

# **FOSTER**

**P**arent  
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**I**nformation  
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**E**ducation

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## **Attachment and the Teen—Session One**

**ATTACHMENT & THE TEEN  
SESSION ONE**

**Revised 02/2012**

## Session One Competencies and Objectives

### **Competencies:**

The foster caregiver:

- Understands the strengths and survival skills of teens who have difficulties with attachment.
- Understands from the teen's perspective how the accumulation of loss, separation, and trauma impact his or her beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and relationships.
- Knows how to provide the teen with a firm and consistent structure within a nurturing and healing family environment.

### **Objectives:**

Session One will enable participants to:

1. Get acquainted with the trainers and each other;
2. Describe the relationship between this PRIDE training, the Adolescent PRIDE Series, and the comprehensive competency-based PRIDE Program;
3. Identify the experiences of teens in family foster care that are likely to result in trauma and loss;
4. Describe, from the teen's perspective, how early attachment experiences have affected his or her development;
5. Describe, from the teen's perspective, the strengths and survival skills that they developed to cope with trauma and loss;
6. Explain how these initially adaptive strengths and survival skills become less useful over time, and even harmful to the process of attachment;
7. Identify personal feelings and responses to teens who are rejecting and do not want help; and
8. Identify possible thoughts and feelings that underlie the spoken communication of teens with attachment needs.

## **Agenda**

### **PART I: Welcome And Introduction**

- A. Welcoming remarks and participant introductions
- B. Use of the PRIDEbook
- C. Purpose of this Foster PRIDE Module
- D. Review of Session One objectives and agenda

### **PART II: My Behavior And Why It Works (Or Doesn't Work) For Me**

- A. What I needed as a child
- B. How I met my own needs
- C. Why I don't need you now

### **PART III: Closing Remarks**

- A. Summary of session
- B. Preview of next session
- C. Taking PRIDE Activity
- D. End session

## **Roxxie**

### **I. What I Needed as a Child**

My name is Roxxie. I am fifteen years old. I went into foster care when I was a baby and then went back home when I was 5. In second grade my mom sent me to live with my grandmother. My grandmother died the next year and I went back to live with my mom. At age 9 I returned to foster care. I lived with two families and then an adoptive family. But the adoptive family decided they didn't want me. I lived with several families after that. They put me in a group home six months ago. I'm getting out of here and can you believe this? They're looking for another family for me.

I don't know when I realized that I was different from other kids. It feels like something I always knew. Like I was born with it—that there was something bad about me. I don't hate my parents but I don't think they should have been parents. One of my foster moms told me I was a drug baby. This may be true. I know they put me in foster care because no one was taking care of me and I wasn't growing.

I can't remember a lot. For a long time I felt like something was missing in me. I needed my mom and to be like other girls. Instead I only got to "visit" my mom once a week in an office with someone watching us. I was so confused. I didn't know what to do when I was with my mom. I needed someone to care about me. I don't remember a lot about my foster parents. All of that is sort of a blur. What did I need? I needed to feel like a whole person with nothing missing. I needed for the hurt deep inside of me to go away.

### **II. How I Met My Own Needs**

When you've had these kinds of things happen to you, you begin to see that no one's going to look out for you except yourself. I remember going into foster homes when I was pretty young and trying to impress them. I was really good at saying what they wanted to hear. This always meant more attention and even better snacks. And it usually meant that I got to see my mom more. As I got older it meant fewer rules and less supervision.

In the beginning I don't think I meant to be dishonest or lie. It was just an easier way to make things happen. And really, the foster parents seemed to like it that way too. Like they wouldn't even think that I would be drinking and stuff. And in school I could get out of anything up until a couple of years ago. Of course the problem is you always mess up somewhere. Then I would just run away and claim that it was because I missed my mom. Which might have been sorta true. But mostly it was because they had caught on to me—that I wasn't what I pretended to be. I'm not kidding—I would find out what the foster parent was into—and I would read up on it. Like this foster dad who was into NASCAR and I read stuff and he loved that! He never cared what I did because I would

just talk NASCAR. I left there after I stole a lot of money from him while he was watching a race. I never really thought of it as stealing—just kinda getting back what I deserve cause I’ve had to deal with so much crap in my life. And they had plenty of money anyway. I have to take care of myself.

I pretty much can get along with anybody. I do fine in a home. But they always want more from me than I want to give. Like they always act like it really matters. I mean, do they really think I want a meaningful relationship, and how meaningful can it get when they’re the 32<sup>nd</sup> family that said they really wanted me. Not to be mean but I personally think it’s an ego trip for foster parents. I mean a few times I really got into it you know. But then I’d go home, or they’d move or something wacky. I mean things just happened.

Now what is a kid suppose to do with that? First I lose my mom, and then this family and then that family. You just can’t keep losing. You have to back off and realize that you still don’t belong anywhere. It’s only you, yourself, and you. Sometimes I’d figure out what really pushed their buttons to see if they would tell my worker to move me. I figure that I’ve been through a lot. If I have to steal some money, or take advantage of someone once in a while, what’s the big deal? It’s not like I’ve had an easy life.

### **III. Why I Don’t Need You Now**

I’m getting out of here and can you believe this? The worker says I need “permanence and stability.” I’m thinking it might have made more sense if somebody had thought about that a long time ago. I mean at this point the last thing I need is another family trying to act like they care and telling me what to do. Here’s what I would say to my new foster family:

I don’t need you. You don’t know how to take care of me.  
I don’t need you. You will want me to be something that I can’t be.  
I don’t need you. You won’t be able to love me.  
I don’t need you. You will want me to love you.  
I don’t need you. You will want to tell me what to do.  
I don’t need you. You will only get hurt.

I don’t need you. So you better not need me.

## Roxxie's Needs—Worksheet

Statement or phrase	What could have helped Roxxie to develop positive attachment?
I don't know when I realized that I was different from other kids. It feels like something I always knew. Like I was born with it.	Better self-esteem and more connection to others; consistent care would have provided her with a better sense of self-worth.
...that there was something bad about me.	
...told me I was a drug baby	
They put me in foster care because no one was taking care of me and I wasn't growing	
I needed my mom...	
I needed ... to be like other girls.	
I didn't know what to do when I was with my mom.	
I needed to feel like a whole person... I Needed for the hurt deep inside of me to go away.	

## Understanding the Developmental Response to Trauma and Loss

<b>ADAPTIVE ABILITIES AS A RESPONSE TO TRAUMA AND LOSS:</b>	<b>WHY IT HAS BEEN PURPOSEFUL:</b>	<b>POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT OVER TIME:</b>
A strong commitment to taking care of self	Helps ensure survival by making sure own needs are met	Total focus on self and own needs; unable to see needs of others or view self in relationship with others
Ability to conform to expectations, manipulate situations, be what people want you to be	Increases likelihood of getting what one needs and wants (helping ensure survival); takes focus off behaviors and needs	Identity confusion; lack of a genuine sense of self
Ability to protect self from losses	Enables one to overcome the pain and move on with life	Detached from feelings and emotionally unavailable to others
Ability to rationalize behaviors and actions	Helps ensure survival by giving one permission to aggressively pursue one's needs	No sense of personal responsibility; lack of conscience and moral development; lack of a sense of community
Ability to take control of a situation and do what needs to be done	Provides incentive to "act" and not allow things to simply "happen"; helps ensure one's safety	An irrational need to control others and all situations

## I Don't Need You—Behind the Words

WHAT I SAY	WHAT I MIGHT MEAN
You don't know how to take care of me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have taken care of myself for a long time now.</li> <li>• I want control.</li> <li>• I'm afraid you won't want to keep taking care of me.</li> </ul>
You will want me to be something that I can't be.	
You won't be able to love me.	
You will want me to love you.	
You will want to tell me what to do.	
You will only get hurt.	
So you better not need me.	



## Taking PRIDE—About a Teen I Know

In this session you heard Roxxie's story and it helped you to better understand her behaviors and needs.

- Think of a teen in your care (or who was in your care in the past). What is his or her story?
- Tell the teen's story—from the teen's point of view. Use the word "I," and really try to think from the teen's perspective. Tell the three parts of the story—what I needed as a child, how I met my own needs, why I don't need you now. It's fine if you don't know some parts of the story.
- It doesn't have to be long and you don't need to be a writer.

**What I needed as a child:**

**How I met my own needs:**

**Why I don't need you now:**

**ATTACHMENT & THE TEEN  
SESSION ONE**

**Revised 02/2012**

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## **Attachment and the Teen—Session Two**

**ATTACHMENT & THE TEEN  
SESSION TWO**

**Revised 02/2012**

## Session Two Competencies and Objectives

### **Competencies**

The foster caregiver:

- Understands the strengths and survival skills of teens who have attachment needs.
- Understands from the teen's perspective how the accumulation of loss, separation, and trauma affect beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and relationship.
- Knows how to provide the teen with a firm and consistent structure within a nurturing and healing family environment

### **Objectives**

Session Two will enable participants to:

1. Get re-acquainted with the trainers and one another;
2. Describe what they learned about a youth in their care (or who was previously in their care) through the Taking PRIDE activity;
3. Describe how the teen's challenging behaviors develop over time out of adaptive responses to trauma, grief, and loss;
4. Provide specific examples of behaviors that develop out of the teen's adaptive responses to trauma, grief, and loss;
5. List five basic tips for helping to manage challenging teen behaviors in the home;
6. Describe why the "relationship-based" strategies for handling behavior are generally not effective when working with teens who have attachment needs;
7. Describe eleven "logical parenting concepts" and why these become "illogical" when working with teens who have attachment needs;
8. Revise the logical parenting concepts into concepts that are useful for working with teens who have attachment needs;
9. Describe how the Relationship-Building Model of working with teens who have attachment needs differs from the "Relationship" Model;
10. Describe why it is important to establish a climate of nurturing control within the home from the time that the teen comes into the family;
11. List helpful hints for bringing the teen who has attachment needs into the family;
12. Identify the four goals in day-to-day parenting of the teen who has attachment needs; and
13. Identify strategies for achieving the four goals.

## **Session Two Agenda**

**Part I: Welcome and Building Bridges**

- A. Welcome
- B. Review of objectives and agenda
- C. Building bridges

**Part II: A Framework for Understanding the Teen with Attachment Needs**

- A. Understanding teen behavior as a response to grief and trauma
- B. Illogical parenting

**Part III: Promoting Attachment in Teens**

- A. A parenting approach
- B. When the teen first arrives
- C. Creating a healing environment

**Part IV: Closing Remarks**

- A. Summary of Session 2
- B. Summary and evaluation of Module
- C. Saying goodbye

## Behavior as a Response to Trauma and Loss

<b>ADAPTIVE ABILITIES AS A RESPONSE TO TRAUMA AND LOSS</b>	<b>WHY IT HAS BEEN PURPOSEFUL</b>	<b>POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT OVER TIME</b>	<b>RESULTING BEHAVIOR</b>
A strong commitment to taking care of self.	Helps ensure survival by making sure own needs are met	Total focus on self and own needs; unable to see needs of others or view self in relationship with others	Stealing, lying, cheating; Lack of concern for others; Taking advantage of others; Selfish behaviors (ex.: unable to share or wait one's turn)
Ability to conform to expectations, manipulate situations, be what people want you to be	Increases likelihood of getting what one needs and wants (helping ensure survival); takes focus off behaviors and needs	Identity confusion; lack of a genuine sense of self	
Ability to protect self from losses	Enables one to overcome the pain and move on with life	Detached from feelings and emotionally unavailable to others	
Ability to rationalize behaviors and actions	Helps ensure survival by giving one permission to aggressively pursue one's needs	No sense of personal responsibility; lack of conscience and moral development; lack of a sense of community	
Ability to take control of a situation and do what needs to be done	Provides incentive to "act" and not allow things to simply "happen"; helps ensure one's safety	An irrational need to control others and all situations	

