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**FEB
2016**

RESOURCES, NEWS & INFORMATION FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES IN TEHAMA COUNTY

TOGETHER on purpose

**Network &
Resource
Group**

February 16 ■ March 15

3:30 - 4:30 PM

345 David Avenue, Red Bluff
(North Valley Baptist Church)

All Adoptive Families Welcome ■ Free Childcare Provided On-Site

Coming Soon: Redding Support Group for Caregivers Raising Children with FASD

A new group has formed in Redding with a focus on supporting grandparents and parents raising children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Kathryn Page, president of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in Northern California, said many people in the group have grandchildren who have frequent meltdowns, their school progress is slow and friendships either few or troubled.

"We wonder if it's something we're doing wrong, and we get lots of well-meaning but often useless advice from our friends and even our doctors or counselors," she said.

"If their moms drank during pregnancy ... the most likely explanation for this behavior is the prenatal alcohol exposure."

Paige said the spectrum is a broad range of brain damage, causing children difficulties in "connecting the dots."

"Reasoning, memory, delaying gratification, understanding others' feelings, putting up with discomfort are all affected, to different degrees in different people," she said. "Rarely diagnosed, these folks are often labeled as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, some also with bipolar disorder or just bad parenting."

Paige said doctors are mostly trained to recognize fetal alcohol syndrome — a small percentage of the whole spectrum, "But roughly 8,000 people in Shasta County are on the fetal alcohol spectrum, and most of them appear totally normal," she said.

"FASD is a disability. It's a physical disability — damaged brain — that shows up as behavior," Paige said, "behavior, which often looks like it's on purpose, under the control of the child. If we recognize the possibility that our children are actually doing the best they can with an out-of-control brain — if we can get some help for that condition — our kids stand a much better chance of going on to a happy and productive life."

FASD NorCal, is a group of parents and professionals aiming to foster diagnosis, services and support for everyone affected by the spectrum of disorders. The group will be holding meetings soon in the Redding area. For more information, visit www.fasdnorcal.org or call 530-249-1060.

WHAT'S GOIN' ON? Coming Events & Activities

FEBRUARY 2016

12 Sweetheart Swing
Friday, February 12 at 6:30PM at the Red Bluff Community Center, 1500 South Jackson Street, Red Bluff. The Red Bluff Community Band will be performing their Swing/Big Band Set. There will be finger foods and desserts, raffles, and children's activities. Come join us for a Family Friendly Night Out! Tickets can be purchased at the Red Bluff Community Center. Adults - \$5, 10 & Under - \$3, Call (530) 527-8177 for more information.

13 4-H Family Fun Night
4-H Family Fun Night Saturday, February 13 from from 4PM - 8:30PM at the Tehama County Fairgrounds. Fundraiser for the Tehama County 4-H Program - every club in the county program creates and runs carnival style game booths for EVERYONE to enjoy! Along with the games there are special contests, a silent auction, concessions, dinner, root beer floats and live entertainment. FREE to enter - 25 cents a game! 2013 theme: "Chinese New Year" VIP Hour from 3-4PM for ALL of our special needs and elderly community members! VIP's play for free and eat at a discounted price! **FREE EVENT.**

16 Together on Purpose Network & Resource Group
Tuesday, February 16, 3:30 - 4:30PM at 345 David Ave., Red Bluff (North Valley Baptist Church). Come meet with professional therapist Scott Howell, MFTI and other Tehama County adoptive families for support, networking and resource sharing. **Free childcare provided on-site.** All adoptive families welcome. For more information, call Andrea or Tahnee at 530-528-0300 or email acurry@atvrb.org. We look forward to seeing you there! **FREE EVENT.**

20&27 Therapeutic Parenting Course For Parents of Adopted and Traumatized Children
Two 4-Hour Training Sessions: Saturday, February 20 from 12-4PM and Saturday, February 27 from 12-4PM. At The Attach Place - Center for Strengthening Relationships, 3406 American River Drive,

Suite D, Sacramento, CA 95864. Traditional parenting does not heal the broken hearts of traumatized children. This adoption and trauma informed course will help you find your way with a comprehensive approach that includes: Complex Developmental Trauma vs. RAD Psycho-education, Brain-Based Parenting Approach, Preventing Parent Reactivity, Zones of Regulation, and Empowering, Connecting, Correcting. Trainer: Ce Eshelman, LMFT, Attachment Specialist, TBRI Certified Trainer. **Tuition: \$200 per 2-person group.** To sign up, email jen@attachplace.com or call 916-403-0588.

