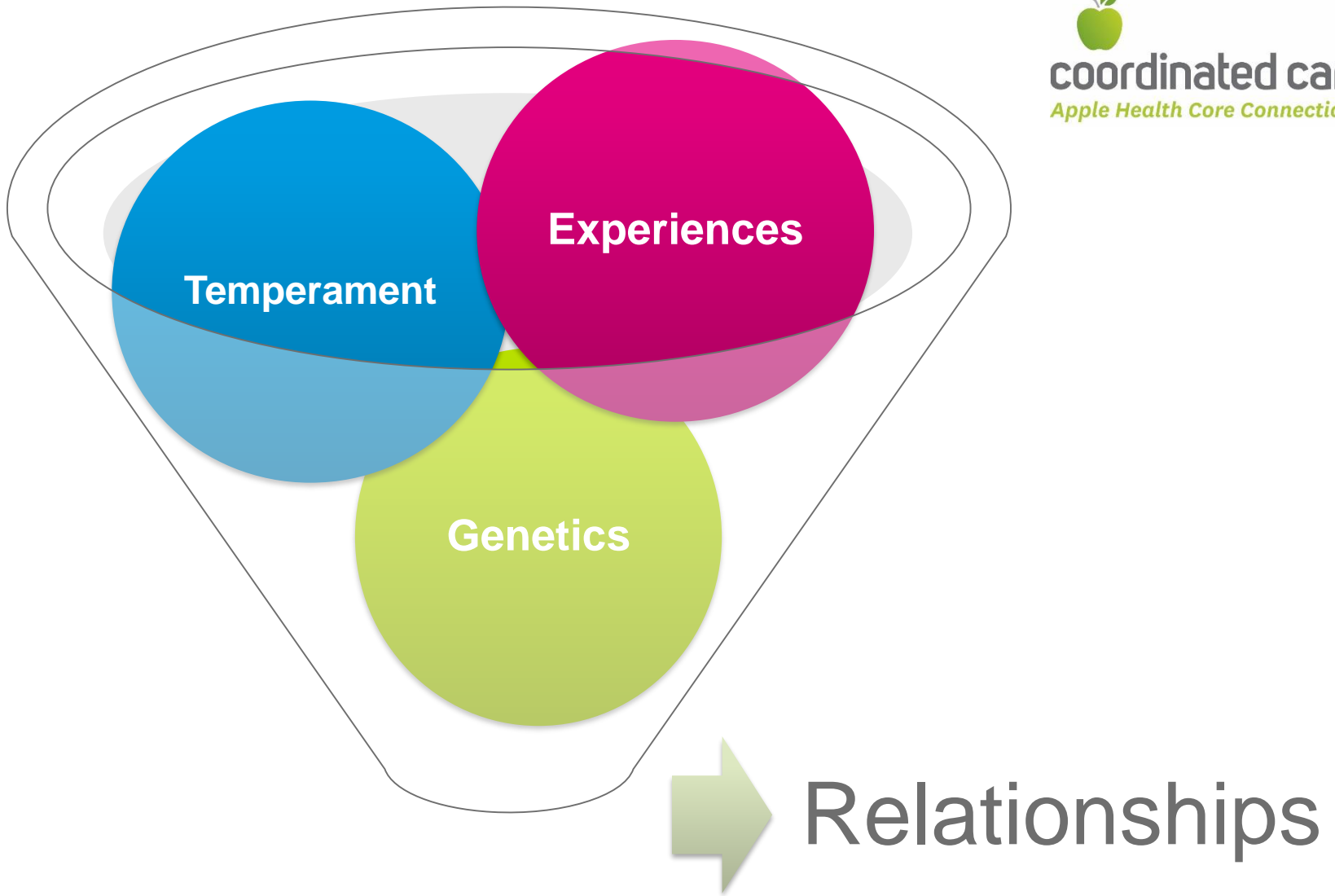


Parent Process



Our experience of how we were cared shapes how we parent children, whether by birth or foster/adoption.