## Trying to Make it Just a Little Bit Easier

In working with teens who have attachment needs, you may find the following points helpful:

**These behaviors developed over a long period of time.** Addressing the behavior will also be a lengthy process.

**You are not handling an incident. You are handling what has become the teen's overall approach to life.** Everything that you build into your home to create structure and stability and to ensure safety and well-being is part of the discipline process.

**Realize that other parents, and even professionals, may not understand what you are going through.** Expect a range of responses and even judgments.

**At least initially, and probably for quite a while, you cannot expect to get the rewards and joys that parenting usually brings.** Just knowing this will help you to adjust your expectations and think about ways to ensure that your emotional needs are met elsewhere.

**Realize that the behavior is not about you or your parenting.** Knowing this will help you to remain more objective and to control feelings that will sometimes be overwhelming.

## The Trouble With Being Logical

Logical Parenting Concept	Why It May Not Work With Teens with Attachment Needs
1) As the parent's relationship with the teen strengthens, the teen's behavior will improve.	As the relationship strengthens the teen may become very scared. The teen does not feel that he or she deserves a relationship. The teen's behavior may actually worsen as he or she fights the attachment.
2) Making positive statements or providing "rewards" will help ensure that good behaviors continue.	
3) Using negative reinforcement (such as taking away something or using negative consequences) will discourage negative behaviors.	
4) Consistency in how you supervise or monitor behavior and establish consequences is critical to good parenting.	
5) It is good to have some flexibility, and to be willing to give the teen a break once in a while.	
6) You only need to establish the degree of structure or limits that is absolutely necessary to help manage the teen's behavior.	



Logical Parenting Concept	Why It May Not Work With Teens with Attachment Needs
7) It is good to start with a “clean slate” when a child comes into your home.	
8) It is helpful to reason with a teen and have lengthy discussions about his or her behavior.	
9) Encourage the teen to “tell the truth” and to tell his or her side of the story.	
10) It is good to express your feelings about the teen’s behaviors—good or bad; this helps develop understanding and empathy.	
11) With caring, consistency, and good boundaries, behavior will gradually improve.	

**ATTACHMENT & THE TEEN  
SESSION TWO**

## Rewriting the Book on Parenting

### ***Replacing Common Parenting Concepts with New Ones:***

- ***Common concept:*** *As the parent's relationship with the teen strengthens, the teen's behavior will improve.*

**New Concept:** As you perceive that the teen is beginning to make a positive connection to you, expect that his or her behavior will worsen.

- ***Common concept:*** *Making positive statements or providing rewards will help ensure that good behaviors continue.*

**New Concept:** Use positive reinforcement sparingly and with concrete examples of the positive behavior that you observe.

- ***Common concept:*** *Using negative reinforcement will discourage negative behaviors.*

**New Concept:** Discuss and use natural and logical consequences to help teens make informed behavioral decisions.

- ***Common concept:*** *Consistency in how you supervise or monitor behavior and establish consequences is critical to good parenting.*

**New Concept:** Maintain consistent behavioral expectations, but be creative and ever-changing in how you provide structure, supervision, and monitoring—keep them on their toes.

- ***Common concept:*** *It is good to have some flexibility, and to be willing to give the teen a break once in a while.*

**New Concept:** Don't bend the rules or give the teen a break.

- ***Common concept:*** *You only need to establish the degree of structure or limits that is absolutely necessary to help manage the teen's behavior.*

**New Concept:** You need to establish the degree of structure or limits that seems necessary to help manage the teen's behavior, and "kick it up a notch."

- **Common concept:** *It is good to start with a “clean slate” when a child comes into your home.*

**New Concept:** Be immediately prepared to address and deal with the range of challenging behaviors that the teen has exhibited in the past.

