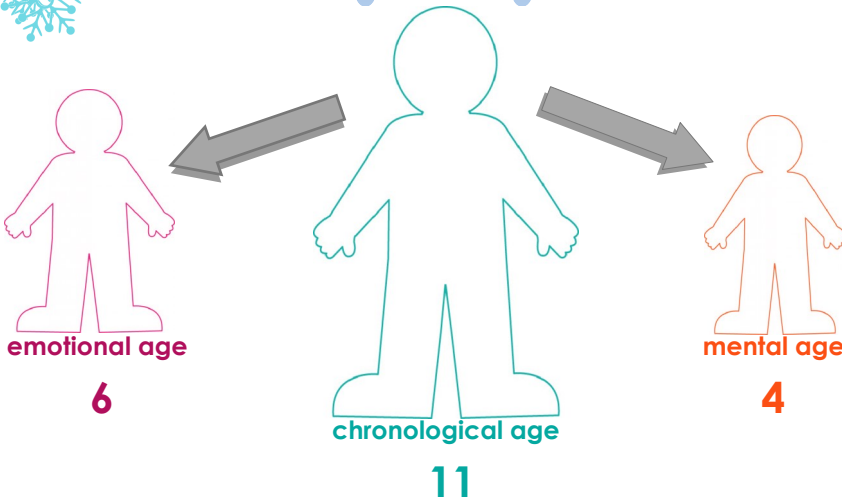




# Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland & Macomb Counties



## Chronological Age vs. Emotional Age



Orchards Children's Services

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### Inside this issue:

Chronological Age vs. Emotional Age	2
Family Fun Night	3
Helping Your Child Understand Adoption	3
Upcoming Support groups and Trainings	4

**A**ge is just a number when it comes to trauma. You may have adopted a child at age 8, and in most ways they behave like you might expect that an 8-year-old would. However when triggered, or out of control, you feel more like you are parenting a 3-year-old. This kind of behavior is not uncommon for children that have experienced trauma and it may be a sign that their emotional, or their mental age isn't quite measuring up to their chronological age. Studies have shown that trauma can affect brain growth and development. Cognitively a child may have progressed adequately, but socially and emotionally, they may have missed important milestones, and development. These children may have behavioral issues that you might expect from a much younger child because their brains have not been able to develop in some areas to the same extent that other children their age have. Because of this trauma, and these gaps in development, chronological age will not always be an indicator of what they are capable of emotionally or mentally. (continued on page 2)

**Age is just a number when it comes to Trauma.**

For more information on the Post Adoption Resource Center please contact us at  
**313-530-9746**  
Or visit our website at  
**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.



# Chronological Age vs. Emotional Age Continued

The good news is that these gaps in development, making it difficult for your child to cope with certain triggers, frustration or transitions can be improved or even closed. Children can learn the skills necessary to start to close the gap between their emotional age and their chronological age. You may need to adjust your expectations for your child's behavior. Meet them where they are at. What may seem to you like a conscious choice to behave a certain way may actually be the result of a lack of social or emotional development. You can start to meet them where they are both cognitively and emotionally. You may have a 12 year old that excels in school, but emotionally they cope like a 3 year old. Meet your child where they are academically, but keep in mind that you must also meet them where they are emotionally. If they need to be held and rocked, and soothed like a 3 year old, then do just that. It may take time to start to understand where they are, but once you do, be sure to meet them right where they are and progress from there. You wouldn't expect your 4-year-old to do your 10-year-old's math homework. Your 4-year-old hasn't learned the skills required to do that kind of work yet. Likewise, your child that has experience trauma, may not have had the opportunity to learn important social and emotional skills. When you can start to parent your child according to their emotional and mental age, and let go of the expectations tied to their chronological age, they can start to grow and gain the skills they need to move up to having the behaviors, emotions, and skills of their actual age.

**Meet them  
where they  
are at.**

*For more information visit the following, [www.lovinadoptin.com](http://www.lovinadoptin.com) and [www.adoption.com](http://www.adoption.com), and search the keywords 'chronological age vs. emotional age'.*

## FAMILY FUN NIGHT IDEAS!

Incorporating a 'family fun night' or a family game night, is a great way to come together and bond as a family. Below we have compiled a few fun activities to try out with your family during your next get together!

- **HOT LAVA-** the only rule is that the floor is lava! Be careful not to get burned! Work as a team to make it to one side of the room without losing a teammate. Use your imagination!
- **TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE-** Take turns telling two truths and one lie and have family members guess which is the truth and which is the lie.
- **THE ANIMAL GAME-** Everyone stands/sits in a circle with one person in the middle that has their eyes closed. The person in the middle counts to 10. Everyone around them trades spots so the circle is mixed up. The person in the middle points at someone and gives them a command to make a specific animal sound. (ex, "bark like a dog" or "make a fox sound") After the person being pointed at makes the sound, the person in the middle has to guess who it is. If they guess correct they get to come back out of the circle and the person they pointed to takes their place in the center. If they guess wrong they try again.
- **SECRET DANCER-** One person is chosen to be the 'detective' and is sent outside. Next someone is chosen to be the 'secret dancer'. The secret dancer teaches everyone else a dance and the detective is called back in. The detective then has to guess who the secret dancer is while everyone in the room does the dance. The secret dancer can change the move mid game.

# Helping Your Child Understand Adoption

A child's understanding of their adoption changes with age and can impact their adjustment, self-esteem and identity. There are healthy ways to help your children understand their adoption throughout their development. Read through this guide for tips and suggestions on how you can help your child move through these developmental stages with a natural and healthy understanding of their adoption.