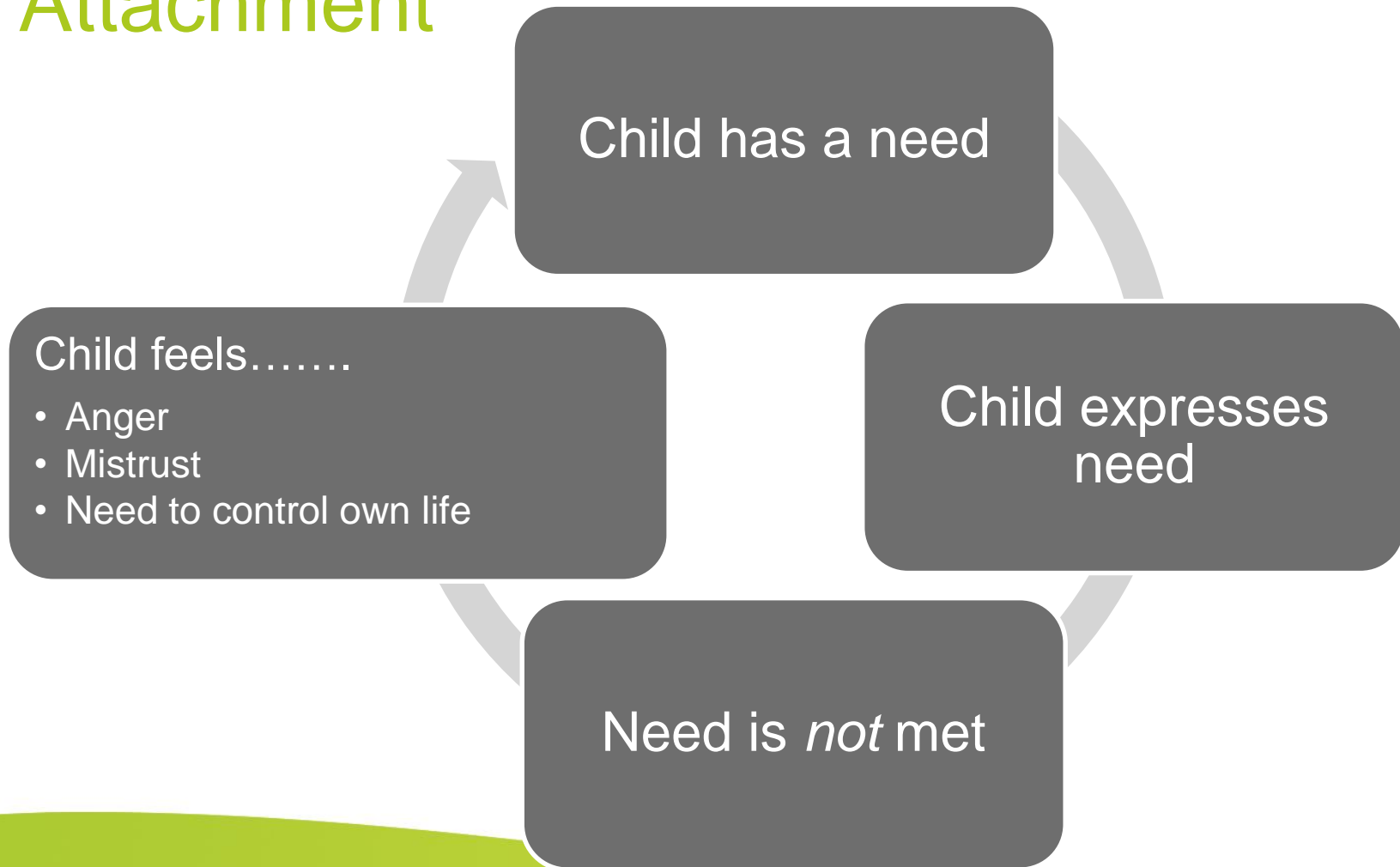
Also, how old is the child at time of placement? Age can impact attachment.



