



Support. Education. Local Events.  
for Adoptive Families



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The PARC newsletter is published quarterly.  
Please direct questions and comments to  
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Bethany Christian Services is a nonprofit,  
private social services agency with more  
than 115 offices located in 36 states. In  
addition, Bethany offers social services to  
children and families in 15 countries.



**www.bethany.org**

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## Rebuilding Air Traffic Control

One big need that adoptive parents report is finding ways to survive the daily emotional battles with their children who have suffered from trauma. You can attend all the training seminars and read the latest books, but if it doesn't make a difference in the day-to-day operations, it's easy to feel discouraged.

The reality is that a large part of our parenting job (after connecting and attaching) is teaching our kids the skills they missed during their formative years. Experts often compare a child's ability to function, focus, and regulate their emotions in daily life as a type of "air traffic control mechanism" of the brain (Center on the Developing Child, 2014). Age, neglect, abuse, and mistrust can make learning these skills difficult.

In this issue, we want to provide you with practical tools to help you teach your child ways to self-regulate. In their article on improving the executive functioning skills of children, Harvard University tells us, "Children aren't born with these skills—they are born with the potential to develop them. If children do not get what they need from their relationships with adults and the conditions in their environments—or (worse) if those influences are sources of toxic stress—their skill development can be seriously delayed or impaired." (Center on the Developing Child, 2014)

We recognize the challenges you face, and the Post Adoption Resource Center wants to support and help you and your child in your journey of healing and rebuilding. We hope that the tools in this newsletter help you do just that!

*Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2014). Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.*

## Fun Facts

**Armadillos can hold their  
breath for up to six minutes!**

**Cheetahs can change direction  
in midair when chasing prey.**

### Working with your adoptive family:

- Support of a PARC specialist in your home
- 24-hour crisis availability
- Short-term emergency intervention
- Family-centered plan
- List of supportive regional resources

### Connecting you with community services:

- Liaison for adoptive families to other service providers
- One-on-one assistance accessing services
- Comprehensive resource guide

### Getting you the information you need:

- Daily phone access
- Timely responses with information
- Connection to resources

### Supporting your family:

- Monthly group experiences
- Quarterly training

### Sharing even more:

- PARC website with suggested books/articles on adoption
- List of community resources
- Calendar of adoptive parents' events and trainings
- Adoptive family newsletter

## Fun Facts

Water's composition (two parts hydrogen to one part oxygen) was discovered by the London scientist Henry Cavendish (1731-1810) in about 1781.

In 1999, astronomers focusing on a star at the center of the Milky Way measured precisely for the first time how long it takes the sun to complete one orbit (a galactic year) of our home galaxy: 226 million years.

The gravity on the Moon is about 17% what it is on the Earth. So, if you weigh 200 pounds on Earth, you will weigh 34 pounds on the Moon.

## Age-appropriate Activities to Strengthen Executive Function

In the brain, the ability to hold onto and work with information, focus thinking, filter distractions, and switch gears is like an airport having a highly effective air traffic control system to manage the arrivals and departures of dozens of planes on multiple runways. Scientists refer to these capacities as executive function and self-regulation—a set of skills that relies on three types of brain function: working memory, mental flexibility, and self-control. Children aren't born with these skills—they are born with the potential to develop them. The following are age-appropriate activities to strengthen executive function:

### 6 TO 18-MONTH-OLDS

- Lap Games: Peekaboo, Pat-a-cake
- Hiding Games: Hiding objects, hiding themselves
- Imitation or Copying Games: Waving
- Role Play: Sweeping the floor
- Finger plays: Itsy bitsy spider
- Conversations

### 18 TO 36-MONTH-OLDS

- Active Games: Throwing, catching, balancing, jumping
- Imitation games: Follow the leader
- Active Inhibition games: Freeze dance
- Song Games with many movements: Hokey Pokey, I'm a Little Teapot
- Conversation and Storytelling: Narrating their play, talking about feelings, telling stories about shared events
- Matching/Sorting Games and simple puzzles
- Imaginary Play

### 3 TO 5-YEAR-OLDS

- Imaginary play with props and toys
- Storytelling act out stories, tell group stories
- Movement challenges: Climbing, seesaws, skipping, yoga poses, Songs and games: Songs that repeat and add on, backward-counting songs
- Quiet Games: Matching, sorting, puzzles, cooking

