

Child Specific Issues for Children with Trauma

Discipline Strategies for Children with Trauma Histories: Why is it so different?

This workshop explores the implications of a child's early history, and how it offers insight into what children need in order to build secure relationships with caregivers. The presenter will discuss some of the common behaviour concerns frequently exhibited by children in care, and the trauma informed/attachment-based responses that have proven effective. Participants will better understand how discipline is different for children with early trauma and how best to support parents and caregivers who are struggling with difficult behaviors in their home.

Understanding and Advocating for the School Needs of Children With Trauma and Relational Losses

Children who have experienced early trauma and caregiver losses often encounter difficulties in their school environment. Multiple factors contribute to children feeling emotionally unsafe, and unable to tolerate the feelings of shame, and lack of competence, that they encounter in this setting. This workshop will assist professionals in assessing whether a child is able to tolerate their learning environment, interpreting a child's school based behaviors accurately and advocating for interventions that meet the child's needs. Successful adaptations for children with trauma will be explored.

Responding to Eating Difficulties in Children with Early Trauma and Relational Losses

This workshop will address common concerns for children whose early experiences included food deprivation or food scarcity. Participants will understand how to look at the relationship between current feeding challenges and how they relate to safety, attachment and relational security. Attachment based strategies for responding to difficult eating and feeding behaviors will be presented and participants will hear creative interventions for shifting a child's beliefs and experiences of eating.

Responding to Sleep Difficulties in Children with Early Trauma and Relational Losses

This workshop will demonstrate relationships between early trauma, implicit memories, and sleep issues. Environmental adaptation in early brain development prepares children for the perceived risks involved with sleep resulting in behavioural patterns that are hard to shift. Participants will learn how to intervene with trauma informed, attachment based interventions when children persist in maladaptive sleep patterns based on early experiences.

Therapeutic Interventions

Overview of Parent-Child Therapies and Adoption Specific Services for Adoptive Families

A Child's Song provides a variety of services that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of all members of adoptive and foster families. We offer education, consultation and therapeutic services for adoptive families and professionals caring for adoptees or adoptive parents. As a therapeutic team, we believe that parents are the key to the healing and transformation of their children. This workshop will cover all of the available services, and the rationale for why these services meet the unique needs of our families. Professionals will leave with a better understanding of what service to refer families to, when the service will be most effective, and what to expect in terms of outcomes.

Professional Workshops for Social Workers

Our team at A Child's Song provides adoption competent clinical counselling, consultation, education, psychoeducational assessment, occupational therapy, mentorship programs and special events. We offer services for adoptive families, foster parents, adoptees, children & youth in care, school professionals, social workers, and adoption professionals.



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Professional Workshops for Social Workers



Transition Workshops

Transitioning Children from Foster Care to Adoption: Best Practices

Transitioning a child from foster care to adoption is a complex process with significant implications for the future development of the new parent-child relationships. Planning transitions based on current “best practice” can be slow, confusing and at times discouraging for those involved. Participants will receive new information that will assist them in understanding the needs of children and caregivers in the transition process and a set of guiding principles to inform their decision making.

Transitioning Babies Toddlers in Foster Care and Adoption (0-3)

Given what we know about how babies and toddlers experience big losses, particularly the loss of a primary caregiver, our transition practices need to reflect this understanding. Practical information about best practices for this age group will be discussed. The Guiding Principles of Transitioning will be applied specifically to planning transitions for babies and toddlers from a trauma informed perspective. (Note: this workshop is best taken together with ‘Grief and Loss for Babies and Toddlers.’

Preparing Older Children for Adoption (4-11)

This workshop will explore the uneven development of children who have experienced early loss and trauma and how this impacts preparation for adoption. Talking to children about adoption requires a level of attunement to their complex experiences. Participants will learn how to offer clear, direct and compassionate explanations the help children to form connections between experiences from the past, present and future. How to assess readiness will also be discussed.

Trauma & Loss Workshops

Understanding Trauma and the Brain with the Experiential Brain Architecture Game

This workshop is an experiential activity that builds understanding of the powerful role of experiences on early brain development—what promotes it, what derails it, with what consequences for society. The goal is to build a brain that is as tall as possible, which represents functionality, and as sturdy as possible, which represents the ability to withstand stresses. Weights must be hung from the structure of the brain when life hands out stressors. Will the foundation withstand these weights, or will it collapse? Applications of this information to the development of trauma informed interventions will be discussed.

‘When Kids Don’t Have the Words’: Responding to Preverbal Trauma in Older Children

Children who experienced preverbal trauma and loss (ages of 0-3) carry these memories with them long after they find safety and security in permanent homes. Preverbal trauma is stored in the body and is easily triggered through senses like vision, touch, taste, smell as well as the auditory and motor systems. This workshop will provide a deeper understanding of how and why children’s preverbal trauma continues to impact important areas of their functioning. Participants will leave with a greater confidence in their ability to recognize and respond effectively when children are triggered. Current therapeutic interventions will also be explained.