Cycle of Healthy Attachment



Cycle of *Unhealthy* Attachment



Lack of attachment is...

NORMAL!

- It's the rational outcome of the way the child has experienced the world
- Not present at the beginning of any relationship (i.e. a new placement) for children and adults.



Key Points to Remember



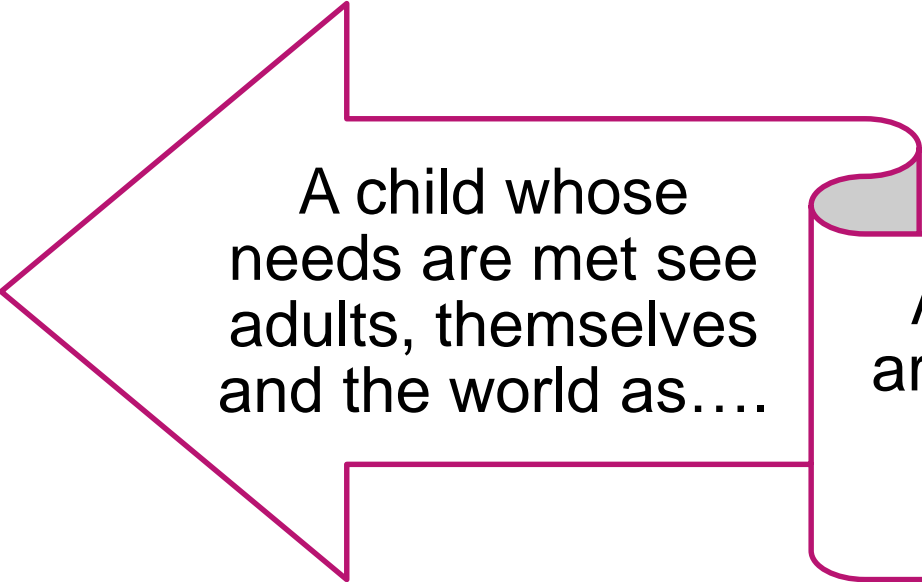
- Parents and children respond according to the bond established in their first relationships.
- Difficulties may occur if the child experienced
 - neglect
 - abuse
 - repeated trauma

Key Points continued...

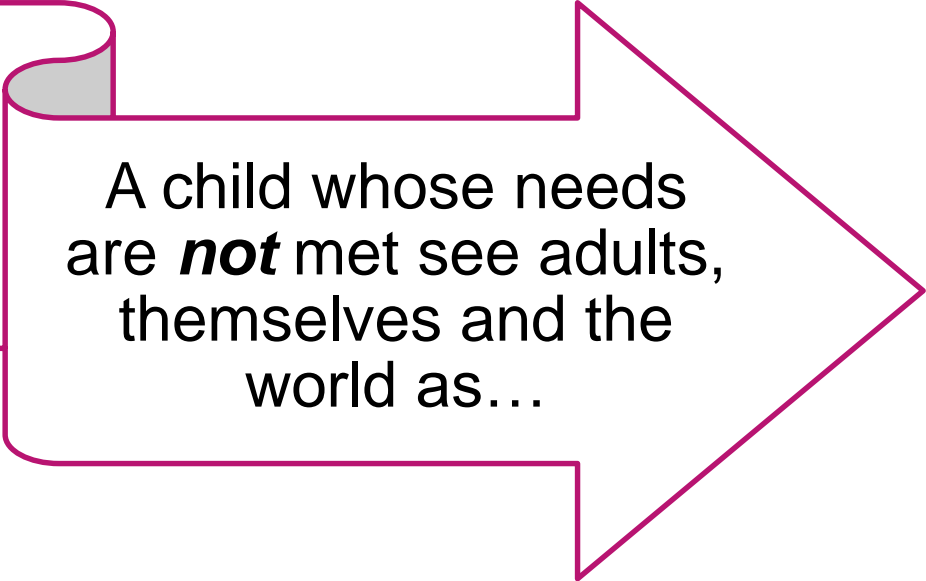


- Children *cannot* be disciplined, or “talked out of” attachment concerns
- Attachment and bonding is different for each individual.
- Consistent, nurturing experiences can change this pattern. *Note: older the child at placement, it is likely there will still be some attachment issues present.*

The Way of the World...



