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Module Twelve, Session One—Transitioning to Adulthood: Resilience, Risks, and Research

Session One Competencies and Objectives

Competencies

The foster parent:

- Knows the developmental tasks of preteens and teens.
- Understands the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens.
- Knows developmentally appropriate ways to assist youth through the preteen and teen years.

Objectives

Session One will enable participants to:

1. Describe why transitioning to adulthood is the primary goal for preteens and teens;
2. Identify three reasons preteens and teens in family foster care experience developmental risk;
3. Explain why recent research showing that brain development continues into early adulthood is critical;
4. List three critical research findings related to teen brain development;
5. Describe implications for parenting teens as a result of these three critical research findings;
6. Describe the impact of the “fear response” that children experience following trauma, abuse, and neglect;
7. Describe long-term effects of the “fear response” on development;
8. Identify the developmental milestones for preteens;
9. Explain the physical and emotional impact of puberty on preteens; and
10. Explain the importance of peer relationships to preteens.

Resource 1-2

Session One Agenda

Part I: Welcome and Introductions (25 minutes)

- A. Participant introductions
- B. Use of the PRIDEbook
- C. About this Module
- D. Review of Session One competencies, objectives and agenda
- E. Discussion of teamwork agreements

Part II: Transitioning to Adulthood—Key Developmental Concepts (1 hour 45 minutes, including 15-minute break)

- A. Resilience and risk for preteens and teens
- B. Research in teen brain development

Part III: Focus on Preteens (40 minutes)

- A. Introduction to developmental tasks of preteens
- B. Overview of the developmental tasks for preteens

Part IV: Closing Remarks

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

Transitioning Youth to Adulthood: Where We Stand

Research Findings on Teen Brain Development

Group One: You Don't Use It, You Lose It

Research Finding:

The NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health) study concludes that teens have the power to determine the direction of their own brain development. Whether they do art or music or sports or videogames or books, the brain structure will adapt accordingly. Brain structures that are not stimulated may be pruned away to allow for the growth areas. In essence, teens are building new circuits of neurons as they interact with their environment.

General implications:

Implications for me as a foster parent:

Group Two: Mad, Sad, or Glad

Research Finding:

Deborah Yurgelun-Todd and researchers at the McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts, have studied how adolescents perceive emotion as compared to adults. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), they looked at the brains of teens and adults. Both groups were shown pictures of adult faces and asked to identify the emotion on the face. The researchers recorded the responses as well as tracing what part of the brain responded during the task. The results were surprising, even to the researchers. They found that the teens had greater difficulty accurately identifying the emotion of the person depicted in the picture. They also found that teens and adults use different areas of the brain when approaching this task.

General implications:

Implications for me as a foster parent:

Group Three; Amygdala vs. Prefrontal Cortex

Research finding:

Deborah Yurgelun-Todd and researchers at the McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts have used functional magnetic resonance imaging to compare the activity of brains of teenagers to those of adults. Adults have more activity in the prefrontal cortex of their brains. This is the part of the brain that controls emotions and impulses, processes, cause and effect relationships; it helps anticipate consequences and make decisions about right and wrong. In contrast, the greatest activity in the teen brain takes place in the amygdala. The amygdala is part of the limbic system of the brain that is involved in instinctive “gut” reactions and emotional arousal. National Mental Health studies indicate that the prefrontal cortex is the slowest part of the brain to develop and undergoes the most drastic changes during the teen years. To compensate for the underdevelopment of the prefrontal cortex, the teen brain relies more heavily on the amygdala (and thus gut reactions and emotional response).

General implications:

Implications for me as a foster parent:

Developmental tasks for Preteens

Puberty

Webster's dictionary defines puberty as:

The stage of physical development when secondary sex characteristics develop and sexual reproduction first becomes possible.

Puberty often begins earlier than we think. In girls, the first sign of puberty is breast budding, which on average begins at age 10. It may begin as early as age 8. Menstruation usually begins about two years later.

Boys enter puberty about a year later than girls. The average age for boys is 11, but puberty can occur anytime between the ages of 9 and 14.

With puberty come hormones, chemicals produced in the body. With puberty also come dramatic growth spurts when more food and more rest are necessary.

During puberty, many children are not sure how they fit into their changing bodies. They are frequently embarrassed by these changes, especially with the opposite sex. It isn't an easy time for children.

Self-regulation

At 11 and 12 years, preteens can act like adults and discuss politics one minute, and snuggle a stuffed toy the next. The feeling of the moment is most important. Their thinking is immature. Mary Pipher in the book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Lives of Teenage Girls* stresses how ill-prepared the young teen is to make decisions. She points out that this is also the age at which the child is expected to handle additional responsibility, but with less oversight and supervision. It is important to keep in mind that preteens are emotionally immature. They want to be grown up and a child at the same time. Since we know that the feeling of the moment and immature thinking are at work, we may need to reconsider the responsibility we give them.

