



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service

**NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE
FOR WALES**

Resource Pack

for Prospective Adopters

Introduction

This resource pack has been designed to assist anyone thinking about applying to adopt or who has already submitted a Registration of Interest form and would be entering Stage 1 of the process.

It consists of a number of exercises that you can do on your own and/or with your partner if you are applying jointly, as well as suggestions of other activities you can do to prepare including online training, reading and TV/Films.

The exercises will help you to think about adoption in relation to three key areas:

- Parenting an adopted child
- You and what you bring to the adoption task
- Therapeutic parenting for adopted children

Parenting an adopted child

The process of adoption involves you considering what you have to offer as a prospective parent alongside your learning about the needs of the child you may adopt. Adoption is not without its challenges but ultimately if your goal is to provide a family for a child you will be able to identify the rewards that are so much a part of it as well, not least of which is knowing you are making a huge difference to a child's life. The activities suggested in this pack are just some of the things you may need to think about when parenting children.

You and what you bring to adoption

Everyone has different qualities and characteristics and we all bring a variety of skills into parenting children. On thinking about becoming an adoptive parent you will already be considering how your current lifestyle may need to be adapted. The exercises in this section will assist you reflect upon what is important to you and what things you may want to adapt over time.

Therapeutic parenting for adopted children

Therapeutic parenting is the term used to describe a way in which adopters, foster carers, special guardians and kinship carers look after children who have experienced past trauma or disruption in their lives. PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) provides a foundation for this type of parenting and the exercises contained in the pack will provide an introduction of how some of these qualities are integrated into everyday situations with adopted children.

Note: None of the exercises are compulsory, you can choose to do some or all and there will be further opportunities as you progress through the assessment process to expand on your learning in relation to these and other areas of adoption.

A. Parenting an adopted child

Exercise:

1. House rules
2. Advocacy task
3. The 'No' exercise
4. What if...
5. Confidentiality

Suggested reading:

- No Matter What by Sally Donovan

Online: <https://www.dewis.wales/child-development-cyp> Information on child development and milestones

B. You and what you bring to adoption

Exercise:

1. All about you
2. How well do I care for myself?
3. Identity questionnaire
4. Life as it is...
5. Strengths and vulnerabilities
6. Genogram
7. Ecomap

Suggested reading:

- An Adoption Diary (2006) by Maria James

Online: <https://adoptcymru.com/family-stories>

C. Therapeutic parenting

Exercise:

1. Information about PACE (to be added)
2. Positive Parenting exercise
3. A fraught day in...
4. How might parents respond with PACE exercise

Suggested reading: Nurturing Attachments (2008) by Kim Golding

Online: <https://adoptcymru.com/adopter-training-modules> Module 2: Attachment Theory and its relevance for parenting adopted children

Additional exercises:

Below are some suggestions of other things you could do to enhance your knowledge and understanding of adoption:

1. Interview with an adopted person
2. Supporting letters

Life Journey work – what it is and how it helps adopted children <https://adoptcymru.com/adopter-training-modules> Module 6 Life Journey Work

Video clips/Films

- Still Face clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>
- Sarah Naish clip re impact of abuse/therapeutic parenting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-oWUZNhEXo>
- Bryan Post resources on <https://postinstitute.com>
- Dan Siegel “Hand Model of Brain” clip from youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>
- Helen Oakwater “Lack of truth telling” presentation from youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2EX3G1-XOs>
- BBC podcast The Adoption

Films:

- Thunderbird film “My Life as a Courgette”
- Disney Pixar film “Inside Out”
- ‘Removed’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOeQUwdAjE0>
- Instant Family

Further reading:

Child Development and Attachment

What Every Parent Needs to Know (2007) by Margot Sunderland

Blame My Brain (2013) Nicola Morgan

Attachment in Common Sense and Doodles (2013) by Miriam Silver

Parenting therapeutically

Therapeutic Parenting in a Nutshell (2016) by Sarah Naish

Parenting with Theraplay (2017) by Vivien Norris and Helen Rodwell

The unofficial guide to adoptive parenting (2014) by Sally Donovan

Stories

Holding on and Hanging in by Lorna Miles

Adoption Conversations (2008 and 2010) Renee Wolfs

Listen

The Adoption— available as a Podcast and on BBC iPlayer (BBC Radio 4)

Further information:

Adoption UK(Cymru) is a registered charity and adoption support agency providing advice, information and support to anyone interested in or involved in adoption. They can be contacted via <https://www.adoptionuk.org/Wales>

EXERCISE 1

House rules or family boundaries for a child/ren

Purpose: to help you to think about some of the issues that frequently arise when caring for children and managing their behaviour. Use the headings below to think about some of the ways in which you might respond or have responded to children.

