

Healing Through Assessment and Beyond



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What Led Us to Our Assessment Process



- We had always served families after adoption, but we were observing that parents were struggling more and differently and it wasn't "only" adoption issues
- We began learning more about trauma and loss through reading articles and attending seminars focused on the neuroscience of that experience
- We entered into a federal research grant with VCU to explore the intersection between adoption, trauma and attachment and from that research – developed assessment and treatment protocols

What Does our Assessment Include?



- **Psychosocial Interview**
- **Child Interview**
- **Standardized instruments**
 - Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Screening**
 - Short Sensory Profile**
 - Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales**
 - Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children**
 - Parenting Stress Index or**
 - Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents**
- **Marshack Interaction Method**

Psychosocial Interview



- Engages parents in active role to explore and assess
- Use large flip chart – display during interview
- Begins child’s history in utero
- Work slowly and methodically over a child’s history through to current age
- Allow for “AHA moments” with parents
- Internal working model (parent led)

Child Interview



- Includes a combination of question/answer, art, and play depending on age of the child
- Explores child's specific feelings about adoption/understanding of their adoption story
- Looks for adoption themes (following the 7 Core Issues)

Standardized Instruments



- **Luria Nebraska Neuropsychological Screening**
- **Short Sensory Profile**
- **Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales**
- **Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children**
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Marshack Interaction Method



- A structured technique for observing and assessing the relationship between two individuals. The MIM evaluates the parent's capacity: to set limits and to provide an appropriately ordered environment (*Structure*), to engage the child in interaction while being attuned to the child's state and reactions (*Engagement*), to meet the child's needs for attention, soothing, and care (*Nurture*), and to support and encourage the child's efforts to achieve at a developmentally appropriate level (*Challenge*). At the same time it allows assessment of the child's ability to respond to the parent's efforts. The MIM is also the beginning assessment for Theraplay ©.

What Did We Learn?



- **Parents are the best “healers” for their children**
- **Children are uniquely resilient and have ongoing capacities to change and grow – even following traumatic histories and even when they are older**
- **Focus on the family system and focus on parents as responsible and in charge of family health lead to more positive outcomes for child, parent, and family**

Theraplay ©



- Theraplay © is a short-term, attachment-based intervention utilizing non-symbolic, interactional play to re-create experiences of secure attachment formation between parent and child. The interactive sequences are carefully structured by the therapist to make possible the pleasure of being together and shared enjoyment in the child's mastery. These elements of shared positive emotions may be crucial in restructuring the attachment relationship towards greater organization and security. Core Concepts consist of interaction, here and now experience, adult guidance, attunement, right brain language, multisensory experience, and playfulness.

www.theraplay.org

Family Attachment Narrative Therapy



- Our treatment approach is gentle and nonintrusive, yet intensive and powerful. The program is guided by the belief that parents are the primary healing agents for children, and builds on parent knowledge about the child's internal motivations. Our therapists train parents to create narratives that increase feelings of security, address issues in the child's history and help the child reach new conclusions about his or her life experiences.

With the necessary support, parents are able to attune to their child and provide the sensitive, caring experiences missed in their early years. This helps the child take a new perspective on life and provides a pathway for an improved future. Parents, along with the therapists, create four types of attachment narratives, unique to the child.

- Claiming — Used to communicate that from the beginning the child deserved love and care. Also used to impart family traditions and history.
- Developmental — Helps the child to progress properly through necessary stages of development.
- Trauma — Addresses trauma history and helps the child gain a new understanding of life events.
- Successful child — Teaches positive core standards for behavior.

Psychosocial Interview



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Other Resources



- Dr. Bruce Perry (www.childtrauma.org)
- Dr. Daniel Seigel (www.drdanielseigel.com)
- Dr. Bessel van der Kolk (www.traumacenter.org)
- Dr. Joyce Pavao (www.joycemaguirepavao.com)
- Dr. Karyn Purvis (www.empoweredtoconnect.org)
- Jayne E. Schooler (jayeschool@aol.com)
- National Center for Trauma and Loss in Children (www.starr.org/training/tlc/)
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (www.nctsnet.org)
- Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov)