

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

Behavioral issues arise in kin caregiver situations, largely because the child and caregiver are deal with an enormous transition.

TRANSITIONING FOR CHILDREN

Transitioning between caregivers can result from family disruption, changes in the family structure, substance use, homelessness, etc. These transitions are abrupt. Sometimes children have to leave home, friends, school, belongings, and pets in the middle of the night.

NEGATIVE COPING BEHAVIORS

- Outbursts
- Dysregulation
- Defiance
- Food Disruption
- Bad Hygiene
- Refusing To Go To School,
- Behavioral Issues At School
- Behind Educationally
- Negative Peers
- Substance Use

TRANSITIONING FOR CAREGIVERS

Our kiddo's go through tons and tons of transitions, but as kin caregivers, you go through your own as well. Including

- **GRIEF:** Grief can be the loss of your own child or the loss of a relative. It can be the loss of self, the loss of your sense of normalcy. You have your own routine, your own life you're living before your kiddo comes into your care. Loss of retirement. Whether it's going from retirement to a job, cashing in your retirement plan early, going back to work to work another position or just completely losing that dream altogether. You have to keep working and working to support the kiddo you have.
- **ROLE TRANSITIONS:** Becoming a grandparent to parent or aunt to parent, uncle to parent, brother to parent. You're changing who you are, becoming an authority figure. Maybe you were a relative or friend who spoiled this kiddo, giving them presents, or taking them places. Now you're the one who's creating all the rules and all the structure.

- **INTENSE SCHEDULE:** You won't have the schedule you had before. You have to take them to school. Maybe you have to go to work at the same time. There's activities like soccer, baseball, basketball. You may have to go to counseling for kiddo, and medical appointments. Maybe there's some visitation involved and you have to keep appointments for these as well.
- **FINANCIAL STRESS:** School supplies, shoes, backpack, food, clothing appointments maybe we have a deductible or a copay.
- **NAVIGATING SERVICES:** Getting children into school and the right classes. Maybe they have to go to an IEP meeting. Do they have a 504 plan? Legal issues, CYFD involvement, supplementary programs and services—all these things require understanding and attention.

INTERVENTIONS

Interventions are things we do for our kiddos to help them get through hard moments.

EMOTIONAL REGULATIONS FOR CAREGIVER

If we don't regulate our emotions, we can't help our kiddo regulate theirs. For example, if I come and I'm angry and I'm yelling and the kiddo is angry and yelling and I'm asking him to be calm while I'm angry and yelling, he's not going to be calm at all.

CONSISTENT RESPONSE

Every time my kiddo is angry, I have to be consistent in my response. If he's angry, I have to sit with him, but I always take a breath, "Tell me why you're angry." We can't, in one moment use coping skills, and then start yelling next minute I'm going to yell. That's not going to build attachment. It does not model appropriate skills for the child to learn.

ROUTINES AND RITUALS

Consistent schedule, routines and rituals stabilize a child's mood and behavior. Consistent meal times, story times, bath times, and bed times make their life more stable, predictable, and less fearful. Routines and rituals to help them stay regulated and build positive attachment.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF ATTACHMENT

- Emotional Regulations For Caregivers
- Attunement
- Consistent Response
- Routines & Rituals

EMOTIONAL REGULATION FOR CAREGIVERS

- Not taking child's behaviors personally
- Knowledge of trauma responses
- Self-monitoring skills
- Building supports & resources

ATTUNEMENT

- Understanding the child's perspective
- Understanding a child's triggers
- Reflective listening skills

WHY WE REGULATE

- Provides A Safe Environment
- Supports Connection
- Builds Emotional Tolerance
- Confirms Needs Will Be Met

IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS

- Understand & Express Emotions
- Identify Emotions In Oneself & Others
- Cues: Body Language, Tone, Eye Contact, Etc.
- Build Emotional Vocabulary
- Understand Triggers & Responses

EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

- Use "I" Statements
- Develop Routine Discussions
- Encourage Open Communication
- Teach Importance Of Expressing Feelings
- Identify Safe People (Circles of Trust)

NONVERBAL SKILLS

- Tone Of Voice
- Physical Space
- Eye Contact
- Explore Emotional Expression Through:
- Play, Art, Writing, Movement, Drama, Music

RESOURCES

- UNM Developmental Disability Resource Network: Largest collection of disability-related books, eBooks, and DVDs in New Mexico. Available for check out or onsite use by public. unmhealth.org/services/development-disabilities/programs/other-disability-resources/information-network/
- Share New Mexico: Largest, most up-to-date, & comprehensive New Mexico resource directory for improving quality of life. sharenm.org
- Fostering Family Caregiver Resources: Financial, Educational, Caregiving, Mental Health, Legal, Transportation & Housing Resources, Peer Support Group & Monthly Virtual Trainings. fosteringfamily.com