1. Values and Beliefs – what are your own values and expectations when thinking about caring for children.
2. Resolving conflict
3. Mealtimes
4. Bedtimes
5. Pocket Money
6. Responsibilities
7. Privacy
8. Discipline
9. Other issues to consider

EXERCISE 2

The Advocacy Task

Purpose: There will be many occasions as a parent when you will need to request support for your child. This is likely to be at school, within a health setting or even socially. The example below illustrates how this can happen when an adopted child might do something that suggests they are unhappy or there is another reason for their behaviour.

Either:

Describe an example of when you have spoken up for a vulnerable person. What was their problem? How and why did you become involved? What did you do? What was the impact of your actions? What did you learn? How will this help you as an adoptive parent?

or:

Your son/daughter aged 8 has been misbehaving at school and has been excluded from a forthcoming trip to an adventure park. Either write a letter to the Head teacher explaining why you feel he/she should not be excluded from the trip. Or write a list of points you would make when discussing the exclusion with the head teacher/child's teacher.

EXERCISE 3

The “NO” Exercise

Purpose: As parents one of the challenges we often face is managing a child's behaviour in a way that helps him/her to understand why the behaviour is not acceptable. This can be difficult at times with an adopted child who may, through their earlier experiences, struggle to understand the impact of what they do.

Describe a situation when you have had to say ‘No’ to a child

- 1) What did the child do? Describe his/her behaviour
- 2) How did you feel?
- 3) What did you do?
- 4) What was the effect of your actions?
- 5) What else could you have done and how would this have affected the outcome?
- 6) How do think the child felt?

EXERCISE 4

What if?

Purpose: All children placed for adoption have a right to be told their 'story' and to have an understanding of how they came to be placed for adoption. Below are just some of the examples when the information they have could result in them asking further questions prompted by events or situations that they encounter.

1. Your adopted son aged 5 has just started school and comes home after the first week to say that he had to draw a family tree – he asks how he will show the teacher why Gary his older brother is not living with him?
2. You are out shopping and your adopted daughter who has been with you for 2 years asks whether she can buy her other dad a birthday card as it will be his birthday next week?
3. Following an argument with your 11-year-old adopted daughter about tidying her bedroom, she screams at you saying you are not her real mother and she does not have to do anything for you.
4. Your 7-year-old adopted daughter is asking about her birth father. His identity is not really known, birth mother has refused to give any information about him. It is strongly suspected that her father is in fact her grandfather. How and when will you talk with her about this?
5. Whilst visiting your new GP with your 9-year-old adopted son, he asks him whether he can remember his birth family.
6. Whilst watching a soap on the TV your 8-year-old adopted child says that he would like to know what happened to his baby brother and mother, the first time in 5 years that he has ever mentioned their existence. You know that his birth mother was a drug user and prostitute.
7. Tim is a 4-year-old who lived with his foster family for almost 18 months before being placed with you 5 months ago. He still gets upset when he hears the foster family's name mentioned. Sadly, you did not have a lot in common with them and you feel reluctant to establish any contact.
8. You have just had a letter from your daughter's birth mother via the letterbox contact system telling you her own mother has died and she now has a son called Craig who was born 4 months ago and who is living with her.

EXERCISE 5

Confidentiality Task

Purpose: as you progress into the assessment and become an adoptive parent you will be given confidential information about children which you will not be allowed to share with anyone other than the people working with you. This can be challenging at times particularly if you have a very close relationship with family and friends and usually share most things with them. Holding private information about the child who you might go on to adopt will not be as difficult as you think but this gives you an opportunity to think about how you usually handle sensitive and private information given to you.

Think of a time when you have had to keep a piece of information confidential; i.e. you have been entrusted with some information which you have judged is better kept to yourself or just with your partner.

1. Describe the situation below. (You do not have to break the confidentiality, as specific details do not need to be disclosed e.g. "someone once told me that...")
2. Why did you decide to respect the person's confidentiality?
3. Was it difficult to maintain confidentiality? And why?
4. Can you think of a time when you have chosen not to respect a person's confidentiality?
Or can you think of any circumstances when you would not keep information to yourself?

