

CHILDREN'S ADOPTION PREPARATION PROGRAM (CAPP)

SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

This 8 – session curriculum for children ages 5 to 12 is based upon core concepts in adoption preparation. It uses multisensory teaching materials, flexible activities, crafts, and discussion to help children clarify their feelings and needs; recognize their personal histories of abuse, neglect, and loss; identify their past and present coping skills and strengths; sequence and integrate their family relationships; address divided loyalties; develop positive perspectives; and anticipate their next steps towards adoption. Participants create a Life Book and crafts to keep.

Session #1: All About Me

Children and facilitators establish rapport and the common purpose of exploring their personal life stories and what adoption could mean for them. Activities include creating covers for new Life Books and bead crafts with their names (or alternative crafts). Initial Life Book pages provide information about their unique characteristics. Children experience self-soothing techniques of deep breathing and guided meditation. A "Talking Stick" aids turn-taking and sharing during closing circle. A group "good-bye" ritual is established.

Session #2: Expressing My Feelings

Children listen to an animal story about feelings as a starting point for identifying and labeling their own feelings. They notice where they feel different emotions in their bodies and recall when and how they experienced these core feelings in the past. The children begin to relate these feelings to their histories. Feelings become normalized as they are shared with others.

Session #3: What All Kids Need

A picture chart depicts what all children need for healthy development (safety, food, good touches, medical care, opportunities to play, etc.). The discussion provides a framework for learning about appropriate parenting. Children exploring nurturing behaviors through role play with dolls. Life Book pages help them to identify which basic needs of their own were met or not met in their birth homes and foster families. Through guided meditation they "wrap themselves" in a "Love Blanket."

Session #4: Why I Couldn't Stay

An original video of a puppet named Rita eases children into applying the concepts of abuse, neglect, and coping skills to their own life histories. Through a combination of group discussion and individual Life Book pages, children recall, record, and share their own difficult times and coping methods. The guided meditation helps them create a personal "Safe Place".

CAPP Summary of Sessions, continued

Session #5: My Circle of Protection

This session helps children identify their own personal resources for self-protection, coping, and resiliency. Learning about Native American medicine shields empowers them to identify their own sources of safety, strength, and protection. Using picture symbols, each child designs and creates a personal “Shield of Protection.”

Session #6: My Journey

Each child constructs a chronological history in some form of important people, homes, places, pets, events, and feelings that they have experienced so far in their lives. “House Pages” for the Life Books provide a chronological record of residences, people, and significant events. This record can be amended or supplemented over time. Experiences in each residence are recorded, drawn, and discussed or shared, according to each individual's preferences .

Session #7: Love and Loyalties

Children learn that they are capable of loving many people (and pets) at once, even if they are not physically in contact (through separation or death). Discussion promotes the understanding that children can love a person while not liking some of their behaviors, and that the children can love people who do not like one other (divided loyalties). Crafts include decorating “Heart Boxes” or “Treasure Boxes” and filling them with small objects or trinkets that are symbolic of their loved ones. Corresponding Life Book pages reinforce concepts of maintaining love and heart connections throughout life.

Session #8: Celebration

With primary support adults present during this session, children learn about the process of meeting and transitioning to their new adoptive families. A surprise puppet show provides a non-threatening opportunity to ask specific questions about their transition process. Following a Life Book review, the supporting adults speak about the heroic features of each child and present them with a “Hero” page for their Life Book.