### 5 TO 7-YEAR-OLDS

- Games that require remembering: Concentration, Go Fish
- Matching games: Crazy Eight, Uno, SET
- Games that require fast responses: Slapjack, Perfection
- Strategy Games: Sorry!, Battleship, Mancala, Checkers

- Games that require attention: Musical Chairs, Red Light Green Light, Duck Duck Goose, Mother May I?
- Fast-moving ball games: Four Square, Dodgeball, Tetherball
- Simon Says
- Structured physical activities such as organized sports
- Songs that repeat, singing in rounds: Row, row, row your boat,
- Complicated clapping rhythms: Miss Mary Mack
- Puzzle and Brain Teasers: Books, mazes, word finds, matching games
- Logic, Reasoning, and Guessing Games
- ISPY books

### 7 TO 12-YEAR-OLDS

- Card games for tracking: Hearts, Spades, Bridge
- Games that require monitoring and fast responses
- Games requiring matching: Rummy, Gin, Mahjong
- Strategy games: Chess
- Complex games involving fantasy play: Minecraft
- Organized Sports
- Jump Rope Games
- Games that require monitoring of the environment: Tag, paintball, laser tag
- Learning to play a musical instrument, music classes
- Singing in parts and rounds, dancing
- Brain Teasers: Crossword Puzzles, Sudoku, Rubik's Cube
- ADOLESCENTS**
- Sports, Yoga and meditation
- Music, singing, dancing, theater
- Strategy games and logic puzzles
- Computer games

# Helping our Children Land the Plane (Teaching Self-Regulation)

Power struggles between adoptive parents and kids who have experienced trauma can be a daily struggle. It's easy to fall into the idea of believing your child is just being difficult. But often the "won't" is masking the reality of "can't." A common byproduct of your child's inability to regulate is anger. Parents and children can get caught up in the cycle of anger which can worsen dysregulation and keep everyone stuck.

Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross in their essay, *Caught Between the Amygdala and Hard Place*, write about getting unstuck from this cycle: "We see vast changes in parent-child relationships as parents begin to recognize that their child's behavior is not a personal assault on them as parents, but is rather a blind assault on the shadowy terrors of the past that haunt them."

In other words, it's not personal. It's often chemistry and trauma. If we are going to bring change to the daily battles happening in our homes, it starts with seeing past the behavior to the needs of the child.

As parents, your part is critical. Toxic stress on the brain in those early years can keep children stuck in the feeling center of the brain. I remember often saying to

one of my kids, "What were you thinking?" The reality that I didn't see in the dysregulated moment is that this child wasn't thinking. He was surviving. The brain had learned early on these coping skills to survive his experiences that came out in these unpleasant behaviors.

As parents, not only can we model healthy self-regulation in our own lives (especially during those powerful interactions), but we have an opportunity to also teach self-regulation skills daily to our kids.

I confess, I spent a lot of wasted time telling my kids what not to do during those difficult years. It's easy to fall into the trap of lecturing and talking at our kids when we get frustrated! But our greatest efforts should be spent in taking time to teach our kids the right way to do things so they have skills to fall back on when trouble hits.

Dr. Purvis has written and spoken much in her book (*The Connected Child*) and videos (*Trust-Based Parenting*) about teaching children self-regulation through playful engagement, relational connection, and by offering children brain "re-do's" as corrective principles.

So, what are some ways we can do that? In this issue, we include many

age-appropriate activities provided by The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University that you can engage in with your kids to help them strengthen their brains and build their skills. Additionally, it provides your family an extra benefit: quality connection time.

As the parent, you empower your child to use the skills they've been taught during your daily interactions, by acting as their coach during the regulation process. Helping them learn to wait, take turns, problem solve, etc. If they begin to dysregulate, your role will be to help them find a way to access the calming skills they've learned, by asking important questions like, "What do you need right now?" or "How can I help you?"

These subtle questions can remind them, even in their worst moments, that you are someone who cares and can be counted on to help them. In his book, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog and Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook*, Dr. Bruce Perry acknowledges the importance of our role in helping kids heal:

"If self-regulation is going to happen, it will take time, relationship, correcting skills, and a patient caregiver willing to rein in their own emotions, look beyond the behavior, and help their child find healing.

