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Supporting Children with Roots in Ukraine and Russia

Every day the news and social media are filled with difficult images of the families and children directly impacted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The daily reminders of this war pull at our heartstrings and make us yearn to do something to help. Some of us have donated supplies or written checks to organizations that can help Ukrainian families.

But what about those families whose children were adopted from Ukraine or Russia? This war can be very difficult for those families, especially the children who may have some memory of their home country and worry about birth family, friends or acquaintances still located there.

The National Council for Adoption (NCFA) recently held a free webinar entitled "Supporting People in the Adoption Community with Roots in Russia and Ukraine." During this webinar, experts from several agencies spoke about how

parents may be able to help navigate this sensitive time with their adopted children, many whom now are teens or young adults. Here are some points we would like to share.

People, whether adopted from Russia or the Ukraine, no matter what their age, may be experiencing feelings of grief, loss, fear and sadness. Consider the child who may have lived in an orphanage in the Ukraine in their early years. Seeing war images on TV or social media may bring back feelings from their own past traumas. Younger children may not even realize what they are feeling, but their behaviors may be manifested in different ways, such as being distracted at home or school, being less interested in playing with friends or simply not talking to you about what they are thinking or feeling.

For Russian adoptees who now may be in college or in the working world, (Russia banned adoptions to the U.S. in 2013), the negative images and press about

their home country being portrayed as the "bad guy" may be difficult. They may also be experiencing anti-Russian stigmas and prejudice due to the war. Some adoptees may downplay their ties to Russia and their heritage.

So what can adoptive parents do to help children who have roots in Ukraine or Russia?

First, we need to acknowledge that we are all experiencing a sense of grief, loss, sadness and helplessness, regardless of having roots or not in these countries. There are complex emotions at work here, and as parents, it's easy for us to say to our children, "everything will be fine, don't worry about it" or get too emotionally involved and create a stressful situation at home. Neither is helpful.

It is more helpful to establish a safe space to allow your children to talk and express their feelings.

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NJ•ARCH Features:

- Website
- Lending Library
- Warm Line
- Resource Directory
- Training Workshops
- Events/ Conferences and More



CHILDREN'S AID
AND FAMILY SERVICES

www.cafsnj.org

Do You Know?



INTERESTED IN BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT?

The state of NJ is looking for prospective resource families who are willing and able to provide a loving home to the following:

- * Children and youth with complex behavioral health, developmental and medical needs
- * Adolescent youth ages 13-17
- * Sibling Groups of four or more.

For more information on how to become an NJ foster parent, please contact NJ ARCH at 877-427-2464 or warmline@njarch.org or embrella at 800-222-0047 or visit their website at www.embrella.org.

For more information on New Jersey's waiting children, please visit: www.nj.gov/nifosteradopt/adoption/

DCP&P WAITING CHILDREN

Ricky
Born 10/2008



A handsome little boy with a lot of positive energy, Ricky is a fighter who has surprised everyone with his determination. He may be non-verbal but is learning sign language. Grabbing your hand or using facial expressions or eye gazes are the ways he communicates his wants and needs. Ricky is able to walk with support as his balance is slowly developing. One on one attention, playing with toys, participating in art class and listening to music are some of the things that Ricky enjoys doing. Add to that growing list is being outdoors and engaging in activities such as playing with dogs, swinging, spending time in a medical gym as well as field trips; they all will bring a smile to Ricky's face. Ricky would flourish with a family who is committed to his care. A family with the ability to provide him with love and support as he continues to grow into adulthood are a must for this enthusiastic little guy. For more information on Ricky, please contact Kenyatta Johnson, at 856-340-6928.

Keriana
Born 6/2009



Keriana is a very friendly and affectionate young lady. She is very easy going and happy-go-lucky. She is always found laughing and smiling. She participates in the school STEP team and has expressed an interest in girl scouts. She is a fan of the Packers but does not have a specific athlete that she admires. She loves unicorns, they are her favorite, and she has quite the collection of stuffed animal unicorns, clothing, backpacks, etc. She is also a fan of LOL dolls. She has a good imagination and enjoys constructing play scenarios in her mind. Keriana loves pets but would specifically love to have a cat. Keriana has a close bond with her sister and would like to maintain contact with her. For more information on Keriana, please contact: Veronica Villanueva-Rosas at (609) 888-7491.