Big Feelings, Little Bodies: Understanding Grief and Loss for Infants and Toddlers

Grief and loss for infants and toddlers is a lot like big feelings in little bodies that have limited options for expression. Children who experience loss during preverbal stages of development grieve deeply even though they are unable to talk about their experiences. We see this grief in the way they behave, the way they sleep and eat as well as how they relate to others. Our understanding of the impact of grief and loss on a child’s development informs how we need to respond. This workshop focuses on effective response from caregivers that help infants and toddlers regulate and process their experiences.

Matching Workshops

Trauma Informed Matching In Adoption: Strategies for Assessment

Understanding the implications of how an adoptive parents’ historical trauma will interact with a child’s early experiences is crucial in successful matching. New research on the impact of trauma on brain development, and subsequent relationship dynamics, can offer insight into the more subtle factors that are difficult to identify and assess in the matching process. A prospective adoptive parents’ unresolved history with mental illness, parent child relationships, experiences of fear and shame, as well as abuse and neglect, can result in blind spots that can impact how they view and understand a child’s behaviours. Identifying these blind spots can inform matching decisions and how to support prospective adoptive parents in finding early resolution.

Assessing the Child for Best Outcomes in Matching and Transitioning

This workshop was designed to provide social workers with practical instruction on how to assess children prior to considering a permanency placement as well as throughout the transition process. Participants will learn how to identify key aspects of child development and current functioning to be considered when determining the best fit between child and caregivers. Learning how to identify a child’s baseline of functioning, how to monitor changes to the baseline and then draw conclusions from the observations will be discussed. This workshop will also include a brief look at situations when a higher level of assessment is required and how to access those services.

Special Considerations in Matching: Race, Culture, Religion, and Family Composition

Matching, in adoption and permanency planning, requires a depth of understanding how race, culture, religion and family composition factors impact not only the child, but the whole adoptive family, post-placement. This workshop will explore some of the tough questions about how race matters, as well as how religious or cultural beliefs should influence matches. We will also explore how different family compositions such as one or two parents, heterosexual or same-sex couples and sibling groups might also impact placement success.

Birth Family Workshops

Understanding the Complexity of Birth Family Relationships

Many children in foster care have the opportunity to remain connected to members of their biological family, and we know that these relationships are so very important to the child’s sense of identity and wellbeing. Navigating the specifics of visitation with birth family can be very stressful for both professionals and caregivers. This workshop explores the different ways children can remain connected to birth families as well as some basic principles for establishing visitation arrangements that are child-focused with respect to all areas of development. It will also strategies for caregivers to support children in transitioning before and after visits.

Birth Family Contact in the Adoption Process

Assessing and planning for long term birth family relationships is an important aspect of creating successful permanency plans for children. This workshop will discuss the role that birth family relationships can play in the adoption process and how to factor in birth family contact throughout the matching, transition and post placement stages of adoption. Participants will learn practical strategies for developing effective birth family contact plans for children transitioning into adoption.

Placement Crisis Workshops

Managing Crisis Post-Placement: Recognizing Warning Signs and Responding Effectively

Crisis in a family, post-placement, can at times build slowly, with awareness of the increasing tension, while other times, can appear with what seems to be no warning signs at all. It is important to assess new formed families for indicators that the placement is in trouble and to continue reinforcing conversations about permanency. Understanding the reactions of children to the process of attachment, and what this feels like for adoptive parents, can have a significant impact on responsiveness to serious challenges. This workshop will provide a framework for recognizing crisis indicators as well as effective tools for responding to both parents and children, in the midst of crisis.

Crisis of Adoption Breakdown: Critical Needs of the Child in a Transition-Out Plan

When all resource and support options have been exhausted, and extenuating circumstances are leading to a placement breakdown, it is important for social workers to have a process they can follow that will allow them to support all parties. It is critical that a child’s grief is adequately acknowledged and that experiences of closure are provided for the child and caregivers. Participants of this workshop will be provided with guidelines that will help them support caregivers in providing responses to children that minimize long-term relational consequences for the child.

‘Please Move These Kids’: Responding to Foster Caregiver Crisis

Every social worker dreads the call from a caregiver in what appeared to be a stable placement indicating that they are in crisis. At this point foster parents are often indicating that they don’t know how to manage the child’s behaviour or are insistent the child be moved immediately. Managing this call with confidence and expertise has a significant impact on the outcome of these situations. Participants will be guided through a discussion on how to respond to the emotional experience of the caregiver, how to validate their concerns and engage them in a problem solving process that will improve outcomes for the child.

Care of the Professional Workshops

When Social Workers Experience Trauma: Impact of Complex Decision Making

The impact of working with the complexity of human relationships can be heavy, intense and traumatic, leaving social workers feeling at a loss for control or numb to their experience. Left unprocessed, the social worker’s trauma is often mistaken for burnout which leaves the underlying root unresolved. This workshop will provide social workers with a clear understanding of how to recognize symptoms in self and others, preventative tools for both social workers and team leaders that can be readily implemented, and the importance of processing these traumas with evidenced based interventions.