Communicating and Learning

Most preteens are in the fifth and sixth grades. During these years, the expectations connected with school increase. Students will begin to write about their own opinions. They will learn to examine different aspects of an issue. Current events will be part of classroom curricula.

Sex education is likely to be a part of the curricula during these years. The first class is usually about changing bodies, and boys and girls are frequently separated to avoid embarrassment and giggling. Substance abuse will also likely form part of their health education.

By preteen years, children have enough vocabulary to communicate well. But having the vocabulary does not necessarily mean they will use it. They can be very moody. They also will begin to use a lot of slang and language that is "cool" within their peer group.

Making Friends and Getting Along with Peers

By the preteen years, children's friends will become more important to them than anyone else. Don't be surprised if they don't want to be seen in public with you when their friends are present.

By fifth grade, preteens tend to take on the problems of others and can be just as upset over a friend's parent who is sick as they would be if it were their own.

By sixth grade, preteens will be interested in clothes and having the "right" ones. It is very important to them to look like everyone else, even if the style does not suit your tastes.

It is at this time that children usually find their first "best friend." This best friend will be of the same gender, but interest in the opposite sex is increasing.

Material for this resource was adapted from the following sources:

American Academy of Pediatrics (1999). *Caring for your school age child: Ages 5-12*. New York: Bantam.

Newfeldt, V. (Ed.) (1988). *Webster's New World Dictionary*. Third College Edition. New York; Simon and Schuster, Inc.

Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the lives of adolescent girls*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Parent Soup Development Tracker <http://www.parentsoup.com>

Developmental Milestones for Preteens

Not every child will do everything on this list. But you can get a general sense of whether or not the child is on track by looking at how and when these milestones are met.

- Begins to grow rapidly.
- Develops special interests such as hobbies and collections.
- Daydreams about the future and about careers.
- Understands most concepts.
- Enjoys clubs.
- Demonstrates interest in competitive sports.
- Enters puberty.
- Begins to develop social awareness and may take on a cause.
- Questions authority more often.

Taking PRIDE Activity

In this session you learned about the recent significant findings in brain development research listed below. Apply these findings to a preteen or teen in your care. (If you do not currently have a preteen or teen in care, consider a situation from the past.)

Preteens and teens may not be able to accurately perceive the emotional responses of others.

Have you observed this to be true? If so, please explain or give an example.

Explain any consequences for the preteen or teen.

How might you apply this knowledge so as to help the preteen or teen in the future?

The part of the brain that governs rational thinking and understanding of cause and effect is not fully developed in the preteen or even the teen. Most teens approach decision-making from the part of the brain that acts on impulse and emotion.

Have you observed this to be true? If so, please explain or give an example.

Explain any consequences for the preteen or teen.

How might you apply this knowledge so as to help the preteen or teen in the future?

Teens have the power to determine the direction of their own brain development. They can “grow” neural pathways by engaging in learning activities, mathematical, musical, verbal, or sports-related. But if they “don’t use it, they will lose it.”

Have you observed this to be true? If so, please explain or give an example.

Explain any consequences for the preteen or teen.

How might you apply this knowledge so as to help the preteen or teen in the future?

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Module Twelve, Session Two—Developmental Tasks and the Impact of Trauma and Loss

Session Two Competencies and Objectives

Competencies

The foster parent:

- Knows the developmental tasks of preteens and teens.
- Understands the impact of trauma and loss on preteens and teens.
- Knows developmentally appropriate ways to assist youth through the preteen and teen years.

Objectives

Session Two will enable participants to:

1. Describe how trauma and loss impact preteen development;
2. List ways to help integrate preteens into the day-to-day life of the foster family;
3. List ways to help preteens grow and develop;
4. Describe the three critical developmental tasks for teens;
5. Describe how abuse, loss, and trauma affect these critical developmental tasks; and
6. Identify specific strategies that foster parents can use to help promote positive attachments and development in the teen.

Session Two Agenda

Part I: Welcome and Building Bridges (10 minutes)

- A. Welcome and review of competencies, learning objectives, and agenda
- B. Building bridges

Part II: Focus on Preteens (40 minutes)

- A. The impact of trauma and loss on the preteen
- B. Tasks for foster parents.

