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by Deena McMahon, MSW, LICSW

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2016

RESOURCES, NEWS & INFORMATION FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES IN TEHAMA COUNTY

# TOGETHER on purpose

## Network & Resource Group

March 15 ■ April 19

3:30 - 4:30 PM

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

All Adoptive Families Welcome ■ Free Childcare Provided On-Site

## NEW! Counseling Services now available at NO COST for child victims of abuse or neglect in Tehama County.

As many of us have seen first-hand, children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect are at increased risk for struggling with a number of health and mental health concerns, including learning problems, problems relating to peers, internalizing outcomes like depression and anxiety and externalizing symptoms like aggression or defiant behavior.

The first vital step in protecting these kids is getting them safe - but finding practical resources for helping them heal from the trauma of abuse and neglect once they're in a safe environment, can be challenging, especially in a relatively small community.

To address this need, an exciting new program will be offering counseling for victims of child abuse and/or neglect and information and referral services for non-offending parents and caregivers, right here in Tehama County.

Abuse and neglect can come in many forms - in addition to the types of abuse that are often documented, like physical or sexual abuse, factors like exposure to substance use by parents or caregivers, witnessing domestic violence between adults, food insecurity, among others, can have long-lasting effects on children if not addressed. In many of the circumstances that lead to children being placed with foster or adoptive families or relative caregivers,

documentation of past abuse or neglect may not be available, yet these children are no less in need of help in healing from trauma. **Participation in these services does not require a referral from any agency, and no documentation of abuse is required.** Assessments, as well as counseling and other services in this program are being offered by Alternatives to Violence. The program is made possible through grant funding, allowing services to be provided at no charge to families.

If you feel that your child could benefit from counseling services specifically designed to address past abuse or neglect, call 530-528-0226 to set up an assessment with a therapist.

# WHAT'S GOIN' ON? Coming Events & Activities

## MARCH 2016

### 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@atvr.org](mailto:acurry@atvr.org). We look forward to seeing you there!

### 19 Paskenta Community Hall Annual Spring Fundraiser Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner

Saturday, March 19, 2016 at the Paskenta Community Hall, located at 13140 Toomes Camp Road, in Paskenta. Doors open at 5PM with Dinner starts at 6PM. Tickets can be purchased at the door- Adults: \$15, Children(ages 6-12): \$6, and Children under 5 and under eat for free. There will be a Cake Wheel and Raffle, but anyone interested is encouraged to bring a cake for the Wheel, or to share after dinner. Anyone interested in donating for the Auction and Raffle, please contact at (530)833-5308.

### 24 Understanding and Managing Challenging Behaviors

Presented by Stephen M. Diggs, Ph.D.  
Thursday, March 24, 9AM - NOON at Glenn County Office of Education, Conference Room, 311 S. Villa Avenue, Willows, CA  
This training is designed to help caregivers understand the underlying needs of children with challenging behaviors and to provide practical, hands-on skills. The training will include lecture, demonstration, role play, and practice. Please call Leslie at (530) 879-3861 or email [ldamschroder@sierrastaff.org](mailto:ldamschroder@sierrastaff.org) to RSVP or for more information.

## APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH!

### Local Proclamations:

- Corning City Council on 3/22
- Tehama Co. Board of Supervisors 3/29
- Red Bluff City Council 4/5

## APRIL 2016

### 15 Lifebook Class

Presented by Diane Largent, MSW  
Friday, April 29, 9:30 AM - NOON at Lilliput Children's Services, 289 Rio Lindo Avenue, Chico. Join us and learn a therapeutic tool for adoptive parents and children. Lifebooks can help connect adopted children to their histories and beginnings while creating foundations with their adopted families. Please RSVP by April 15: 530-896-1920 or [mrcrittenden@lilliput.org](mailto:mrcrittenden@lilliput.org)