- **Common concept:** *It is helpful to reason with a teen and have lengthy discussions about his or her behavior.*

**New Concept:** Enforce clear behavioral expectations with consequences and do not leave room for discussion.

- **Common concept:** *Encourage the teen to “tell the truth” and to tell his or her side of the story.*

**New Concept:** Determine to your best ability what really happened. Don’t expect the teen to tell the truth and don’t invite his or her side of the story.

- **Common concept:** *It is good to express your feelings about the teen’s behavior—good or bad; this helps develop understanding and empathy.*

**New Concept:** It is best to maintain behavioral expectations and consequences that are enforced in a caring, consistent, and rational manner without expressing your feelings.

- **Common concept:** *With caring, consistency, and good boundaries behavior will gradually improve.*

**New Concept:** Expect things to get worse before they get better; improved behavior will follow an uneven and unpredictable course.

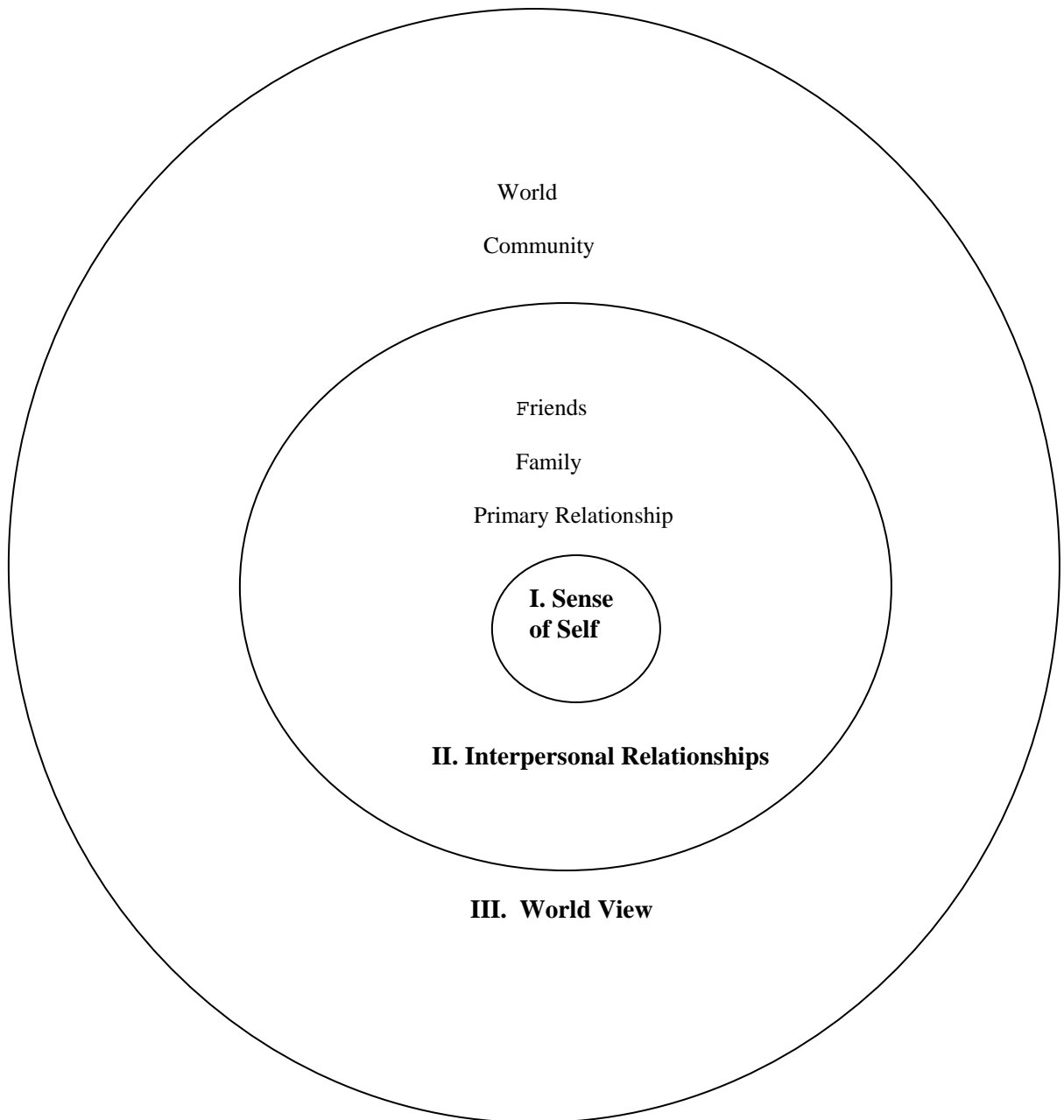
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This activity was developed using information from the following resources: Daniel Hughes, *Facilitating Developmental Attachment: The Road to Emotional Recovery and Behavioral Change in Foster and Adopted Children*. Northvale, New Jersey. Jason Aronson, Inc. 1997; and Terry M. Levy and Michael Orlans, *Attachment Trauma and Healing*. Washington, DC, CWLA, 1998.