Part III: Focus on Teen Development (2 hours, including a 15-minute break)

- A. Developmental tasks of adolescents
- B. The impact of trauma and loss
- C. Tasks for foster parents

Part IV: Closing Remarks (10 minutes)

- A. Summary of session
- B. Instructions for participant evaluation
- C. End session

Integrating a Preteen into the Foster Home and Promoting Growth and Learning

Puberty

- Provide books about puberty. Put them in the child’s room to read on his or her own.
- Don’t tease children about pubertal development. They will be embarrassed if kidded about the changing shape of their bodies or their cracking voices.
- Give accurate information in a matter-of-fact manner when the opportunity arises.
- Provide privacy.
- Ignore sudden outbursts or moodiness. These are a normal part of puberty when a child is under stress.
- Additional ideas: _____

Self-regulation

- Allow for adult and childlike actions, and do not criticize either.
- Give responsibility slowly and in ways the child can manage.
- Provide supervision appropriate to the needs of the child.
- Calmly assist the child to deal with overwhelming feelings of anger, and avoid power struggles.
- Accept the child’s overwhelming feelings of sadness and grief; do not deny or minimize the feelings or their right to have these feelings.
- Expect mistakes with responsibility, and make adjustments without judgment.
- Model appropriate ways to express and manage feelings of grief, sadness, anger, loneliness, etc.
- Additional ideas: _____

Communication and Learning

- Provide a quiet place and time for study.
- Encourage children to express their opinions.
- Talk openly about the dangers and risks of substance abuse.
- Do not accept unacceptable language in your home. Set a good example.
- Encourage children to talk about their birth family.
- Arrange for therapy for the child whose overwhelming feelings of anger and sadness make school difficult for them.
- Be prepared to work with the school, and spend extra time helping the child with school work.
- Additional ideas: _____

Making Friends and Getting Along with Peers

- Encourage children to invite their peers into your home. Provide supervision.
- Help children learn to shop for clothing that suits their body type.
- Do not make fun of a child's growing interest in the opposite sex.
- Support family and/or sibling visits in your home.
- Model good conflict management skills.
- Additional ideas: _____

Three Developmental Tasks for Teens

Separating from family and developing a sense of independence

The teen years have traditionally served as a preparation for separation from the family and eventual independence. In these years the youth finishes school, learns to drive, often has part-time or summer work, develops basic life skills, assumes greater responsibility, and is gradually given more freedom and opportunity to make life decisions. This is practice time. Teens get to try out certain things, but if they don't work out, their family is still there for them.

Developing a sense of one's identity and sexuality

Adolescence is a time of exploration outside the family, and discovery of the range of beliefs, values, and options the world has to offer. Youth try on different personas, personalities, and even "costumes". When their explorations bring them into conflict with family values or goals, they may begin to flaunt their differences as a way of saying "This is me."

Their peer group may replace the family as the purveyor of guidance, support, values, and beliefs. Youths' cultural identity may become more important to them at this age, leading them to dress and act in ways that they feel reflects their culture.

Finally, this is a time to explore sexuality. Youth must make a lot of decisions about sex within a culture that exploits sexuality as the "road to success." Youth who feel they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or questioning must deal with what it is like to feel different.

Developing an educational, vocational, or career path

Youth must begin to prepare for a vocation or career. This often occurs through their work in school, or it may happen as their interests develop in specific areas. The opportunity to explore different job opportunities, have after-school jobs, and continue educational pursuits is critical.

Supporting Teen Development—Tasks for Foster Parents

Developmental Area: Separation from Family and Developing a Sense of Independence

Developmental Tasks <i>(what needs to be done)</i>	Possible Behaviors <i>(how the teen may react)</i>	Challenges Due to Loss and Trauma <i>(why it may be so hard)</i>	Tasks for Foster Parents <i>(what we can do to help)</i>
<p>Developing basic life skills such as cooking, shopping, use of transportation, money management, learning to drive, and time management.</p> <p>Developing decision-making and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>Finishing school.</p> <p>Developing ongoing supports (peer group, special friends, organizations).</p>	<p>Questioning limits and rules.</p> <p>Displaying defiant and willful behavior.</p> <p>Seeking to stay out late and not divulge whereabouts.</p> <p>Not wanting to participate in family events (such as vacations).</p> <p>Wanting to pick own friends, not tell who they are “hanging” with.</p> <p>Withdrawing emotionally.</p> <p>Swinging between dependency and independence.</p> <p>Spending more and more time with friends.</p> <p>Taking on the values of the peer group.</p> <p>Developing sexual relationships.</p>	<p>These teens may not have developed healthy attachment. Talking about “separation” is premature, if not confusing.</p> <p>When a teen is placed we may be encouraging the teen to attach to the foster family, while dealing with physical separation from the birth family, while also trying to encourage independence.</p> <p>These teens may not have developed some of the basic life skills we might assume for a teen.</p> <p>There may be limited time to both build a relationship and help the teen to separate.</p>	