EXERCISE 6

Starting to look at you and yours

Purpose: Part of the assessment process as a prospective adopter involves you in looking at the important elements of your life and the people, events and occasions that have influenced who you are today. It is important for social workers to also have some understanding of this when thinking about matching the right child with you. Below is an opportunity to begin to write about your own 'narrative' which will be helpful for you when you start Stage 2 of the assessment with your social worker.

1. Which two people have you been closest to, and why?
2. Who else was important to you growing up?
3. If you have siblings or those that you consider siblings what is your relationship with them?
4. How do you think your parents would have described you as a child?
5. Can you think of a good memory from your childhood?
6. What about a bad or sad memory?
7. What, if any, contact have you had with people with disabilities?
8. Does your family have any special traditions that are important to you?
9. What type of school did you go to?
10. If you could change anything about your school days, what would it be?
11. What was your first job?
12. One thing I like about my job is:
13. One thing I don't like about my job is:
14. What are your hobbies/interests?
15. Tell us one thing you are really good at?
16. Describe yourself physically and tell us about your character.
17. Ask your partner to describe you...
 - Physically
 - Personality
 - Your best feature
 - Your worst characteristic

EXERCISE 7

How well do I care for myself?

Purpose: to provide an opportunity for you to consider how well you look after yourself and how you may need to adapt to meet your own needs whilst prioritising those of a child/ren.

	Not at all	Some times	Reasona ble amount of time	Often	All the time
I give myself time and space to recover from an illness					
I visit the doctor when I need help or advice					
I am comfortable letting others help me when I am under the weather					
I take time for myself when I notice I am getting stressed					
I can turn to others when I have a problem or worry					
I can sit and relax without worrying about things I should be doing					
I have hobbies and interests and feel it is important to have time for these					
I make sure I take regular exercise					
I make sure I eat healthily					
I don't feel guilty if I have an occasional treat					
I make sure that I get enough sleep					
I can say no to others when I need to					
I have time during the week which is just for me					
I make time in a month to spend time just with friends					
I have people in my life who I can talk about anything to					

Taken from Kim S. Golding Foundations for Attachment. Training Resource, 2017

EXERCISE 8

Identity Questionnaire

Purpose: to provide an opportunity to think about how heritage and ethnicity might be important to you and to children who are placed for adoption. This exercise will help you to consider how you could meet a child's needs if he/she has a different ethnicity to you and what might be important to him/her in relation to identity. As with other exercises there are no right and wrong answers; the questions are designed to help you to reflect on things that are important for you, and for your social worker to know about you.

1. What is your heritage and ethnicity?
2. What are your hobbies?
3. How would you describe your job and your partner's jobs?
4. What are your beliefs and values?
5. Do you see yourself as belonging to a particular "group" or not?

EXERCISE 9

Life as it is

Purpose: to help you to gain an understanding of how you may need to adapt your current lifestyle in order to welcome a child or children into your home. There are no right and wrong answers; this is just an opportunity to reflect on the things that are important to you. It may be that you are already doing things that a child would easily fit into or it may be that you are looking forward to making some changes. Answer as many questions as you feel comfortable with.

1. Describe a “typical day in the life” of your family now.
2. Who cooks? What is your special recipe?
3. Who does most of the housework?
4. Who is the family accountant?
5. How do you celebrate family occasions?
6. What activities do you do together?
7. Why are play and hobbies and interests important?
8. How will you encourage your child to take part in activities...?
 - At home
 - With friends
 - Formal out of school activities
 - Sports and outdoor activities
9. How do routines benefit children? When can they be more of a hindrance?
10. What do you think the two biggest changes will be if child/children are placed with you?