A child whose needs are met see adults, themselves and the world as....



A child whose needs are **not** met see adults, themselves and the world as...

THEY SAID I HAD ATTACHMENT DISORDER

REALLY, I HAD A LIFE DISORDER

I ATTACHED ACCORDINGLY

Culture of Foster Care Postcard Project from www.fostercarealumni.org



Culture of Foster Care Postcard Project from www.fostercarealumni.org

What can you do?
Consider the self-talk they might engage in.

A Child Fearful of Attachment will:

- Resist cuddling
- Resist eye contact
- Won't seek comfort from parent
- Have strong control issues
- Can be too friendly with everyone
- Can be “in your face” all the time, scared to let you out of their sight and clingy.



Encouraging Attachment



- Calm and quiet home environment
- Consistent, reliable routine
- Minimize electronic use
 - need connection to caretakers, not things

3 C's in Foster Care or Adoption

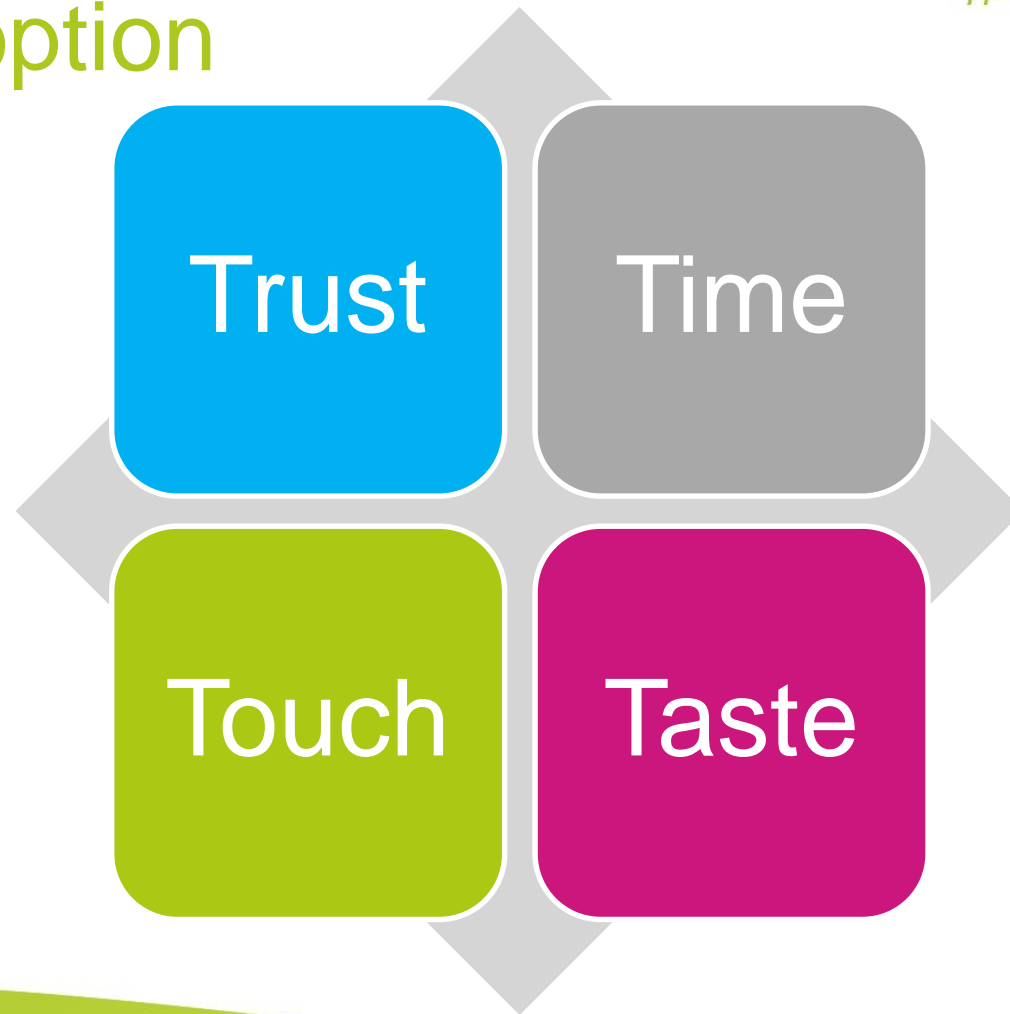


- Commit
- Claim
- Connect

To Attach to a Child

- Commit to the child
- Claim the child as your own, when you can
- Understand rejection from a child
- Love is more about **action** than feeling.
 - **Decide** to be committed even on days you don't like your child
- Get *your* needs met elsewhere

The 4 T's in Foster Care and Adoption



Time and Trust



- Roughly 6 months+ to attach under age 3
- Older children need 1-2 years, depending on past
- Spend time with your child
 - quality **and** quantity count here. They have already had years without you.
- May need to outlast their longest placement to-date

Play! (time together)

- Parents may have to teach kids how to play
- Use tactile play
 - large bouncy balls,
 - stress balls for fine motor skills and anxiety,
 - games to encourage physical activity,
 - blocks,
 - drawing
- Avoid video games or electronics



Touch

- Children need healthy, loving touch
- Builds trust and attachment, for both adult and child
- Be aware of a child's personal boundaries
 - may not like touch, or have extreme limits due to past abuse.
- Be creative
- ***If*** child wants lots of healthy touch, do it. Attachment will develop faster for both of you.

Taste: food

- Inconsistent access can lead to anxiety
- Offering choices builds trust; empowers kids
 - Don't let food be a battle ground
- Children have simple tastes
- Do *not* limit food
 - Offer healthy, small snacks often
 - Can have snacks in backpack, bedside table, etc.

Childcare

- Children may respond differently to different child care
- Group settings may be *comfortable for the unattached child*. Ask for feedback on the child's engagement.



Emotional Development

- Development tends to slow greatly at the age a child was first traumatized
- Parent the *emotional age*