Developmental Area: Developing a Sense of Identity and Sexuality

Developmental Tasks <i>(what needs to be done)</i>	Possible Behaviors <i>(how the teen may react)</i>	Challenges Due to Loss and Trauma <i>(why it may be so hard)</i>	Tasks for Foster Parents <i>(what we can do to help)</i>
<p>Exploring one’s cultural heritage and background.</p> <p>Developing a sense of one’s sexual self—orientation, values, and feelings.</p> <p>Identifying with peer group.</p> <p>Developing one’s beliefs, values, and sense of morality.</p> <p>Exploring religious/ spiritual feelings and beliefs.</p>	<p>Exploring different styles of dress, often to the extreme or with great variation. May present one way one day and another the next.</p> <p>Displaying great interest in music and various pop or musical stars.</p> <p>Displaying great interest in cultural identity—may begin to identify more with cultural background.</p> <p>Exploring sexuality—may be “questioning” sexual orientation or may begin to act on sexual feelings.</p> <p>Testing of limits and boundaries the teen had previously respected.</p> <p>Developing new sets of friends.</p> <p>Developing an interest in religion and spirituality.</p> <p>Developing strong interests in various topics or beliefs.</p>	<p>The teens may feel responsible for the abuse in their families; multiple placements may make them feel they don’t belong anywhere; they may believe they are “bad” and act in ways that confirm this belief.</p> <p>Teens who have experienced placements outside of their race or culture may question their identity.</p> <p>Teens who have been sexually abused may have difficulty with their “sexual self” and begin to question sexual orientation and identity, act out sexual feelings, or ignore their sexuality.</p> <p>A teen who is gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or questioning may have difficulty dealing with this in addition to issues of abuse/neglect and loss. The GLBQ teen may also be scared to talk with foster families or to set him or herself apart as “different.” Teens who have been abused as a result of sexual orientation may be afraid to express their sexual identity.</p>	

Developmental Area: Developing an Educational, Vocational, or Career Path

Developmental Tasks <i>(what needs to be done)</i>	Possible Behaviors <i>(how the teen may react)</i>	Challenges Due to Loss and Trauma <i>(why it may be so hard)</i>	Tasks for Foster Parents <i>(what we can do to help)</i>
<p>Exploring and developing special interests.</p> <p>Continuing one's education.</p> <p>Exploring different job opportunities.</p> <p>Developing money management skills.</p> <p>Observing role models and mentors in the workforce.</p> <p>Volunteering in the community.</p> <p>Working part-time and summer jobs.</p>	<p>The teen may have a lot of different interests that change from day to day, or may appear totally disinterested in any type of job or education.</p> <p>The teen may become very involved and invested in volunteer or part-time work.</p> <p>The teen may be reluctant to commit to a part-time or summer job, or may have difficulty meeting the responsibilities of a job. They may have problems with co-workers and bosses.</p> <p>The teen may want to quit school in favor of work or vocational training.</p> <p>The teen may reject work or any financial responsibility.</p>	<p>The teen may not feel good about him or herself, and may be unable to identify any strengths. The teen may not feel deserving of having special interests.</p> <p>Trauma and loss affect the teen's school work. Enrollment in different schools can result in a lack of follow-up on educational needs. Grades may be poor; the teen may be delayed, or may want to quit school, or have already done so—all making it more difficult to find employment or gain entry to training and educational programs.</p> <p>The teen may not have been exposed to role models in the workforce, or learned to value work itself.</p> <p>Youth may hear differing views and messages regarding their skills and abilities. Subsequent caregivers may not have learned of skills the teen demonstrated at an earlier age.</p>	

Foster PRIDE Core Training Participant Evaluation

Understanding and Promoting Pre-Teen and Teen Development

MODULE #12 DATE: _____

LOCATION: _____

TRAINERS: _____ and _____

Part One

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

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

A. Content/Materials

	4 Strongly Agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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 PRIDEbook will be useful to me as a resource at home "on the job."	_____	_____	_____	_____

My comments on the training content/materials:

B. Presentation

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

My comments on the training presentation:

C. “Atmosphere” of the Training

	4 Strongly Agree	3 Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
1. There was enough opportunity for me to get actively involved in the training.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. The trainers responded adequately to my questions, comments, and concerns.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The training location (room, seating, etc.) was comfortable for learning.	_____	_____	_____	_____

My comments on the training atmosphere:

History of PRIDE

The PRIDE Program was developed at the request of foster parents in the state of Illinois. In November 1990, members of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Committee of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) met with the DCFS Director to share their vision of an effective training program which would help foster parents meet the changing and increasingly challenging needs of children and families. The Advisory Committee envisioned a program that would:

- Comprehensively address the knowledge and skills necessary to foster successfully;
- Be relevant and applicable to foster parents' job tasks;
- Have an evaluation component to assure the training program meets the agency's needs; and
- Lead either to a certification process or another means of recognizing the professional role of foster parents.