EXERCISE 10

Strengths and Vulnerabilities

Purpose: Below is a list of the strengths and vulnerabilities which are commonly identified in Prospective Adopter Reports. You could use this tick list to start to identify your own strengths and vulnerabilities and show it to your social worker at the beginning of your assessment. This is not compulsory but just designed to give you an opportunity to

STRENGTHS	
A&B have some experience of caring for children. There is evidence that they enjoyed this experience.	
They have a strong support network and longstanding friendships.	
B experienced loving and consistent parenting when she was growing up and developed a secure attachment to her main caregiver.	
The have lived through conflict and can demonstrate how they managed this successfully.	
Their relationship has withstood the pressures of separation and multiple moves. They have a strong relationship.	
They have demonstrated a capacity for empathy.	
A&B are able to think about why a child is behaving a certain way. They can understand and make sense of this behaviour.	
A&B can be flexible in the way they respond to children. They think through their reactions and responses with the child in mind.	
A&B have been able to negotiate changing circumstances in their lives.	
A&B have the ability to manage, understand and contain their own emotional needs so that the child is not given this task.	
A&B accept that they cannot have children naturally and now see adoption as a positive route to building their family.	
A&B are experienced parents and can give examples to demonstrate their child-centred parenting.	
A&B have a lot of energy, can be playful, and enjoy the company of children.	
A&B have only one final move before settling into their long-term home.	
A&B are financially stable. They do not have any significant or spiralling debts.	
They seem to be empathic and could present birth family information to a child in a sensitive and honest way.	
A&B can both take lengthy adoption leave.	

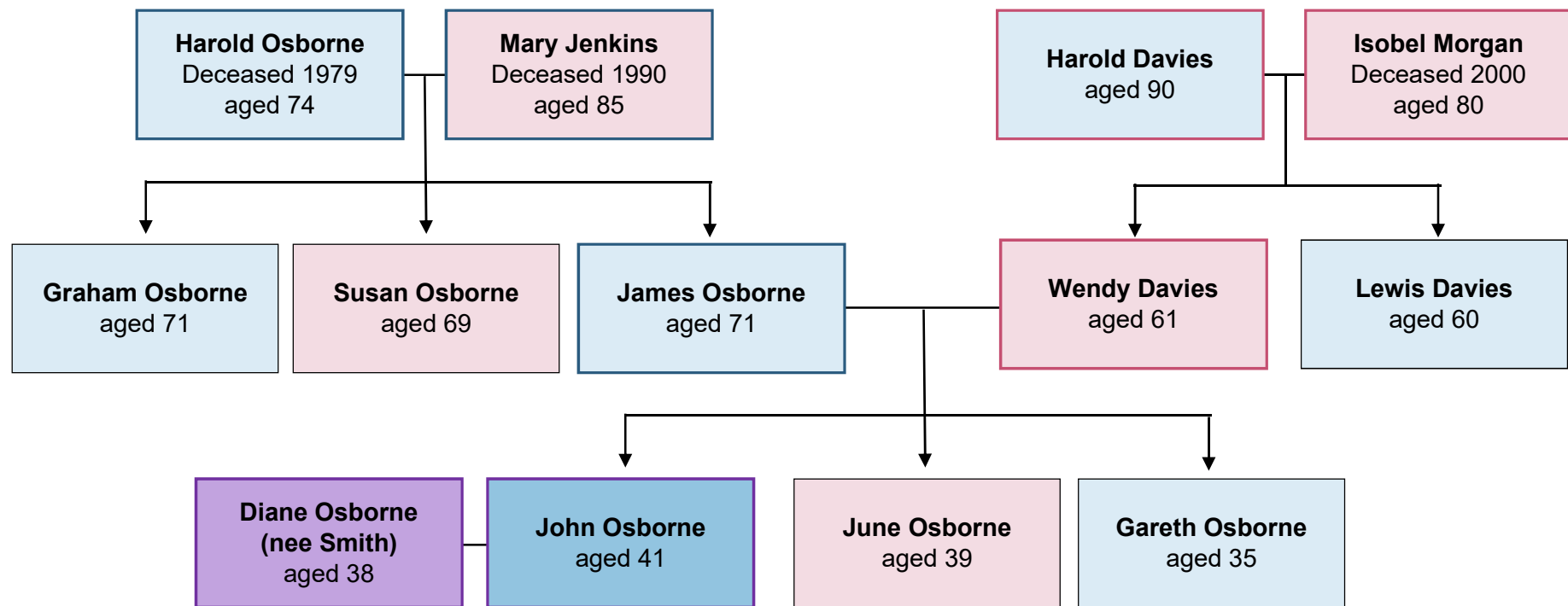
A&B can provide all the care for their child for a significant period of time after the child is placed. They will not need to use a childminder.	
A has overcome her experiences of adversity in childhood and is now emotionally robust.	