## ATTACHMENT & THE TEEN SESSION TWO

Revised 02/2012

## Relationship-Building Model



## **Tips for Bringing the Teen Into Your Family**

### **Present yourself as experienced, capable, and competent**

Present yourself in a self-assured and confident manner. Let the teen know that you are an experienced foster parent and have worked with many teens. Be caring but firm; supportive but not sympathetic; welcoming but not overly solicitous.

**Rationale:** You should present yourself as a confident, competent, and experienced foster parent to provide a sense of safety and hope. “I can prevail where others have failed” is a good motto. Also, discourage the teen from believing that you can be easily controlled or manipulated.

### **Establish immediate safety, structure, and control**

Present expectations in a matter-of-fact tone. Emphasize that expectations are necessary for the teen to learn how people live in the home. Empathize that you know it may be difficult at first to learn how the family lives, and that you know there will be mistakes as he or she is learning.

**Rationale:** Immediate structure helps prevent failure and promotes a sense of safety and security. Expectations, as well as choices and consequences, are more easily accepted up front than they will be later. Expectations presented as a way to “help you learn to live in our family” are less threatening—yet also establish that the teen has a responsibility to participate in that learning. A matter-of-fact tone implies more control on your part.

### **Establish expectations for each family member to contribute to the well-being of the family; focus on three categories—safety, chores, and communication**

Some families have exhaustive lists of rules and expectations. Generally it is more useful to prioritize them since every expectation cannot be expressed. “Learning to live in the family” may take a while. But some expectations do need to be spelled out.

- Expectations regarding safety are critical and are often written down. These expectations are best framed in terms of “helping keep everyone in our family safe.”
- Having chores helps establish the teen as a contributing member of the family and allows for immediate success. Teens who have attachment needs very rarely do well with chores. Often, they feel deprived and think they deserve to do what they want to do to be happy.
- Communication expectations establish guidelines around honesty and respect.

**Rationale:** The emphasis on rules and expectations in the beginning might seem confusing. If we wish to build attachment, shouldn't the emphasis be on providing affection, support, and empathy? Unfortunately the teen may have limited capacity, at least initially, to deal with or understand affection, support, or empathy. In fact, the teen may feel that these gestures are false. The focus on rules and expectations will help the teen feel safe and know what to expect.

**It is probably not helpful to:**

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\*The information in this resource is adapted from Daniel Hughes. *Facilitating Developmental Attachment: The Road to Emotional Recovery and Behavioral Change in Foster and Adopted Children*. Northvale, New Jersey. Jason Aronson, Inc. 1997 pp. 216-222; and Terry M. Levy and Michael Orlans. *Attachment Trauma and Healing*. Washington, DC. CWLA.1998. pp. 199-210.

