

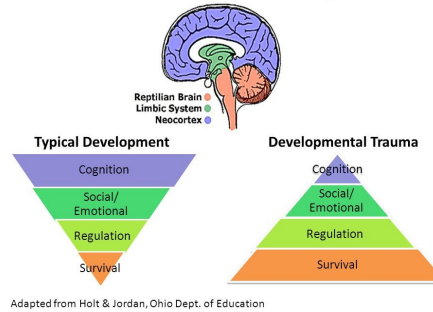


# Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland & Macomb Counties

## Complex Trauma and It's Impact on Education

Complex trauma is described as the combined problem of children exposed to multiple traumatic events and how that exposure impacts the child both in the short and long-term. Trauma can be experienced in a number of ways and includes children who've experienced natural disasters, physical/emotional/sexual abuse, emotional or physical neglect, children who've lived in households where drug use and/or mental health issues are present, children who've witnessed domestic violence, and children who've lost a parent either via death or incarceration. Each of these traumas are referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACE's. Research suggests that with each ACE a child experiences, their brain becomes altered, and affects the youth's academic process, specifically their memory and literacy—leading them to not recognize social cues and to alter the responses that they have in social settings.

Trauma & Brain Development



As can be seen in the picture above, typical brain development leads to persons that function day to day based on their ability to think rationally about situations they find themselves in. These people have developed a healthy ability to use their cognitive abilities to navigate situations and make the best decision / respond in the most appropriate way. On the other hand, persons who experienced trauma function day to day in survival mode. While these individuals may be extremely bright, they respond from a place of survival and protection of self. Thus, when someone who's experienced a number of childhood traumas feels threatened, they respond based on their survival instinct— they fight, they flee, or they freeze— whatever they feel intrinsically motivated to do to protect themselves.

Studies show that 30-50% of youth residing in urban areas have experienced four or more ACE's. These experiences lead to children that are hyper-vigilant, aggressive, mistrustful, and oppositional.

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## Orchards Children's Services

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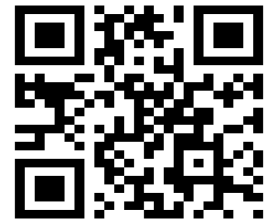
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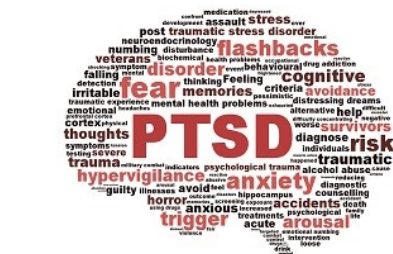
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More information on the Post Adoption Resource Center  
313-530-9746

[PARC-orchards.org](http://PARC-orchards.org)



The Post Adoption Resource Center is operated by Orchards Children's Services and funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.



# Complex Trauma and It's Impact on Education, Continued from page 1

It is imperative that schools become trauma-competent, and as foster and adoptive parents, you are the primary advocate for these children. Here are some suggestions on things you can discuss with your youth's teacher and school personnel:

1. It is important for teachers and school personnel to understand that the threats experienced by someone who's been traumatized can be invisible and / or can be something that to anyone else would be perceived as a completely normal situation. It is imperative to first, not see these children's behaviors as something they are doing to you, rather they are protecting themselves from what they are perceiving as a threat. Their behavior is not a personal attack!
2. Teachers and school personnel must accept that they are being given the opportunity to help a child learn what it feels like to truly feel safe and secure. By having intentional interactions with youth who've experienced trauma teachers have the ability to create an environment where these children can process their life experiences, develop a strong connection to a person that is not going to hurt them, and help them to work towards developing healthy attachments.
3. In order to support youth who have experienced trauma, it will be beneficial for teachers and school personnel to re-think discipline when interacting with these children. At first glance these children appear to need structure and consequences for their actions. However, when linked with the trauma that they've experienced and a better understanding of why these children respond the way they do creative "discipline" techniques can and should be put into place. Examples of "discipline" techniques that could be used could include allowing a child who appears to have been triggered to go to the office and assist an administrative staff he / she has a connection. Another option could be allowing a youth that struggles with even getting his or her school day started to tend to a classroom / school pet. These simple gestures can go a long way in decreasing the heightened need to protect themselves these children can feel, without creating a major distraction in the classroom.

Trauma and it's effect on behavior and biology is a relatively new discovery. Thus, many school districts have not had the opportunity to study it and effectively train their staff. Nevertheless, one study, of a school in San Francisco, showed that once school personnel at a local elementary became trauma informed their suspension rate dropped by 89%! This is big stuff that we, as parents and social workers, need to be talking about. We have an obligation to the youth entrusted in our care to be their voice and their biggest advocates!

If you would like more information related to trauma, it's impact on development and / or education, or feel like you need support to help you have a conversation with your child's school please feel free to contact the Post Adoption Resource Center at 313-530-9746 or visit [www.parc-orchards.org](http://www.parc-orchards.org).