VULNERABILITIES	
D experienced some disruption in his childhood which affected his capacity to trust others and rely on others. This continues to affect his relationships.	
C&D have not been able to communicate openly about their childlessness and are unable to ask each other for emotional support.	
C is slightly isolated in her community and does not have a strong circle of friends and family.	
D is often away for long periods of time and C could find it difficult to cope without her friends and family nearby.	
C&D find it difficult to manage their money and will need to adjust to living on one salary.	
C&D find it difficult to manage their stress and have no established outlet for managing stress.	
D is currently on medication for depression. He does not feel that talking therapies would be of benefit to him.	

Exercises 11 and 12, on the following page, are examples of a Family Tree (**Genogram**) and Support network (**Ecomap**) that you will be asked to produce as part of your assessment.

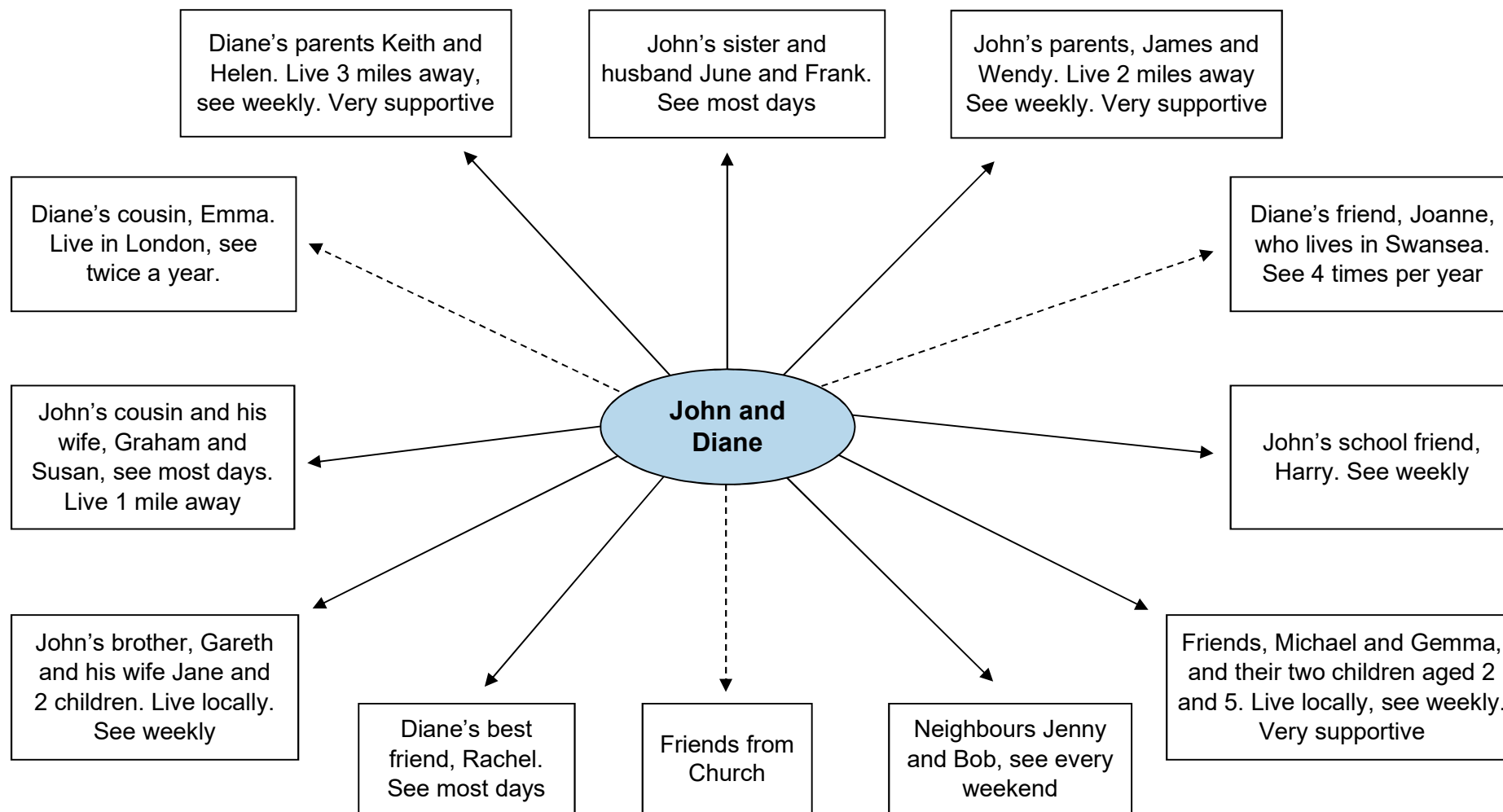
EXERCISE 11

John Osborne Family Tree



EXERCISE 12

Eco Map – John and Dianne Osborne



EXERCISE 13

What is PACE Parenting?