## **Day-to-Day Parenting of Teens with Attachment Needs\***

### **I. Creating a Healing Environment**

When the child initially comes into your home your primary goal is to establish safety and appropriate expectations and structure. But in your day-to-day life you want to establish an environment that promotes healing, change, and attachment.

**NOTES:**

### **II. Maintain the family structure and expectations.**

This is easier said than done. By starting out with a tight structure and clear expectations you get a jump start on this one. But maintaining the structure and clarity over time can be a struggle..

**NOTES:**

### **III. Ensure clear and supportive communication.**

Communication with teens with attachment needs is crucial. You want to set and maintain a positive, yet matter-of-fact tone. Avoid language that is accusing, negative, or that invites a power struggle. Positive statements promote cooperation. For example, saying “We’ll go the video store as soon as your chores are done” is probably more effective than saying, “Unless you do your chores we’re not going to the video store.”

#### **NOTES:**

### **IV. Provide consequences—not punishment.**

Discipline involves teaching, not punishing. The challenge when working with teens who have attachment needs is that they are likely to interpret almost anything, including consequences, as punishment. The goal of using consequences is to help the teen learn how to make positive choices. Initially, providing consequences rather than punishment may seem ineffective because it may take a while to teach teens how consequences work or to get them to believe that they really have a choice. Continue to emphasize that the use of consequences offers a choice. You win because you set up the choices; the teen wins because he or she is given the power to make the choice. But be prepared to accept the choice. And only give choices that you can live with!

#### **NOTES:**

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## About the Author

**Joanne L. Mathews, A.C.S.W., MSW**, is a Senior Training Consultant for CWLS. She brings over 25 years of experience in adoption, family foster care, and child protection in both the public and private sectors. Ms. Mathews has significant training experience, having managed the training division of a state child welfare system and provided training on a wide range of topics and in a variety of settings. Ms. Mathews has also served as the Clinical Director of a private adoption agency and the Training Coordinator for a large residential facility.

Ms. Mathews has worked for CWLA for over a decade. She was a member of the original writing team for Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE, was the primary curriculum developer for the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE revisions, and contributed to several development of the CORE training modules. She has trained extensively across the country on various aspects of the PRIDE model. Ms. Mathews also helped develop the kinship care curriculum, *A Tradition of Caring*, and has developed curricula for the National Resource Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents.

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**ATTACHMENT & THE TEEN  
SESSION TWO**

## Participant Evaluation— PRIDE In-Service Training

### Attachment and the Teen in Family Foster Care

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Training Site/Location: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainer Name(s):#1 \_\_\_\_\_ and #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Your thoughtful response to the items listed below will help us improve the PRIDE Training Program. Please add your comments in the spaces provided on this form.

Place an "X" on the **each** line in **each** **the** column which best describes your opinion.

#### A. Content/Materials

	<b>4 Strongly Agree</b>	<b>3 Agree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>
1. The training content applies to my role as a foster parent.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. The information presented was easy to understand and well organized.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The Participant Handbook will be a good resource at home "on the job."	_____	_____	_____	_____

#### B. Presentation

	<b>4 Strongly Agree</b>	<b>3 Agree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>
4. Trainers presented the information clearly and in an organized manner..	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Trainers were knowledgeable about the subject matter.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Trainers worked well together as an effective team.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**ATTACHMENT & THE TEEN  
SESSION TWO**

**C. “Atmosphere” of the Training**

	<b>4 Strongly Agree</b>	<b>3 Agree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>
7. There was enough opportunity for me to get actively involved in the training.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. The trainers responded adequately to my questions, comments, and concerns.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. The training location (room, seating, etc.) was comfortable for learning.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I have been a foster caregiver for _____ years.				
11. The most important idea I learned from this training that will help me as a caregiver is:				
_____				
_____				
12. Other overall comments and suggestions about this training:				
_____				
_____				

Thank you for your comments!

Please return to your trainer or mail to DCFS Office of Training, Parent Training Program,  
406 E. Monroe, Station 122, Springfield, IL 62701