

Things I Have Learned Along the Way

By: Sharon Behrens

- **This is a journey you can't take by yourself.**
 - It takes a Healing Team of gatekeepers, knowledgeable providers of medical, psychiatric, developmental services, family and friends.
 - It does take a village to raise a child.
 - It is a task foster and adoptive families take on frequently unprepared for the damage that is uncovered.
- **Find the Team Leader!**
 - They coordinate
 - Mediate with other providers and services
 - Help assess/ keep track of all the complicated services and recommendations.
- A truly **valuable team member** has the ability to know when a consult or referral to another service provider lies in the best interest of the child.
- We learned to **never be afraid to change the players or the plan.**
 - The team had to challenge ourselves to think outside that "standard box" of care.
- Need to learn to live with the knowledge that there are **no quick fixes.**
 - We learned that it can be a bumpy treatment road that plays out over time.
 - It is the commitment of the team to stay in thru all the struggles that builds trust.
- **Trauma informed care is a very specific intervention treatment** that requires:
 - **Well trained professionals** – not just one class and a book!
 - **Thorough understanding of child development.**
 - Need to know what is normal or not able to assess the deviation from it and severity of the damage.
 - Early trauma is **pervasive thru all aspects of:**
 - Childs intellect/development
 - Emotions
 - Quality of interpersonal relationship
 - Physical systems
 - **Effective treatment plans MUST include input from the family and child.**
 - **Power plays** by any member of the team are **counter-productive** in formation of an effective treatment plan.

- **Understand that some things must be believed to be seen.** People who do not believe in the ability to change, heal and be resilient won't look for the different solution or be in it for the long haul.
 - You can't be a member of a healing team.
- Children are very **good observers** of their environment, but **poor interpreters**.
Everything for children is shaded by their early environment.
 - Some triggers: noises, smells, a look, body language, shadows, tone of voice, colors, touch (too tight, too soft), textures (including food), holidays.
- **With expert support never doubt that motivated parents can learn to mediate in the lives of their traumatized children.**
- You need to know the experts and what skills they bring to the plan. There are many well meaning professionals, family and friends that can give very bad advice.
- **I am Teachable!**
 - I can learn to be powerful in the life of my child.
 - Teach me so I can reach my child.
- I love the concept: When we know better we do better.
 - Do not regret failed interventions. It is a process not a failure.
 - We eliminate many techniques but may revisit them later.
 - Patience, Patience with yourself, the child and the family.
- **We ask these children to be resilient, change, be flexible, be open to new ideas and hang in there for the long haul. Then why don't we ask it of ourselves?**
- To go forward we may have to safely re-visit the past.
- A brief moment of kindness may change everything for a child.
- A child of trauma is often not able to differentiate between painful, intrusive medical treatments and the pain inflicted by past abusers.
 - Medical procedures can be used to build trust.
 - Learning the lesson: I can be powerful in my own life.
- **Living in the past, holding tight to the trauma is toxic.**
 - Damage model- Reliving the trauma story thru many therapists.
 - Makes you feel unable. I am my trauma.
 - Challenge model - Live in the now but plan for the future.
 - Leads to healing and hopefulness.
 - I am more than my disabilities or trauma. I am much more.
- *Tomorrow is full of promise.*
- **The World is full of people who can impact in a positive way the life of you and your child.**

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