

MODULE VI: MINIMIZING THE TRAUMA OF PLACEMENT

Note Taking Guide

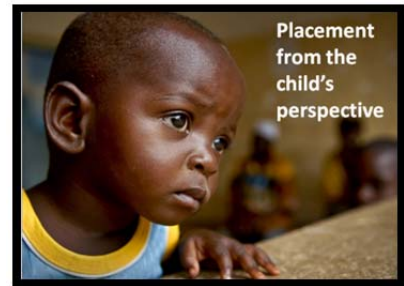
At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain strategies you can use to help a child feel emotionally safe
- Explain how helping the child maintain connections with important people from his past minimizes the trauma of placement
- Describe the kind of information from a child's history that can help determine appropriate parenting strategies

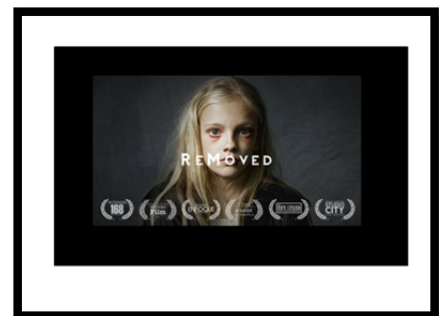
The Trauma of Placement

From a child's perspective, placement means:

- Ruptured relationships
- New people, routines, and rules
- Strangers who have authority over them, without their input
- Labels and stigma



What Trauma Looks Like



Creating Emotional Safety

1. Help them become familiar with the home and community
2. Reassure the child
3. Help the child maintain connections
4. Ask them what makes them feel safe
5. Give them opportunities to express themselves freely
6. Be honest and open in regards to their future
7. Be mindful of transitions and other emotional “hot spots”
(NCTSN, 2007)
8. Know how to address emotional crises



Importance of Gathering Information about the Child

"Being aware of how a behavior emerged from your child's world is likely to be the best way to know how to respond to that behavior" (Hughes & Baylin, 2012).



List three ways you will use the information from this training.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Eddy's Story

Read Eddy's story and underline any information you found helpful in understanding Eddy's behavior:

- Reverts to 'babyish' behaviors when he thinks he is going to get into trouble
- Unresponsive to affection and attempts to avoid it
- Ignores your direction and the house rules
- Leaves the home without asking and stays gone for hours at a time
- Eats whatever he wants whenever he wants
- Destroyed most of the books and toys you have given him
- Screams and tantrums if he isn't able to get your attention right away
- Often smells and appears unkempt

Eddy's Story

Eddy has lived with his mother and grandmother in his grandmother's home for most of his life. His mother is addicted to alcohol, is known to use cocaine, and periodically disappears for weeks at a time, leaving Eddy with his grandmother. Eddy's mother used drugs and alcohol throughout her pregnancy, causing him to develop sensory processing disorder, a condition in which the brain has trouble responding to sensory information. Loud noises, touch, and bright colors all cause Eddy to feel overwhelmed. He would cry inconsolably as an infant when over stimulated and as he got older, he would escape if possible or lash out when he felt "cornered."

When Eddy's mother is home, her approach to parenting Eddy is very unpredictable. Much of the time, she ignores him completely, particularly when she is sleeping after a binge. At other times, she punishes him for even the smallest transgressions, particularly when she has a headache and can't tolerate noise. Eddy's mother will often back off from punishment if Eddy uses baby talk, curls up in a ball, or begins sucking his thumb, because she thinks it's so cute.

Eddy's grandmother is 72 years old, has arthritis, and has difficulty moving around. She typically lets Eddy do what he wants in order to avoid his raging temper tantrums. At times, when she thinks Eddy has been particularly bad, or when she is just plain tired of his behavior, she yells at him and sends him to his room. If he yells back and refuses to go, she will give up and lock herself in her room. On occasion, she has also whipped him.

Eddy's mother's has a boyfriend who occasionally stays in the home. He seems to ignore Eddy until he can't take it anymore, then he will try to "control the kid" by creating and enforcing extremely rigid rules, and physically punishing Eddy for any and all misbehavior. Often when the boyfriend is staying in the home, Eddy will take the family dog, Fred, and roam the neighborhood for much of the day and even into the night.

Food is scarce in the home and Eddy has gone days at a time without eating. The grandmother does the grocery shopping once a month, and often will cook a nice meal when she gets home with the food. Any leftovers are eaten by the boyfriend within a few hours.