The DCFS Director approved the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, and the Office of Foster Care assumed responsibility for directing the project. The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), long recognized for its national leadership and development of quality training programs, was asked to provide consultation. The goal was to create an innovative, comprehensive, competency-based foster parent training program, with a preservice component relevant for prospective adoptive parents.

A Steering Committee was appointed to bring a variety of perspectives and expertise to the program's design and development. The committee's culturally diverse membership included DCFS and private agency staff, foster and adoptive parents, academicians, trainers, and community members, from rural and urban settings, interested in child welfare. The Steering Committee was divided into nine work groups, each co-chaired by a foster or adoptive parent and another professional. Work groups were responsible for completing key tasks for each stage of the project, from curriculum development through planning statewide implementation.

The work groups defined competencies, collected foster parent training materials through a national search, and reviewed draft curriculum and family assessment tools to assure consistency with the project goals and objectives. A process and tool for assessing the individual training needs of foster parents were developed, and criteria for the selection of trainers established. A plan was developed to assure that training is available where, when, and as often as needed. Finally, the Steering Committee recommended strategies to the agency administration for integrating the training program's philosophy and values into all aspects of the agency's operations, to insure consistency among policy, program, practice, and training.

The Illinois project addressed a national need for an affordable, comprehensive, competency-based mutual family assessment and training program. Several other states approached Illinois and CWLA about participating in a collaborative effort. Kentucky, Texas, and New Jersey were the first to

suggest that states share expertise and resources to design a national preservice and inservice competency-based training model for foster and adoptive parents. The National Association for Public Child Welfare Administrators and the National Association of State Foster Care Managers helped inform other states of this new opportunity. Several additional states (Arkansas, California, Delaware, Hawaii, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota) and a voluntary child welfare agency (the Casey Family Program) joined Illinois in developing the PRIDE Program.

To ensure a national perspective, two national resource centers were invited. The National Foster Care Resource Center for family, group, and residential care at Eastern Michigan University assisted in curriculum review. The San Felipe del Rio Foundation produced and generously subsidized the PRIDE training videos.

About the Authors

Karen L. Lasseter, MPA, is currently a curricula developer and trainer for the state of Illinois and for CWLA. She administered the foster care and adoption programs in central Illinois for the state DCFS for 15 years. She was a member of the original PRIDE steering committee and is a PRIDE Master Trainer. Karen has done extensive training in foster care and adoption. She has worked with Governor's State University in Illinois on the interactive digitized version of PRIDE Core. Her personal experiences as an adoptive parent and former foster parent, along with her professional experiences, span 35 years.

Joanne L. Mathews, MSW, has over 25 years of experience in child welfare, spanning the private and public sectors. She began her career at Judge Baker Guidance Center in Boston with a model child protection project in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare. She then worked for the Massachusetts Department of Social Services in various capacities including as the statewide Director of Training. She has since worked in residential care and adoption.

Joanne is a well-known presence on child welfare issues. She began working with CWLA in the early 90s on the development of the original PRIDE curriculum. She has since worked extensively throughout the country on implementation of the PRIDE model, has worked with Governor's State University in Illinois toward an interactive digitized version of PRIDE Core, and most recently led the writing team through the revision of the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE preservice curriculum. She worked toward development of the following PRIDE Core modules:

- *Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture, and Meet Developmental Needs;*
- *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families;*
- *Working as a Professional Team Member;*
- *Managing the Fostering Experience;*
- *Understanding and Promoting Infant and Child Development;* and
- *Understand and Promoting Pre-Teen and Teen Development.*

She developed the first specialized module in the "Parenting Teens" series, *Attachment and the Teen in Family Foster Care*. Joanne has also contributed to the development of other CWLA curricula, including: *Supporting the Kinship Triad* with Sondra Jackson, *A Tradition of Caring* (a training program for kinship caregivers), and *Children of Incarcerated Parents—What Everyone Needs to Know*. In addition to her work with CWLA, Joanne consults and trains for a range of public and private agencies in New England, including the Archdiocese of Fall River, where she has worked to design a model child maltreatment prevention program that is integrated with religious education.

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*as of 3/01/05

**MODULE TWELVE
APPENDIX**

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