## LEARN MORE: BOOKS. VIDEO. WEBSITES.

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University provides great videos (5 minutes or less) on their website to help parents and professionals better understand the impact toxic stress has on the executive functioning of the brain and a child's ability to regulate: [developingchild.harvard.edu/resources](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources)

Toxic Stress: [youtu.be/rVwFkcOZHJw](https://youtu.be/rVwFkcOZHJw)

Serve & Return (Brain Architecture & Development): [youtu.be/m\\_5u8-QSh6A](https://youtu.be/m_5u8-QSh6A)

InBrief: Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning: [youtu.be/efCq\\_vHUMq5](https://youtu.be/efCq_vHUMq5)

For more detailed information on age-appropriate activities from The Center on the Developing Child, check out the full article at: [developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/activities-guide-enhancing-and-practicing-executive-function-skills-with-children-from-infancy-to-adolescence/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/activities-guide-enhancing-and-practicing-executive-function-skills-with-children-from-infancy-to-adolescence/)

The Post Adoption Resource Center's lending library is also filled with resources that can help you as a parent, not only better understand the impact of trauma, but walk your child through the healing process.

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2014). Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu).

Purvis, K., & Cross, D. (2006). *Caught Between the Amygdala and a Hard Place. Fostering Families Today*. [www.empoweredtoconnect.org](http://www.empoweredtoconnect.org).

Perry, B.D., & Szalavitz, M. (2006). *The Boy Who Was Raised as A Dog and Other Stories from A Child Psychiatrist's Notebook: What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing*. New York: Basic Books

## Quotes to Inspire You

"There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them." — Denis Waitley

# local events & training & family activities

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned for fall, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

**REGION 2:**  
**Northern Michigan**  
231-421-6500  
parctc@bethany.org

[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResourceCenter  
OfNorthernMI](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

**REGION 3:**  
**Central Michigan**  
231-924-3390

[www.facebook.com/  
PostAdoptionResource  
CenterCentralMichigan](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

**Region 4:**  
**Western Michigan**  
616-224-7565  
parcgr@bethany.org

[www.facebook.com/  
PARCRegion4](http://www.facebook.com/PARCRegion4)

## Maranatha Retreat Blurb:

In May, we had 56 adoptive parents attend our weekend retreat in Norton Shores, where they spent the weekend learning about trauma and attachment from Pam Wolz, as well as eating great food, walking along the beach of Lake Michigan, doing yoga, and getting free massages. We received a lot of positive feedback from these parents who were able to spend the weekend kid-free in order to rejuvenate and reconnect!



"My husband and I really enjoyed this weekend retreat. We were able to take a break from hectic life while learning useful tools to take back home. Thank you so very much PARC, Bethany, MDHHS for putting this together and making this a great connection weekend. Connection with other parents who are "in the trenches" helps us to realize we are truly never alone in our journey."



"This retreat was the best respite/time away from kiddos to rejuvenate that my wife and I have had since becoming parents 10 years ago. Thank you!"

"It was WONDERFUL to get away!"

## Back to school tips:

*"You're off to great places,  
today is your day,  
your mountain is waiting,  
so get on your way!"  
– Dr. Seuss*

### Tips for a successful new school year:

- Get your kids involved in programs that they can do after school to keep them active.
- Try apps like iHomework or MyHomeWork to help your kids organize assignments.
- Let kids choose a planner or scheduling tool that they're excited to use.
- Remove distractions like TVs and video game consoles from homework areas.
- Have your kids pack their school bags before they go to sleep at night.
- Schedule at least one 30-minute block in your calendar each day for "you time."



Bethany Christian Services is committed to supporting adoptive families through the lifelong, rewarding journey of adoption.

**REGION 2**  
Bethany Christian Services  
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2  
Traverse City, MI 49686  
231-995-0870  
[www.bethany.org/traversecity](http://www.bethany.org/traversecity)

Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

**REGION 3**  
Bethany Christian Services  
6995 West 48th St  
Fremont, MI 49412  
231-924-3390  
[www.bethany.org/fremont](http://www.bethany.org/fremont)

Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

**REGION 4**  
Bethany Christian Services  
901 Eastern Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616-224-7565  
[www.bethany.org/grandrapids](http://www.bethany.org/grandrapids)

Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



[postadoptionrc.org](http://postadoptionrc.org)