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Questions to Ask

History of the Child

1. What is known about the child's prenatal care and birth?
2. Who cared for the child during his first few years of life?
3. What is known about the child's developmental history?
4. Is there any history of abuse, neglect, or any other traumas? If yes, when did these events occur and what is known about them?
5. How has the child done academically and behaviorally in school?
6. Has the child receive any mental health treatment? If yes, What was the treatment and outcomes?
7. Is there a life book?

History of the Birth Family

8. What history is known about the parents? siblings? grandparents and extended family members?
9. Do the parents have a history of drug or alcohol abuse? Do they have any history of traumas?
10. What was the home environment like?

Placement History

11. How many moves or placements has the child had and why did they occur?
12. What were the environments of the previous homes like?

Current State

13. What is the child's current health? Does the child have any medical needs or allergies?
14. Is there any evidence of developmental delays? Any suspected learning difficulties?
15. What parenting strategies work best?
16. Does the child accept and give affection?
17. How would you describe the child's personality and temperament?
18. Are there issues of diversity that need to be discussed?
19. What are the child's strengths? Hobbies?
20. What is the relationship between the child and his birth parents, siblings, and extended family?
21. Who else is important in this child's life and needs to remain connected to this child?

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Michael's Story

Michael, age 12, was removed, along with his two younger sisters, from his single father following repeated episodes of serious physical abuse. He and his sisters were placed with a paternal aunt and uncle. The aunt and uncle want to keep his sisters, but after four months, they asked for Michael to be removed. Michael has refused to acknowledge that the abuse occurred, and wants very much to remain with his father, in his school, and with his circle of neighborhood friends.

Michael's mother abandoned the family when he was five years old, and he has not seen her since. Michael states that he has no memories of his parent's together, but in first grade he drew a picture of a man hitting a woman. When the teacher asked him about it, he said that it was his mother and father. Child protective services was called, but when they interviewed Michael, he said he was just joking. The mother was no longer in the home, and the father denied ever hitting his wife.

At his aunt and uncle's home, Michael refused to follow their rules. His uncle reported that if he even had one beer to drink, Michael would leave the house without permission and stay gone until late into the night. Michael was very protective of his sisters, and would get in arguments with his aunt and uncle if he did not agree with their parenting techniques. Once, Michael got so angry that he pushed his aunt. This is what prompted their request for his removal.

Michael is excellent at soccer and plays on a neighborhood travel team. He is also in the school's art club. He was an A/B student until third grade, when his grades dramatically dropped to D's. He just barely passed the fourth and fifth grades. He has been suspended once for fighting a classmate and he received a red card once playing soccer for deliberately kicking a boy. Michael claims in both instances the other boy made a derogatory remark about his mother.

Childcare for Michael's younger sisters was provided by a neighbor, and Michael would spend a lot of time there as well. He would pick up his sisters from there every day after school, bring them home, and feed them dinner. His father would return from work late at night, and Michael made a great effort to have the girls tucked in bed before he got home. Once his father came home and the girls were asleep, Michael would leave to go to a friend's house or hang out at the local pizza shop. The manager there would pay him cash to do odd jobs around the restaurant.

Michael has been living with you for two days. He has been very moody and has kept to himself. The only time he seems to smile is when he is talking with his sisters on the phone.

After reading Michael's story, brainstorm ways you could help establish emotional safety for Michael.

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Individual Reflection

Please take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned in the Preservice training and how it applies to you. Give this sheet to the agency worker who is completing your homestudy.

1. Think about a time when you felt unsafe as a child. What caused you to feel unsafe? What did it take to make you feel safe again?

2. What thoughts and expectations do you think a child coming into your home will have of you?

3. Consider the scenarios below. Pick one and write about how you would resolve the issue. Note: There is no “right” answer. What is important to remember is to consider how the child will respond to the decision and what course of action, acceptable to you, will be the most supportive to the child.

- a. In most families, each family member has “claimed” a seat at the kitchen table. What if the only seat unclaimed in your home puts the child’s back to the kitchen door, which makes her feel unsafe, and the chair she wants is your 12 year old daughter’s? How would you resolve this issue?

- b. As you are unpacking the child’s suitcase, you find a bedbug. You also note that the blanket the child sleeps with every night, according to the caseworker, is in the suitcase. It is very late at night and the child needs to get to bed. How would you resolve this issue?

- c. A six year old child was just placed with you, and is sharing a room with your three year old daughter. Your three year old – who used to have the room to herself - continually runs in and out of the bedroom, without knocking and without closing the door behind her. The six year old has complained several times, asking for more privacy. How would you resolve this issue?