### 15-17 95th Annual Red Bluff Round-Up

April 15, 16 & 17 at the Tehama County Fairgrounds. A Red Bluff tradition, the Round-Up promises to be an exciting time for all ages! Tickets are available now at [www.redbluffroundup.com](http://www.redbluffroundup.com) or by calling 530-527-1000. April 15, 2016 Performance 7PM; Gates open at 5, April 16, 2016 Performance 2:30PM; Gates open at 12:00, April 17, 2016 Performance 1:30PM; Gates open at 11:30AM

### 19 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@atvr.org](mailto:acurry@atvr.org). We look forward to seeing you there! **FREE EVENT.**

**23 28th Annual Children's Fair**  
Saturday, April 23, 2016; 10AM - 2PM at the Tehama District Fairgrounds. A fun-filled day of activities and entertainment for children of all ages! FREE admission! Featuring a variety of fun activities for children and information on resources for parents. The Children's Fair is a project of the Tehama County Education Foundation. Mark your calendars!  
**FREE EVENT.**

## 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](mailto: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](http://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

# SELF-CARE:

## Barriers and Basics for Foster/Adoptive Parents

by Deena McMahon, MSW, LICSW

When a foster or adopted child has special needs, parents must juggle appointments with mental health therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, psychiatrists, ophthalmologists, allergists, and asthma specialists. They must attend IEP meetings, keep in touch with the school principal and their child's teacher, check in with the social worker, and establish a schedule for personal care attendants (PCAs). Ongoing appointments and emergencies keep parents so busy that attending to their own feelings and needs may be put on hold.

Self-care, however, is crucial for foster and adoptive parents. The physical and emotional toll of caring for traumatized children can be overwhelming. Children can project hurt onto parents and, at the same time, blame parents for feelings of loss and despair. Parents must understand both the complexities of foster care and adoption, and their child's unique needs. With that knowledge and an ongoing commitment to self-care, parents can more easily remain effective and balanced.

### Barriers to Good Self-Care

Unfortunately, adoptive and foster parents face many barriers to taking care of themselves.

To start, the phrase—"Take care of yourself!"—has become so trite that, for many, it has lost all meaning. When someone casually tells an adoptive mom whose kids have special needs to take care of herself, she may feel frustrated and angry. It's easy to say. It's not easy to do.

Second, many who choose to foster and adopt are natural caregivers. They have pets, partners, children, and aging parents who all require care and attention. Most days, the amount of energy they devote to others' needs far exceeds any energy directed to their well-being. In fact, many caregivers are uncomfortable being on the receiving end of others' attention and assistance. They don't want to be too needy, or seem like they are not up to the challenges they have taken on.

Third, many adoptive and foster parents really want to be there for their families. They want to remember birthdays with a homemade cake. They want to be the cheerful volunteer at their child's school. They want to deliver a meal to a sick friend, help out at church, and serve on task forces that address children's needs. So, they work longer and try harder to meet their families' needs.

Fourth, too many parents simply do not know what would help them. They

know something is missing, but can't put their finger on just what might make them feel better. Parents are often told, "Call if there is anything you need," but it is hard to call and ask for help, especially when you cannot even articulate what you need. This leaves many parents vulnerable and exhausted.

Even more significantly, too many foster and adoptive parents believe they somehow shouldn't need support. Many times I have heard parents say that they are in no position to complain or ask for help since they chose to foster or adopt their children. But even when parents know what challenges the child faces, it is often impossible to predict how living with a certain child will change a family.

Compounding matters, recent disasters—9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the earthquake in Pakistan, and the prolonged conflict in Iraq—remind us all that there are always other people who are worse off. We are taught as children to be happy with what we have since other people have it much harder. It is little wonder we sometimes feel guilty because our ongoing trauma pales in comparison to these catastrophic tragedies.