Larenze
Born 8/2006



Meet Larenze, he is often described as a kind, playful and friendly boy. Once you meet him, you will see what a sweet young man he truly is! He enjoys being the center of attention and loves to show everyone his beautiful smile. Playing the piano, video games, and listening to music as well as making beats/rhymes are his favorite activities. He is very creative and loves to share what he musically produces with anyone who will listen. Larenze also enjoys riding his bike and taking nature walks with someone. He loves the one on one time and being outdoors. Having a family is very important to Larenze who is looking for stability and an affectionate family. The forever family for Larenze will consistently offer him structure, guidance and lots of love. For more information on Larenze, please contact: Lisa Scott at 609-888-7358.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN (CON'T FROM PAGE 1)

Offering frequent “check-ins” with your child may be an effective way to help them verbalize and process what is taking place. It may take a few attempts for your child to open up, but when they do, validate their feelings and experiences.

For Russian adoptees, who now may be in their late teens or 20's, the talking to and supporting them may be more complex. Adoptive parents teach their children to have pride in their home country, culture

and people. During these difficult times, some adoptees may feel anger with their home country and even reject their birth identity. Parents can help by empathizing with their anger and offering emotional support. For young adult children living outside of the home, phone conversations may not be enough. Parents visiting to “check in” conveys greater availability for support.

Adoptive parents also need good self-care. Maintaining good connec-

tion with family and set limits on consumption of news and social media. It is not helpful for the war to overly dominate your attention.

It's not an easy time for anyone, but together with open communication, increased patience, and, when needed, seeking help from professionals, we will get through this.

And don't forget to give a lot of hugs.

<https://adoptioncouncil.org/resources-and-training/>

ADOPTEE'S BIRTHRIGHT ACT UPDATE

On January 1, 2017, the **Adoptees Birthright Act, Public Law 2014, c. 9** was implemented by the NJ Office of Vital Statistics. As a result, adult adoptees born and/or adopted in New Jersey may request an uncertified copy of their Original Birth Certificate (OBC). As of early May 2022, the number of adult adoptee requests that have been completed by the NJ Office of Vital

Statistics totaled about 10,150. After receiving their OBC, many adoptees have contacted NJ ARCH and/or the NJ Coalition for Adoption Reform & Education (NJCARE) for resource information on support groups, search specialists, mental health professionals and more. For more information about the Act, or to download the forms, please visit our website at www.njarch.org

and select “NJ Adoptees Birthright Act,” or go directly to the “New Records System for Birth Parents, Adult Adoptees” at www.nj.gov/health/vital/adoption. Birthparents who wish to share their contact information and/or medical history may also use this last website. Want more information? Contact NJ ARCH at 877-427-2465 or e-mail us at warmline@njarch.org.

TOUCHED BY KINSHIP CARE?

In New Jersey, 3% or 57,000 of children live with a relative with no biological parent present. Another 8.1% or 164,000 of children under 18 live in homes where the head of the household is a grandparent or other relative. If you or someone you know is touched by Kinship Care,

please check out NJ ARCH's sister site, Kinship Care Clearing House or **KinConnect**. This website has a wealth of resources for those raising a relative's children including handbooks, publications, agency support group listings and more. Check out

www.kinconnect.org or call our warm line at 877-KLG-LINE (877-554-5463) to speak to a warm-line specialist or for more information. We are here to help.



DO YOU KNOW?

NJ ARCH offers Free training workshops or adoption support groups

E-mail dwfried@njarch.org to discuss doing a training virtually!

- Adoption: A Life-Long Loss
- Telling your Child Difficult History
- Trans-racial Adoption and Foster Care
- Basics of Special Education in NJ
- Adoption and Foster Care in the School
- Foster and Adoptive Care Situations: Helping Foster Parents Deal with Difficult Behaviors
- From Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) to Adoption: The Journey to Permanency
- The Adopted Child's Journey: Questions Along the Way
- Who Am I? The Complexity of Teen Identity and Adoption

DID YOU KNOW?

STAYING HOME FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME MAY BE STRESSFUL FOR SOME RELATIONSHIPS.

IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN AND WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE ABOUT POSSIBLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CONTACT THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC ABUSE HOTLINE AT 800-799-7233 OR VISIT THEIR WEBSITE AT [HTTPS://WWW.THEHOTLINE.ORG/](https://www.thehotline.org/) OR CALL 911 FOR LOCAL HELP.

Our NJ ARCH Program is still working and serving our NJ consumers!

If you have an adoption, foster care and/or kinship-related question, please do not hesitate to contact our warm line at: 877-4ARCHNJ (877-427-2465) or e-mail us at warmline@njarch.org

We are here to help.

MAY IS NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

Each May, we take time to acknowledge foster parents, family members, volunteers, mentors, policymakers, child welfare professionals, and other members of the community who help children and youth in foster care find permanent homes and connections. We use this time to renew our commitment to ensuring a bright future for the more than 407,000 children and youth in foster care, and celebrate those who make a meaningful difference in their lives.

Sponsored by many partners, including the Children's Bureau as part of the U.S. Department of Health, this year's focus is on the connections and the important role kinship care has in the foster care system.

This year's theme, "Relative and Kin Connections: Keeping Families Strong," speaks to the positive impact relative

and fictive kin (someone not related by birth, adoption or marriage, but has an emotionally significant relation with the child) have during the journey to permanency. Extended families can be a source of stability and comfort to children who need care. For a child who cannot safely stay with their parents, kinship care may be the best path.

According to the Children's Bureau, foster care is a support to families and children should stay with family when possible. In many cultures, the "village" approach has been a longstanding value, and extended family is important to the development of children who feel surrounded by love and the continuation of cultural traditions. Whether formally through child welfare or informally through family arrangements, kinship care maintains bonds and reduces trauma. These bonds help children and youth develop their identity, live within their cultural roots, and foster a

sense of belonging—all things that are essential to their well-being.

Children and youth in care aren't the only ones who need our support. Kinship caregivers are responding to immediate family placement needs, so it is important to ensure our support is swift, tailored, and equitable. The aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends, and grandparents who open their homes and provide a sense of normalcy need and deserve equitable support.

For more information on Foster Care Month, the Children's Bureau message, as well as President Biden's Foster Care Month Proclamation, visit: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/about/>

www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/04/29/a-proclamation-on-national-foster-care-month-2022/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

PARENTING TIPS

Raising kids is one of the toughest and most fulfilling jobs in the words—and the one for which you may feel the least prepared.

Recently, *KidsHealth* published an on-line article entitled "Nine Steps to More Effective Parenting." Here are those recommended steps:

1. Boost your child's self-esteem

2. Catch your kids being good
3. Set limits and be consistent with your Discipline
4. Make time for your kids
5. Be a good role model
6. Make communication a priority
7. Be flexible and willing to adjust your parenting style
8. Show that your love is unconditional

9. Know your own needs and limitations as a parent

To read this the full article visit: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/nine-steps.html>



NATALIE'S LIBRARY CORNER

Hello readers!

As we celebrate Foster Care this month, let's turn our attention to new books and resources relating to foster care.

The Foster Dragon by Steve Herman is narrated by a young boy named Drew, whose family welcomes a very special dragon named Diggory into their home through foster care. Drew explains with facts and rhythmic statements how Diggory entered foster care and the difficulties of his adjustment into his new family and community. As Drew and Diggory grow closer, Diggory shares his feelings of sadness, anger, fear and worry throughout his time in foster care. He explains all about the adults in his life that are helping him along the way including a lawyer, the judge, a therapist, and social workers. Diggory explains, "Since I no longer have a family, grown-ups are assigned to make decisions for me, and though they all are kind . . . It's simply not the same as having parents of my own. I guess that it will be this way until I am full grown." Even though Diggory feels safe and happy with Drew and his family, he admits that he is afraid to make new friends or feel close because he knows he will have to move again.

Diggory exclaims, "Sometimes it makes me angry; and that's why I misbehave. Other times, I'm frightened, and I struggle to be brave. It's hard to be a foster child like me, and Kim, and Brad – we don't know what is ahead and miss the life we had." Drew validates all of Diggory's feelings with perfect big brother empathy and the two eventually become true brothers when Drew's family adopts Diggory.