Many adoptive children have come from home environments that have not consistently met their needs, and throughout their lives they are likely to have experienced trauma and loss. It's not unusual for them to have developed certain coping mechanisms that can affect their behaviour and the way in which they respond to difficulties.

Due to this, there may be occasions when they have difficulty in accepting their adopted parent's attempts to form relationships with them. These 'attachment difficulties' can affect a child's self-esteem, confidence and ability to trust. Do not be alarmed as there are several parenting techniques that you can use that will promote a feeling of safety for your child or children.

One of these techniques is called PACE parenting. So, what does PACE stand for?

Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy

PACE parenting is a way for you to therapeutically engage in conversation with your child. It's about building up a positive parent-child relationship and reminding them that you'll always be there for them. It helps promote secure attachments and allows children to reflect on their thoughts and behaviours without being judged.

When speaking about PACE, the child's "inner self" is often mentioned, which refers to what is going on inside the child and the reasons for why they behave the way that they do. PACE parenting is a secure and reflective approach that concentrates on the *whole* child, not just the child's behaviour.

Playfulness: Being playful together helps the bond between the two of you grow. It's about having fun with your child and shows them it's okay to have fun with their parents and promotes a positive connection between you both. Playfulness can allow them to feel safe without any of the scary feelings that the child is used to accompany safeness.

Acceptance: The parent shows an understanding of the child's behaviour and accepts them, even though they are behaving this way. You're showing them that you are not judging them, however where needed, you will show them appropriate consequences for their behaviour. These consequences should not include humiliating or shaming. It's important to let the child learn that they are accepted just how they are. So, this means accepting the *motivation* of their behaviour, not their negative behaviour itself.

Curiosity: Being a curious parent will help gather an understanding of your child's behaviour, which in turn will help with *acceptance*. Having a good knowledge of their history allows you to accept who your child is and understand why they might behave the way they do.

Often, your child will not understand why they behave the way they do and it's important to be *curious* about their behaviour without using an angry tone. Try using a calmer tone and instead of asking "what did you do that for?" which they may not be able to answer, try questions that will demonstrate curiosity such as "I wonder why....", or "What do you think was happening to make you do that?"

Empathy: Being empathetic allows the child to feel safe with you and share their deeper feelings without the threat of being judged. Real empathy comes from the heart and can be used to relieve feelings of shame instead of concentrating on praise. You could use phrases like "That must have been really hard for you to tell me" or "I want you to realise I do understand what it is you are going through". Try to reflect how the child is feeling, if the child is sad, be sad with them. This shows that you understand how difficult what they are going through is, and that you are with them.

EXERCISE 14

Positive Parenting Exercise

Purpose: Part of your adoption assessment will include preparation to parent and care for a child that has not had the easiest start in life. You'll attend training, do plenty of reading and complete tasks that prepare and teach parents for the arrival of a child. PACE is something that we go through in greater depth to equip you with the skills in order for you to use this technique in your daily life with your child.

Using the information contained in Exercise 13 this activity provides an opportunity to think about how you might respond to some of the difficulties listed below. Give it a go but do not worry if you do not have all the answers at this stage. There will be further opportunities to learn more as you go through the assessment process.

Write ideas of how you would manage these behaviours below using positive parenting strategies and PACE techniques. More than 1 intervention may be useful in each scenario.

If possible, you should add some detail/explanation of how you will implement the technique e.g. don't just write 'role models' but add in who, how and why.

- Child aged 3 has a tantrum in the supermarket as she wants sweets
- Teenage children continually argue about how loud they play music
- Child aged 6 wanders off with your neighbours
- Child aged 8 swears at an old man in the street who is in his way
- Child aged 5 throwing his toys and screaming that he won't pick them up
- Children aged 2 and 4 continually run into the house with muddy shoes on
- Twelve-year-old has no friends at school
- Child aged 7 becomes withdrawn or aggressive in the run up to Christmas
- Four-year-old is often sick after parties
- Child aged 4 won't stay in bed at night-time
- Eight-year-old has a tummy ache before school every Monday and Wednesday
- Child aged 6 won't get dressed in the morning
- Child any age writes on his/her bedroom wall.