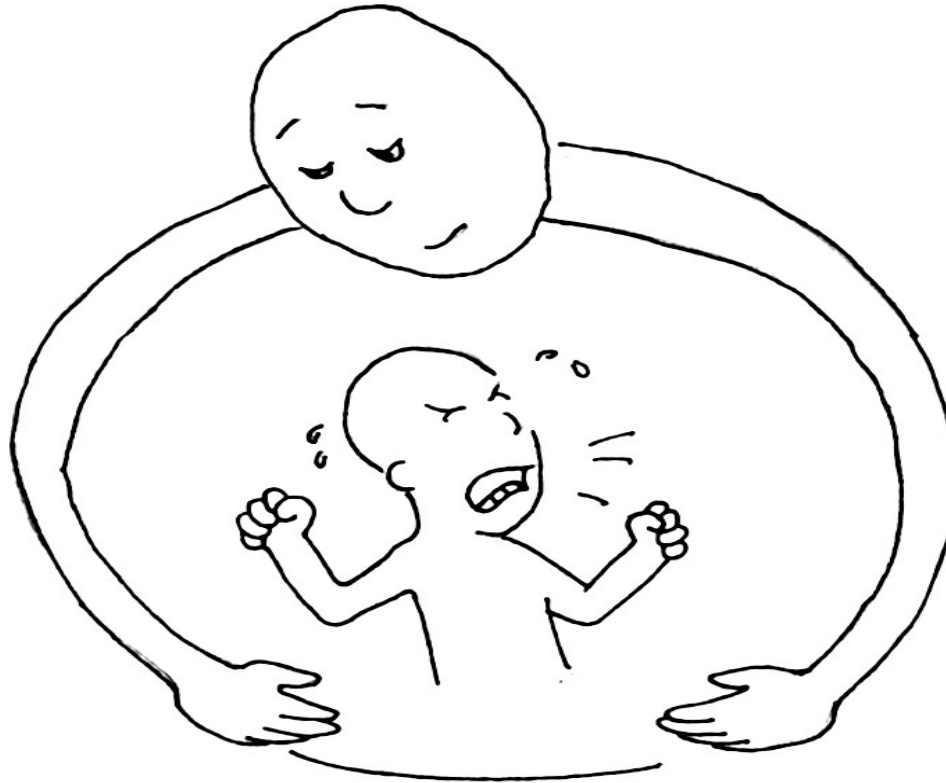
Re-parenting

You are re-parenting the child in many ways

- Help children make up developmental stages of nurturing they missed by treating them younger than they are.
- Allow the child to regress (they won't get stuck there!)



Be an “Emotional Container”



Try...

- Time *in*, not time out
- Make a big fuss over every little hurt
- Daily cuddle time
- Feed them with your own hand/sharing snacks
- Constant touch
- Lavish praise
- Talk about emotions, and who you are in their life

School Work

Don't obsess about academics

- An emotionally delayed child is not able to progress
- Focus on
 - healing
 - establishing security
 - trust with the child



Emotional Hot Spots



- Relationships with birth family
 - child can feel torn loyalties, or confused
- Anniversaries
 - when removed from birth family, someone dies, seasons of moving to new homes
- Birthdays, holidays
- School changes
- Adding new children to the home
- Court dates

A Child Fearful of Attachment Needs a Parent Who...



- Is a true adult
 - stronger, wiser and more patient than the child
- Is not expecting the child to meet parenting fantasies
- Can protect, enjoy and take charge, yet be flexible

Child is Returning to Their Birth Family...



- Attachment and security are still needed to develop positive relationships
- Build positive relationship with birth family
 - This helps the child know they can care for many people
- Acknowledge the sadness of missing them

Attachment is a Journey

- Bonding doesn't occur overnight
- Relationships take time



Enjoy



Delight in the journey together as the child grows in:

- Trust
- Confidence
- Empathy
- Love

Remember

To create and grow a family, it takes...

- Commitment
- Time
- Tears
- Laughter
- Flexibility
- Acceptance
- Love
- *Show up!*



Family Therapy



Attaching to a new child, especially one with controlling or behavioral challenges, can be hard on the family dynamic.

Seek out family therapy to find resources and help everyone in the family to adjust.

Contact Coordinated care for help!

Coordinated Care Can Help



Health Care Coordination:

- Call MemberConnections to learn about care coordination, at 1-844-354-9876.
- MemberConnections or your Coordinated Care Care Manager can find a licensed therapist in your area.
- **Note:** Family Therapy is covered by Coordinated Care
 - Foster and adoptive parents, their children, and foster siblings can participate, with the foster child.

Resources



- **Attachment handbook for foster care and adoption**
- Gillian Schofield & Mary Beek - Coram BAAF1 Jun 2018

- **The Connected Child: Bring hope and healing to your adoptive family Paperback – April 22, 2007**
- by [Karyn B. Purvis](#) (Author), [David R. Cross](#) (Author), [Wendy Lyons Sunshine](#) (Author)

- **Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow Paperback – June 15, 2009**
- by [Gregory Keck](#) (Author), [Regina Kupecky](#) (Author)

- **Spoon and Adoption Nutrition**
- <https://adoptionnutrition.org/>

- **Love Me, Feed Me: The Adoptive Parent's Guide to Ending the Worry About Weight, Picky Eating, Power Struggles and More Paperback – September 14, 2012**
- by [Katja Rowell M.D.](#) (Author)

- **[Attaching Through Love, Hugs and Play: Simple Strategies to Help Build Connections with Your Child](#)**
- Apr 21, 2014
- by [Deborah D. Gray](#)