27 11th Annual North State Fatherhood Conference: The Legacy of Fatherhood
Saturday, February 27, 8AM-2PM at The Education Village, Colusa County Office of Education, at Colusa County Office of Education, This **FREE EVENT** will include fun & Educational workshops for fathers! Breakfast, lunch, T-Shirt & Door Prizes included for Attendees!

MARCH 2016

4 Sensory Processing and Behavior: Understanding Children with Sensory Processing Problems
Friday, March 4, 8:30AM - 12:30PM at Lilliput Children's Services, 289 Rio Lindo Ave., Chico. We will discover how Sensory Processing Disorders affect how a child interprets, processes and responds to information from their senses/bodies and environments incorrectly. Strategies of what to do for home and school will be discussed with opportunities to experiment with some of the strategies and tools that can help. RSVP by 2/26/2016 REQUIRED - 530.896.1920 or MCrittenden@lilliput.org

7 Understanding & Managing Challenging Behaviors in Children for Caregivers & Parents
Friday, March 7, Dinner: 5:30-6PM, Training: 6-8PM at First Lutheran Church - Fellowship Hall, 19 Colusa St., Orland. Presented by Stephen Diggs, Ph.D. Childcare for adoptive families provided on-site. Call 530-895-6143 to register.

15 Together on Purpose Network & Resource Group
Tuesday, March 15, 3:30 - 4:30PM at 345 David Ave., Red Bluff (North Valley Baptist Church). Come meet with professional therapist Scott Howell, MFTI and other Tehama County adoptive families for support, networking and resource sharing. **Free childcare provided on-site.** All adoptive families welcome. For more information, call Andrea or Tahnee at 530-528-0300 or email acurry@atvrb.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

More Resources for Adoptive Families:

Education:

Shasta College Foster Care and Kinship Education

More courses planned for 2016 - Details will be included in newsletters as they become available, or email Sherri at swiggins@shastacollege.edu

Sierra Forever Families

Various seminars offered on topics like Attachment, Understanding Poverty, Understanding Trauma, and more. For upcoming dates, contact Leslie Damschoder at 530.879.3861

The Attach Place Center for Strengthening Relationships

3406 American River Drive, Suite D Sacramento, CA 95864
ce@attachplace.com
(916) 403-0588

Support Groups:

Yuba, Sutter, Colusa, Glenn Counties

For Support Groups held in Yreka, Mt. Shasta, Orland or Sacramento contact Leslie Damschoder at 530.879.3861

Butte County Post Adoptive Services

Support Group, Drop in Assistance, WRAP Family Support Group ... For info, call Miko: 530-209-0817, Heather: 916-475-7198 or Deborah: 530-896-1920

Ten Ways Kids with FASD are DIFFERENT ... and NO, I can't just "relax".

By: Jenna Hill, B.A., M.S.W.

People love to give well meaning and unsolicited advice, particularly when it comes to parenting. I'm fairly certain that folks don't mean to be insulting or annoying when they tell me that my kids are completely normal and that I just need to relax more. Honey, I'd like nothing more than to relax but the consequences of letting down my guard and ignoring history is a sure path to disaster around here. I sometimes wish I could just hand out a pamphlet to the helpful neighbor who watches me hover and tells me to stop worrying so much (don't you think I'd like to do that?), or the nice lady at the supermarket that laughs because "boys will be boys" and hands them candy. Yes, they will. And no they won't. My personal favorite is when someone tells me that all they need is a good spanking. Who knew that a good swat would cure brain damage? (And, yes, I'm starting to use that response out loud.)

Kids with FASD are just different. You know, because of all that prenatal brain damage. Someday, when I'm not bristling with anxiety about what's coming when we get home or how to stay a few steps ahead with these guys, I'd love to sit down and share some of those differences with those well meaning folks. Now I can just direct them to this article. And so can you.

1. They don't get Rewards or Consequences.

They like rewards, don't get me wrong. No one wants a sticker more than my boys. They also have no idea how to get one. Even if you spell it out over and over again. Sticker chart? What's that? You can't take all the stickers and stick them all over yourself? Why not? And what do you have to do to get a sticker? No idea. When I raised my regular kids, we started sticker charts when they were learning to stay potty trained. After 5 days of no accidents (and a sticker every day) they got to pick out a bigger prize. My boys have meltdowns just trying to understand the rules. Because they don't understand the rules at all. They want the sticker, they want the prize. By the time they finally grasp the concept of how to earn a reward it's long

over. Like my 4 year old who was given a mini-marshmallow every time he pooped in the potty. We weaned off of that eventually and he poops fine now. But when he sees the marshmallows he tells me he's going to go poop so he can have one. Or you can just have them in your hot chocolate, kid. No poop required.