EXERCISE 15

A fraught day in Year 5

Purpose: to provide an opportunity to think about how you might parent a child ‘therapeutically’.

It has been a fraught day in school. The children, who are all aged 9 to 10 years, have all been getting tired as it’s the end of term. Joseph and Andrew – who are usually best friends – have had a fight. The teacher calls the boys’ parents in at home time and tells them what went on.

Joseph: Parent speaks to Joseph as they leave school.

Parent: I’m really not happy Joseph, I don’t like to be met by the teacher telling me you have been fighting. What on earth got into you? I thought that you and Andrew were friends?

Joseph: I hate him. I’m never going to be his friend again.

Parent: What has got into you today? (Joseph looks down and doesn’t answer)

Parent: Just get in the car Joseph and we’ll talk about this. I’m not happy, you need to tell me what happened.

Joseph: It was Andrew, I didn’t do anything; I hate him.

Parent: It takes two to fight.

Joseph: He called me thick.

Parent: Well, that doesn’t sound like Andrew, what did you do to make him say that?

Joseph: I DIDN’T DO ANYTHING storms off

Questions to consider

- How did it feel being Joseph?
- What could his parent have done differently?
- Why did it escalate?
- What would have been the impact of this on:
 - Joseph’s self-esteem?
 - His trust in his parent?
 - His relationship with Andrew?
 - Class the next day?

Andrew: Andrew and his parent walk home together. Judging that it isn’t the right time to talk about school. Mum/Dad engages Andrew in a game that he likes, making up words based on car licence plates. Andrew enjoys this and has a drink and a snack when he gets home. He wants to watch TV but Mum/Dad suggests that they figure out what was difficult at school today first. Andrew protests but Mum/Dad persevere.

Parent: It sounds like today has been hard. Maybe we can talk about what went wrong? (Andrew hides under a cushion but is listening)

Parent: I wonder if you were worried about something today at school?

Andrew: No. I was just tired.

Parent: Ah it's hard to manage school when you're tired isn't it? It sounds like you were feeling cross too?

Andrew: I was cross with Joseph, he was being really annoying.

Parent: That sounds difficult, you guys normally get on so well. I wonder why it was hard today?

Andrew: He was being a pain. He got more spellings right than me and he kept reminding me. I told him to shut up but he wouldn't.

Parent: That sounds irritating, no wonder you got angry with him. You tried so hard to learn your spellings this week. Were you upset that you got some wrong?

Andrew: Yes, I wanted to get them all right like last week. Joseph had his name on the board and I didn't. He wouldn't let me forget it.

Parent: I can understand why you felt cross if he was teasing you. I wonder why he did that, it doesn't sound like Joseph.

Andrew: He was really pleased that he got all his spellings right.

Parent: I expect he was, he finds spelling harder than you doesn't he?

Andrew: Yes and I was cross that he got more than me. I told him he was thick and he must have cheated.

Parent: Ah you were cross so you said mean things to him?

Andrew: Yes I was really cross. Then we started fighting. It was my fault wasn't it.

Parent: It does sound like it. I expect Joseph was upset and then he got cross too.

Andrew: Then we fought – do you think he will stay mad at me?

Parent: He might for a while, I wonder what might help?

Andrew: Do you think I can phone him? But what if he won't come to the phone?

Parent: Yes, it might be hard for him to talk to you right now. I wonder what else you could do?

Andrew: I know. I could give him one of my trading cards. I know which one he needs. Can I take it round to him?

Parent: I tell you what, I need to take Bracken out for a walk later. You can help me and we can post it through their letterbox if we go that way around. You'll have to miss TV tonight but it would help me and Joseph would know that you are sorry tonight.

Andrew: OK I guess.

Questions to consider

- How did it feel being Andrew?
- What was different?
- What would have been the impact of this on:
 - Andrew's self-esteem?
 - His trust in his parent?
 - His relationship with Joseph?
 - Class the next day?