## Preschool (age 3-5)

- ◆ Learning the language of adoption.
- ◆ May talk about being adopted without really understanding what that means.
- ◆ They have a limited understanding of what it means to be related biologically. Their idea of a family is limited to knowing that those that live with them and love them are family.

### What you can do:

When our preschool aged kiddos are openly discussing the 'language' of adoption it can be easy to assume that they have a better understanding of their adoption than they actually do, which can lead some parents to stop the discussion here. Keep their age and developmental understanding of adoption in mind when you are having discussions about adoption with them. Be sure that you discuss adoption in positive terms! Create an atmosphere in your home where your kiddos feel comfortable bringing up questions about their background.

## Middle Childhood (age 6-12)

- ◆ Better understanding of reproduction, and being related biologically.
- ◆ Aware of the negative or positive ways in which others talk about adoption.
- ◆ May start to wonder about the 'reason' they were given up for adoption.
- ◆ May begin to realize that gaining a new family means that they have been separated from a previous one. They may daydream about this previous family, or start to feel a sense of adoption-related loss.

### What you can do:

Children of this age group are starting to have a more realistic understanding of adoption and what it means to them. Create an ongoing dialogue with children that discusses adoption and your child's curiosity about it in a normal, positive light. Depending on the age at which a child was adopted, they may experience varying degrees of loss. This experience of loss is extremely common and can range from infrequent and mild feelings of confusion and sadness to complicated expressions of grief. Meet your child where they are and ensure that you are supporting them as they strive to cope with these feelings and build a positive sense of self.

## Adolescence (age 13-18+)

- ◆ Understanding of the meaning of adoption deepens
- ◆ Can become aware that those in society sometimes frame adoption as the 'second best' option. May start to question their value in the family.
- ◆ Increased capacity for empathy. They can start to have realistic and empathetic views of birth parents' life situations.
- ◆ In the process of defining themselves, they may attempt to find ways of integrating aspects of both their adoptive family and their birth family into their identity.

### What you can do:

An adolescent's interest in adoption may vary as they mature. Some children are very curious and others, are not. The role of adoption in shaping identity will depend on individual self esteem and temperament, parent's attitudes, quality of the parent-child relationship and experiences with birth family, peers and those in the community. Being open, supportive and empathetic will help your child develop a positive sense of self. Validate and normalize your child's curiosity, questions and feelings about their adoption.

# UPCOMING TRAININGS AND SUPPORT GROUPS:



## Teen Support Group Now Available!

Available for foster and adoptive youth. This support group is offered the first Tuesday of every month, 5:30pm-8:30pm for tweens and teens ages 12 and up.

Staff will work with youth on anger management, stress management and teach coping skills (among other things) to help them live life to their fullest potential.

*Please RSVP if your teen plans to attend.*

## Support Groups-

### January :

**Macomb County-** Tuesday, 01/09/2018 6:00-8:00pm

**Wayne County-** Thursday, 01/11/2018 5:00-8:00pm

### February :

**Oakland County-** Monday, 02/06/2018 5:30-7:30pm

**Macomb County-** Tuesday, 02/13/2018 6:00-8:00pm

**Wayne County-** Thursday, 02/15/2018 5:00-8:00pm

**Oakland County-** Thursday, 02/19/2018 5:30-7:30pm

*For more 2018 dates and times, visit our website  
[www.parc-orchards.org](http://www.parc-orchards.org)*

**For questions about any support groups or trainings, or to RSVP, please contact**

**Jennifer Harmon, 248-530-7540**

## When Medication is Necessary: Managing and Understanding Your Child's Psychotropic Meds



Conference held on:  
**March 9 & 10 (2018)**

Dr. Barbara Walters will be facilitating. Dr. Walters will assist parents in understanding the uses of psychotropic meds, their side effects, support parents in understanding how to advocate for their children during meetings with psychiatrists, and the necessity of taking medication as prescribed. With so many of our children being prescribed psychotropic meds, education of parents is such a necessity to ensure children's needs are being properly met.

*Contact Jennifer Harmon with any questions at 248-530-7540*

## Therapeutic Parenting Training

Trainings based on the book

'Beyond Consequences'

**Session 1-** Intro to child trauma, Stress Model, chronological vs. emotional age

**OAKLAND Session 1-** 03/06/18 5:30pm-7:30pm

**MACOMB Session 1-** 07/10/18 6:00pm-8:00pm

**Session 2-** Negative and positive repetitive conditioning, positive and negative feedback loops

**OAKLAND Session 2-** 03/20/18 5:30pm-7:30pm

**MACOMB Session 2-** 07/24/18 6:00pm-8:00pm

**Session 3-** How trauma memories are stored; Change from reactivity to responsibility.

**OAKLAND Session 3-** 04/03/18 5:30pm-7:30pm

**MACOMB Session 3-** 08/07/18 6:00pm-8:00pm

**Session 4-** Mind/body connection, improving regulation

**OAKLAND Session 4-** 04/17/18 5:30pm-7:30pm

**MACOMB Session 4-** 08/21/18 6:00pm-8:00pm

**Session 5-** How the brain impacts stress and behaviors; Integrating the whole brain for healing.

**OAKLAND Session 5-** 05/01/18 5:30pm-7:30pm

**MACOMB Session 5-** 08/28/18 6:00pm-8:00pm