We are a Foster Family: How Two Young Boys Became Big Foster Brothers

by Ashlee Caroroll, illustrations by Izzy Bean, is another book written from the perspective of a young boy whose family welcomes children into their home through foster care. This youngster, Rhyder, is 6 years of age. His family goes through the process of becoming a certified foster family and Rhyder explains the process from his youthful and innocent perspective. When his family welcomes two children into their home, he talks about all his feelings from jealousy to joy as they all adjust to each other. Rhyder details, "The first few days were full of changes. Some were easy and some were hard. We played together, but sometimes, our new brother and sister would throw toys or cry loud. It hurt my ears!" Rhyder is sad when his foster siblings are placed with their grand-

parents and he then helps explain kinship care to the reader. Rhyder misses the children while his family copes with the separation and their new quieter home. They soon look forward to the future and Rhyder writes, "then it starts all over again waiting to meet another brother/sister and become a foster family again! I wonder who will come next?"

Are you on social media?

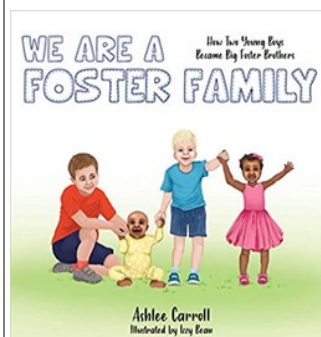
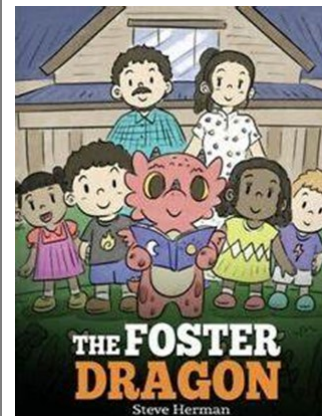
If so, check out [foster.parenting](https://www.foster.parenting) on Instagram. Laura, a foster parent, provides practical tips in scripted format to help foster families through many aspects of trauma informed parenting from taking the first steps to becoming a foster parent, intake phone calls with the social worker, welcoming children into the home for the first time, setting up the home and child's room, traveling with a foster child, visitations with birth family and so much more.

Foster parents are not alone. There are so many books, resources, and support groups to help your family on your foster care journey.

Be sure to check out our website for more resources or give our warm line a call at 877-4ARCHNJ (877-427-2465) or e-mail us at warmline@njarch.org.

- Cynthia Lapidus, BSW, CSW

CHECK THESE OUT



10:19



foster.parenting



Laura • Foster Parent Partner

♥ Practical tips and scripts for foster parents. All things trauma-informed. ♥
 📄 Templates, Resources, Support
linktr.ee/foster.parenting

327

Posts

112K

Followers

709

Following

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resource
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UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Looking for a conference or training in the next few months? Many of the below conferences below are offered virtually and listed on our NJ ARCH EVENTS page. Please check them out so you can join in!



June 14: Center for Adoption Support and Education Webinar and Free Virtual Parent Support Group Series: Strategies for Parenting a Child with a History of Loss and Trauma. 7:00—8:30pm.
<https://adoptionsupport.org/event/webinar-parent-support-group-strategies-for-parenting-a-child-with-a-history-of-loss-and-trauma/>

June 16—July 17: Center for Adoption Support and Education (CASE) Webinar: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth and Family Members:
<https://adoptionsupport.org/event/syf-webinar-supporting-lgbtq-youth-and-family-members/>

July 19-22: 48th Annual North American Conference on Adoptable Children (NACAC). Will be held virtually. <https://nacac.org/get-training/conference/>

August 9: All Children—All Families Webinar: Using Racial Equity Lens to Review and Update Child Welfare Practices Webinar: Register at: https://hrc-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Gjb1AS7oQtuzzKunFDqgVQ

August 22–24 and online September 21–23: National Association of Council for Children: 45th National Child Welfare Law Conference; Baltimore, MD
<https://www.naccchildlaw.org/page/Conference>

Looking for other educational resources? Check out our On-Line Learning, Podcasts and E-Learning options located on the Virtual Support Tab on www.njarch.org.