EXERCISE 16

Pace Exercise (2)

Purpose: PACE stands for Patience, Aceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. It is a way of responding to children who have experienced past difficulties and need help to manage their feelings and emotions. The exercise below is designed to help you to think about how you might parent a child using these qualities. Your social worker will talk more with you about PACE during your assessment and there will be further opportunities for learning.

For each example below think about where the child is developmentally. How might the parent maintain an attitude of PACE with these children

Robert is nine years old and very controlling. He struggles when his parents try to make sense of his experience, tending to get hyperactive and silly. Sometimes, however, when they have helped him to calm down, he can be more mature and tell them what is going on for him. If they accept and empathise with him, so he feels understood, he can think about how he has behaved, recognising and having empathy for others he may have hurt. He wants to make amends
Noah is 14 years old and is struggling with school and has few friends. At home he tends to stay close to his parents, ensuring that they are attending to him by talking to them all the time. He can get emotionally aroused very quickly and will have major outbursts of temper which can be prolonged. He can also get over-excited very quickly, and potentially nice events can get spoiled as a consequence. Noah struggles to talk about how he is feeling. When they try, he tends to shout at his parents and become very silly.
Eloise is 11 years old. She has always struggled with her mother and will reject her attempts to connect, aiming physical and verbal abuse at her. She quickly experiences shame, and so any attempt to correct her generally ends in a major outburst or her running away. When mum expresses empathy for how hard Eloise is finding things, Eloise will shout at her to go away and leave her alone. At times, Eloise can be quite perceptive, noticing, for example, that her brother was upset about not being allowed out to meet his friends because he was worried that they wouldn't invite him another time.
Rachel aged 5 years is living with her aunt following the death of her mother. When she cries, she allows her aunt to comfort her and she has been able to tell her that she has a big worry that maybe her mum died because she was naughty. When her aunt expressed how sad it was to have a big worry, Rachel snuggled into her.

EXERCISE 17

Interview with an Adopted Person

Purpose: In order to better understand that adoption is a lifelong process, it is helpful to talk to an adopted person and listen to their experiences. Most people find that if they ask around, they will be able to find an adopted person in their network. If you can't, your social worker should be able to put you in touch with someone you could talk to.

With their permission here are some ideas for questions you could ask them and information it would be useful for you to find out. These questions are just a guide; put them into your own words and don't feel you have to stick to them rigidly. If the person is talking about their experiences or feelings just listen to what they have to say and maybe use some of the questions as a prompt.

- How old were you when you were placed with your parents and adopted?
- Do you remember being told you were adopted?
- Did your parents or extended family talk with you about being adopted?
- Did your friends at school know you were adopted?
- Do you talk to people now about being adopted?
- Do you know anything about why you were adopted? How did you find out this information?
- Have you searched for your birth family? If you did was this for any particular reason? How did you find the process?
- If you haven't searched was this for any particular reason? Do you think you would consider searching in the future?
- Do you think about being adopted much?
- Is being adopted an important part of who you are?

Review

If you do have an opportunity to speak to someone who was adopted it might be helpful to write down your thoughts and the things you learnt, or you feel might be helpful to you as you become and adoptive parent.

EXERCISE 18

Supporting Letters/Statements

Purpose: Evidence-based Assessment – Skills etc

Whilst you are undergoing your assessment you may wish to collect supporting letters from friends, colleagues or people you have known in a voluntary capacity. You may want to include more than one letter. Some letters may only cover one point whilst others may cover many.

You will need to tell people writing letters to say how long they have known you and in what capacity. Ideally when they make statements it would be helpful if they could give examples, such as “He is very conscious of a child safety and always makes sure my son holds his hand when he crosses the road”.

You can use the referees you have already nominated. They will then be able to give you a confidential reference as well as this more open reference.

Ideally the letters should cover as many of the following areas as possible:

- Your ability to communicate effectively
- Your capacity to work as a member of a team
- Examples of how you have advocated for a child or a young person
- Some comments or examples reflecting your ability to stick to a task
- Your capacity to cope during a period of stress
- Your experience of working with/caring for children of different ages, with comment being made about your particular skills
- Any experience/contact you have with children or people who have disabilities
- Your sensitivity to people from different cultures to your own
- Your ability to maintain confidentiality
- Your appreciation of the effects of discrimination
- Your ability to cope with difficult behaviours in children
- Your ability to keep children safe
- Your role as part of a support network
- Your ability to accept help and advice