### The Road to Good Self-Care

From working with parents, I know that to overcome social, mental, and emotional barriers to self-care, you must first come to understand the importance of taking care of yourself, and then build self-care into your daily routine. You must believe that you are worth taking care of, and that your happiness and well-being are not peripheral to, but essential for good parenting. Once you can accept that:

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- Give yourself permission to need something. It is okay to ask for help. Having needs and trying to meet them is not a sign of incompetence or weakness. It is part of healthy family life. Thirst is your body's signal to drink and prevent dehydration. In the same way, when you feel stressed out, it is time to take a break so you can regain perspective and deal with the issue at hand more constructively.
- Keep it simple. Make life choices that fit your family. Develop consistent routines. Create a safe environment. Understand and respect both your limits and those of your children. Resist the impulse to over-commit what little time you have. Prioritize. Save energy for things that really matter, and seek outside help as soon as you need it. When possible, take advantage of respite opportunities and PCAs to relieve some of the stress during really rough times.
- Stop comparing yourself to other adults and families. They do not live your life, and they are not raising your children. Get comfortable with compromising and being different. Your child may talk, think, achieve, behave, and live differently than other children. Instead of measuring your family's worth by other people's standards, set expectations for your family based on your children's capabilities and your family's reality.
- Know which part of the day is the hardest and have a plan to make it go more smoothly. If getting ready for school is rough, prepare as much as you can the night before. If bedtime is hard, start early and set a predictable routine. Decide beforehand how you will respond

to behaviors that make that time of day so trying. Accept that you won't get anything else done, and do only what you must to get through the hard parts.

- Join a parent support group. Meeting with other parents who have similar experiences and feelings is one of the most powerful and renewing activities for anyone raising children who have special needs. Just knowing that you are with people who "get it" is affirming. Group members may also be able to trade respite care with you. If a group is not an option, find at least one person outside your immediate family with whom you can be real, and whom you can trust to understand.
- Have down time every day. Maybe it's a morning walk. It might be 10 minutes with the paper and a good cup of coffee. It can be writing in your journal before bed. It could be the drive into work, or times of silent prayer in church. Your mind, body, and soul need time to regenerate from life's stresses. If you have no down time—a time without distractions and demands—you cannot benefit from moments of reflection and calm that may help you to center and stay balanced.
- Routinely have something to which you can look forward. Maybe it's coffee with a neighbor after the kids are at school. Or a glass of wine Friday night. Or date night with your partner. It could be going alone to the grocery store Saturday morning or having an uninterrupted bath. Remember, waiting too long to reward yourself for a job well done is not an effective way to shape your behavior. Immediate positive

reinforcement works for adults too.

- Accentuate the positive. It may not be easy, but as you step back to evaluate how you and the family are doing, find time to laugh at the silly situations that come up. Recognize the good in yourself and your children. Celebrate every step forward, no matter how small. Stay connected with your partner. Eat something you really enjoy. (Nutrition is important. Indulgence is wonderful.) Find affirmation in the process of raising an adopted child.

Caring for children who have special needs is a matter of the heart. Self-care is a mind-set and a positive choice. If you can find a balance between caring for your children and meeting your own needs, you will ultimately be much better equipped to do both.

#### About the Author:

A licensed independent social worker, Deena McMahon has worked with families and children for more than 20 years. She is currently director of in-home services at Therapeutic Services Agency, where she supervises more than 25 staff who deliver in-home services in nine east central Minnesota counties. She also conducts parenting assessments, provides attachment therapy, is a staff consultant for social services agencies, and presents at regional and national training events. Through the years, Deena has developed expertise in the areas of childhood trauma, childhood sexual abuse, grief and loss, family violence, adoption, and attachment.



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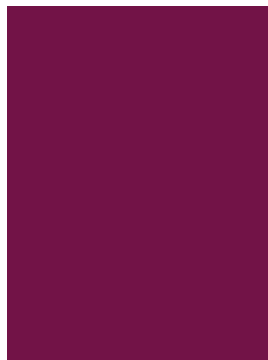




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Alternatives to Violence  
1805 Walnut Street • Red Bluff, California 96080

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