Likewise with consequences. I can't seem to help them connect a consequence, natural, logical or otherwise, to what they've done wrong. So the hitting and biting and screaming continue. The most I seem able to do is to remove them from the situation for a few moments to breathe. They like breathing but I don't think they know why they're doing it. And Aiden's food issues...ugh. Normally if you spit on food, say you don't like it, aren't going to eat, I would remove your meal and you'd be excused. This causes a huge meltdown. At every single meal. I'm stumped. He eats mostly peanut butter and jam sandwiches these days.

2. They don't get cause and effect.

This is similar to the above but bears mentioning because if you don't get that A causes B, and B causes problems, you're going to continue to do A and be confused about how B happened. Little ones quickly learn that if you touch a hot stove, you'll get hurt. FASD kids, not so much. I still have to caution the boys every time I open the oven door about the heat and the potential for getting burned. And for this reason, lamps get broke every few weeks around here (jumping on sofas) and kids fall off of said sofas and are always surprised when this happens. Because they don't get the concept of sitting still and staying safe and keeping lamps intact. I swear Aiden fell off of his chair at every meal for a year. He was surprised and distraught every single time. He sits on a big bench now instead and only falls off occasionally. #winning

3. They can't handle more than one thing per day.

I learned that the hard way and I still struggle with it. Liam, in particular, goes crazy if we try to do more than one outing. Like the time in

Florida when I took them to the pier, then to lunch, and tried to stop at the Winn-Dixie to grab supper. Liam acted like he was on speed by the time we hit the grocery store. This was about 10 days into our 3 week trip and he never really recovered from that episode. The combination of the trip, the water, and all of the fun we were having seemed to make his brain just explode. He was manic and silly and completely over the top for weeks. He made no sense at all, laughed in my face when I talked to him, and couldn't sit still. Which meant he got injured constantly because he was physically out of control. Next time we go on vacation, because I'm not giving up the dream, we'll stick to one thing every few days. Think of the money I'll save. I have this crazy dream of taking them to Disney someday but I'm little afraid for Liam.

Aiden handles the stress of too much fun in a different way. He becomes cranky, whiny, clumsy and goes to sleep for long hours. In Florida he slept 15-16 hours every night. Bless him.

4. They don't do change well.

Similar to above, they don't do change. Even when they're really excited about it. They love the concept of going somewhere new. They love birthday parties. They love Christmas and Easter and the supermarket. They can't cope with any of these things at all. Or maybe they cope for awhile but the crap hits the fan when they get home. For three days. Or more.

5. You can't prepare them for change.

They perseverate. A lot. That's a fancy social work word for getting fixated on things. Like the time I was talking too much and told the boys that I was thinking about taking them back down to Florida. Unfortunately, I hadn't thought that through. Because I was only starting to look for a rental and we aren't really going for like 8 more months. They have asked me every single day, ten times a day when we're going to the beach. Tomorrow? After lunch? Like when they went yesterday (9 months ago)? I finally said we weren't going after all and changed the

subject. I'll probably tell them the day before or when they notice the suitcases are out. If they notice.

One time Liam caught me trying to throw out some old Christmas decorations. He got totally fixated on the jingly bows and insisted on having one on his head. Since we weren't going out, I only said "no" 5 or 6 times before letting him have it. Because nothing says fun in the sun like Christmas bells in your hair.

6. They have a different version of reality.

This one is scary for foster parents who have case workers who don't get that concept. Which is about 95% of them. No offense social workers, I didn't get it either. The fancy word is confabulation. Some would say it's lying. I think it's more like their version of the story becomes their truth because they don't know the difference between truth and reality. Once they tell a story, they accept it as gospel.

My favorite example of this is the elevator story. When Liam was almost 3 we spent 10 days at a beach condo in Florida. The condo was only on the 4th floor but with all of our crap, the elevator was a necessity. Liam was terrified of the elevator. (#countryboy) He would just freeze up. So one day we get to the ground floor, Aiden charges out and Liam is frozen clutching his pail and shovel and afraid to step over the crack. By the time I grabbed Aiden, the door had closed and Liam was still on the elevator. I'm frantically hyperventilating and punching buttons and watched as he traveled to the third floor and back to the ground in less than 15 seconds.

After I slugged back an alcoholic beverage (#irony) at the pool bar, all was well and it was forgotten. Until the day he started his new preschool 15 months later when he suddenly remembered how he got lost on the elevator for the entire day and had no family. And he proceeded to spend two days telling everyone who would listen the story of how he lived on an elevator all by himself. I kept telling him that's not what happened and then I snapped and said we weren't talking about this anymore. He also likes to tell people I hit him. I did hit him once with my purse by accident. His version is Bible. Stand down social workers until you hear the real story.

7. They don't remember things.

Sometimes this works out in our favor like when the boys went trick or treating this year,

gathered a ton of candy, and then forgot all about it. They never mentioned their candy buckets again once they woke up the next morning.

They're still sitting in the garage (half full because my memory is fine). This was great but it's going to be a problem as they get older. Despite the fact that we had the same thing for breakfast for over a year, they still seem surprised and have no idea what's coming each morning. One will consistently ask for a sandwich despite me telling him sandwiches are for lunch. Rules are particularly hard for kids with FASD because they don't of that whole rewards and consequences thing. This is frustrating for them and the adults in their lives. Teachers really struggle with this and often think these kids are defiant or being difficult. They really just don't remember.

8. They feel things differently.

Kids with FASD often have sensory issues either feeling too much or too little. My youngest, Aiden, had an actual diagnosis of Sensory Processing Disorder long before the FASD diagnosis. Everything was too much for him for a long time. He hated noise, bright lights, and tickling was almost painful. Doctor's visits are completely overwhelming because of the poking and touching and all the activity going on. Some kids don't feel pain, or have other reduced senses and need extra pressure like firm touch and weighted blankets to connect with their senses or to help them self-soothe. Weighted teddy bears and stuffed toys are a good idea, too. I've actually considered learning to make these since there aren't a lot of resources in this area.

9. They have weird physical things going on.

Every time a new thing happens like Liam's seizures, or their chronic constipation, extreme clumsiness, intolerance to sugar or food dyes, or urinary tract issues you're going to ask the doctor if this is connected to FASD. The doctor will tell you it's not. Bless his heart. Other foster and adoptive parents will tell you stories of the same symptoms. Which kind of leads me to think that the physical stuff is probably connected to the FASD.

I probably should stop asking the doctors questions like that (our doctor is great, it's the emergency room doctors I'm referring to here) because when I look back at my 18 years in child welfare, and the past 6 of them working with infants and toddlers in care,

every single one of them that were exposed to alcohol in utero had similar physical issues going on that my guys do. It wasn't until we were referred to a urologist for Aiden that I made the connection. I recognized the doctor's name and remembered that I'd taken two other kids on my caseload to see him who also had the same issue he was experiencing. Coincidence? I doubt it. Other parents and caregivers are your go to when the doctors tell you you're crazy. They're the experts because they're living it. Doctors don't mean to dismiss us, they just don't really have the same experiences. Or they do and they haven't made the connection. A doctor familiar with FASD is hard to find but worth connecting with if possible.

10. Their vocabulary doesn't match their comprehension.

Basically they talk the talk but can't walk the walk. For Liam, who loves to memorize and quote movie lines, that means he says intelligent sounding things that make no sense at all. Sometimes you get tricked because it might be coincidentally in context with what's going on but the two are rarely connected. Like this morning, after a new snowfall, when the boys asked if I like snow. The kids know I hate it but they ask every time they see it. Liam then says, "Come on, Mom. Try it. Don't be Scared. Maybe you'll even like it." Ummmm....What? I'm 47, I've experienced snow.....Oh. And then I realized he was quoting a movie line. He had read the script but it wasn't the correct script. So even when they can repeat a rule and the consequences for what happens if they break it, they don't really understand what they're saying. I struggle with that one. A lot.

There you go, well meaning folks at the grocery store...that's what we'd like to tell you if you take the time to listen.

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Jenna Hill, B.A., M.S.D., is a foster/grandparent to two boys, advocate for foster and adoptive parents, writer, blogger and avid DIYer.

Jenna has a background in Child Welfare, but says that she's learned more about FASD from other foster and adoptive parents than in the field.

Be sure and check out www.fasdfamilies.com for more articles, supports and resources for families caring for children with FASD.



BOREDOM BUSTERS

Have you ever noticed someone YOU love looking a little down or lonely? Did you want to help, but weren't sure HOW? Keep these **Anytime Valentines** handy - next time someone you care about could use some encouragement, cut one out and leave it for them to find! Tape it to the mirror in the bathroom where they brush their teeth, leave it on their pillow, their desk or even in the silverware drawer - anywhere that you know they'll be sure to see it.

anytime
VALENTINES
for people of all ages!

It's true that we can't always fix everything for everyone we love - but it's amazing how helpful a little reminder of our love for them can be. Try it and see!





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