# What is Mindfulness?

# Mindfulness Activities

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Breathing

Being able to control your breathing can help you take control of your thoughts and emotions, too. Slow breathing helps reduce feelings of stress, increases positive emotions, and creates a sense of calm. It's really an important component to practicing your mindfulness. Sometimes, just focusing on your breath can help you get refocused and recharged.

To practice proper breathing you should:

- Sit in a comfortable position
- Relax your abdomen muscles
  - Slowly breathe in
- Hold your breath at the top for just a second
  - Slowly breathe out
- Close your eyes if it helps you get focused

Sometimes using a Breathe Board can help you focus on your breathing. It is a picture that you follow as you breathe in and breathe out. The breathe board makes your breathing practice more concrete. There are several different types of breathe boards.

Practice each breathe board by following the lines with your finger as you breathe in and out.

BREATHE IN BREATHE OUT BREATHE OUT BREATHE IN

BREATHE IN BREATHE OUT

**Mindfulness 5-4-3-2-1**

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Mindfulness is defined as a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations; it is often used as a therapeutic technique. Mindfulness activities are something that could be used to assist a child who's been triggered work towards calming him/herself down. Additionally, mindfulness is a good technique for those caring for youth who've been traumatized to calm themselves down when the youth is acting out in a way that is making the care provider feel personally attacked.

The activities to the left are some ways in which youth, and adults, can work towards achieving mindfulness. Deep breathing and / or grounding exercises are excellent ways in which to help you, or someone else, re-focus on the here and now. Oftentimes, when youth are triggered, their minds begin to race, they begin operating in that survival mode, and seemingly minor incidences explode into something so extreme that it becomes very difficult to reign in the youth and their behaviors. Likewise, when parents / care providers are feeling attacked and disrespected it can be easy for them to react out of anger, further exacerbating an already tenuous situation.

Focusing on one's breathing, or focusing on what one can be connected with via the senses (grounding exercises), can work towards re-focusing energy. Additionally, breathing and grounding exercises can help one to get to place where they are able to communicate in way that is rooted in what is really occurring in the present moment versus letting their mind run wild. Likewise, it can help one respond in a way that is coming from a place of care and concern versus a place of anger and resentment. It is important to discuss ways in which mindfulness can be used as a coping mechanism, prior to a behavioral episode occurring, and if used properly, could contribute to a decrease in outside intervention. For more information on mindfulness activities and how to use them please contact PARC at [www.parc-orchards.org](http://www.parc-orchards.org).



## Upcoming Events

Back by popular demand, on June 8, 2017 from 5:30—8:00 PM, the Post Adoption Resource Center, in partnership with Families on the Move, will be hosting Dr. Sabrina Jackson at Westminster Church in Detroit, MI. Dr. Jackson will be doing a presentation on her Essential Colors Model. Essential Colors allows people to not only understand how they are wired, but it also teaches them how to deal with people who are wired differently. When you know/understand this, you learn how to better interact with them. Essential Colors helps you with your relationships, parent/child relationships, sibling relationships, extended family relationships, and friend connections. Make a decision to improve all of your relationships and live your life in color! Please join us for an evening to discuss how this model can help you as you interact with not only your children, but everyone around you! If you would like more information or to RSVP to the event, please contact us at 313-530-9746 or visit our website at [www.parc-orchards.org](http://www.parc-orchards.org). We'd love to see you there!



On August 4, 2017 from 10:00 AM—1:00 PM, the Post Adoption Resource Center will be hosting an event at the Outdoor Adventure Center in Detroit, MI. Located on Detroit's riverfront in the historic Globe Building, with the Dequindre Cut Trail running through its backyard, the Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) gives you a taste of Michigan's great outdoors in the heart of the city. Experience exciting outdoor adventures with hands-on activities, exhibits and simulators -- walk behind and touch a waterfall, step into a fishing boat and reel in a big fish,

hit the trail on a mountain bike or snowmobile, and much more. At the OAC, you'll learn about how the DNR manages state parks, forests, wildlife and fish as you climb the roots and explore the canopy of a massive bur oak tree, hop aboard a real airplane, and see what's swimming in our aquarium. This event is free for adoptive families, lunch will be provided, as well as, an interactive training on wildlife found within the city of Detroit. For more information or to RSVP to this event, please contact us at 313-530-9746 or visit our website at [www.parc-orchards.org](http://www.parc-orchards.org).

### Upcoming Support Groups

July 11, 2017 6:00—8:00 PM 42140 Van Dyke STE 206 Sterling Heights, MI 48314	July 17, 2017 5:30—7:30 PM 24901 Northwestern Hwy. Southfield, MI 48075	August 8, 2017 6:00—8:00 PM 42140 Van Dyke STE 206 Sterling Heights, MI 48314
August 21, 2017 5:30—7:30 PM 24901 Northwestern Hwy. Southfield, MI 48075	September 12, 2017 6:00—8:00 PM 42140 Van Dyke STE 206 Sterling Heights, MI 48314	September 18, 2017 5:30—7:30 PM 24901 Northwestern Hwy. Southfield, MI 48075

Dates are subject to change. If you are interested in attending any of the noted support groups or would like more information, please contact PARC at 313-530-9746 or by email at [www.parc-orchards.org](http://www.parc-orchards.org).