



Fostering Hope

For YCS Specialized Treatment and Foster Home Families

Autumn 2012



In this issue

***Explore the many facets
of the act of forgiveness***

BONUS!

Get rid of pesky resentments

Need to de-stress?

***Check out two simple exercises
for the mind and body that are
guaranteed to make your day
a little lighter***

***Did you know that if
you adopted a child
with special needs
you may qualify for
a special tax credit?***

Let's get acquainted!

♥ ***A Warm Welcome*** goes out to **Anitra Hampton** from Woodbury. Her home has been officially licensed and she is awaiting the placement of her first child.

♥ ***Congratulations to families with their first placements!***

Willy & Mildred Brujan welcomed a 13 year-old girl into their family.

Tammy Lewis Johnson & Thornton Johnson welcomed a 14 year-old girl into their family.

Edwina and David Johnson welcomed an 11 year-old boy into their family.

♥ ***A special thanks goes out to all existing parents who have so generously opened up their homes to other children.***

Chris & Tiffany Gilmore welcomed a 13 year old girl and an 8 year old boy into their home.

Michele & Gerald Johnson welcomed a 14 year old boy into their home.

Kimberly Williams welcomed a 13 year old girl into her home

Dudley & Sheila Williams welcomed an 18 year old boy and a 16 year old boy into their home.

Vernon & Janet Robinson welcomed a 16 year old girl into their home.

Talina Johnson welcomed a 10 year old boy into her home.

Mary Ann Jones welcomed 13 year old girl into her home.

Norma & Arundel Morris welcomed 11 year old girl into their home.

Elaine & John Murray welcomed 10 year old boy into their home.

Lisa Smith welcomed 17 year old girl into her home.



Fostering Hope

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Parent Refresher Training

Southern Region

Saturday, November 10th
9 am to 5 pm
20 East Evergreen Avenue
Somerdale

Lunch will be provided

YCS Mission

To partner with at-risk and special needs
children, youth and young adults to build
happier, healthier more hopeful lives
within families and communities.

www.ycs.org



*Save the date
for our annual*

Holiday Celebrations

Southern Region

Thursday, December 20th
6-9 pm
VFW Hall
10 Kennedy Blvd.
Somerdale

Northern Region

Date & Time to be Announced

**From the Desk of William Waller
Vice President, YCS Treatment Home Svcs.**

Dear Parents,

Hello and welcome to the annual fall edition of *Fostering Hope*. I am hopeful that the children in your care have acclimated to their new schools, teachers and classmates and you're enjoying the beautiful autumn weather.

This edition of our newsletter is devoted to forgiveness. We could not find a more deserving topic to spotlight. The inability to forgive especially impairs children, youth and adults impacted by trauma.

Our children often blame themselves for being separated from their families and hold themselves accountable for problems that are well beyond their ability to influence or control. Very few learn to forgive themselves which renders them powerless to even begin to deal with the trauma caused by transgressors. This paralysis prevents our youth from moving forward in their journey to healing and many remain "stuck" throughout their adult lives in those places where they have been hurt, harmed or hindered. There is a simple exercise on page seven that can help you and your children get past debilitating resentments.

As caregivers, we must help our children free themselves from the pain of the past. This begins with helping them forgive themselves.

After reading this, issue please share these ideas with your children. Hopefully, a meaningful dialog will follow, and you just might be amazed at their responses. Several of our treatment home parents share with us their experiences on how modeling forgiveness has changed their relationships with their children and at the same time has demonstrated for their children how to forgive. Remember, forgiveness is a powerful force which frees us all to move forward on our journeys!

I look forward to seeing you at our holiday celebrations.

William Waller



Adoption News!

*Rejoice with your family in
the beautiful land of Life!*

Albert Einstein

Kimberly Williams
and her 15 year old
daughter, Antoinette



Rozenaa Perry and
her 11 year old daughter, Kara



On behalf of all the families and staff, Fostering Hope would like to extend our fondest well wishes to the families whose adoptions were finalized over the past year.

The Therapeutic Value of Forgiveness

“When you forgive somebody who has wronged you, you’re spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each others’ presence.” Fredrick Buechner

The freedom to be at peace in our own skins - that’s what forgiveness allows. We relinquish this freedom when we hold onto anger and resentment. Enormous amounts of energy are wasted when we hold back compassion and cling to hate, and hostile feelings. The only remedy is to let go of the anger and genuinely forgive.

Children can learn the act of forgiveness by observing their parents as they forgive others and equally important as parents or adults can forgive themselves.

So what is the real meaning of forgiveness

FORGIVENESS IS

1. For your own healing (and not about the offender)
2. Power over negative thoughts
3. The attainment of peace of mind
4. Protection of physical and mental health
5. The act of finishing of old business so you can experience the present, free of contamination from the past.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT

1. Condoning or excusing hurtful behavior
2. Denying or minimizing your feelings and hurt
3. Having to reconcile with the offender
4. Giving up your rights for justice (including legal action)

[Four case] studies, taken as a whole, suggest that forgiveness may be taught and learned, and that the outcomes can be quite favorable. In fact, statistically significant improvement in such variables as hope and self-esteem, as well as significant decreases in anxiety and depression, were more the rule than the exception.

Robert D. Enright & Catherine T. Coyle
<http://www.forgivenessinstitute.org>

Forgiveness Begins With Forgiving Yourself Self forgiveness enables the release of guilt, shame and fear

If you’ve ever beaten yourself up over something you’ve said or wished you could take back some thoughtless act, you know how haunting this can be - especially if the regret involves your child or family member. Forgiving yourself, learning from the mistake and moving on is much easier said than done.

If you find yourself compelled to replaying past offenses over and over, and re-experiencing the original hurt, you have not genuinely been able to forgive yourself. According to Peter K. Gerlach, MSW., logic and "willpower" are of little use in stopping this compulsion, because the inner voices that tell you to replay the past believe they're *helping* you. With patience, inner-family therapy can end this frustrating dynamic.

Nelson Mandela once said, “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.” You have the power to change that. Peace is built on the decisions we make and the actions we take in the small moments of our life. Deciding to forgive is one more way of creating peace, the most important job any of us can do right now.

Turn to page 7 for a simple mental exercise to release that can help release feelings of resentment →

Advice from the Frontlines ***Two parents share their thoughts on the topic of forgiveness***

I believe it is very important as Treatment Home Parents that we are able to totally forgive our children every time they act out. As we know, being a Treatment Home Parent is not easy. The children act out in our homes because they are hurting from the loss of their biological or adoptive parent/s. The children want to be reunited permanently with their biological parent/parents, when in most cases this is not possible. Therefore, the children grieve and act out.

The irony is that the act of forgiveness which may seem a sign of weakness is in reality empowering and freeing.

Acting out is a sign of emotional distress that is occurring within the children. No one likes children to act out, but it is very important that we totally forgive the children each time, and move on to the present. **Do not take it personal! Let go of all anger, grudges, resentments and negative feelings towards yourself and especially the children.** Otherwise, the parents will not move on, and the relationship/bond between the parents and their children will suffer terribly. It is ironic that the act of forgiveness, which seems to be a sign of weakness, is in reality empowering and freeing.

Children are little recorders, and they learn the act of forgiveness by watching their parents. If the parents forgive themselves and others, then the children will learn to forgive also. In conclusion, I hope that someday our children will be able to forgive themselves, and those that have hurt them. I believe, only then, our children will be able to move on, to become productive citizens with empowerment, and freedom from their painful past.

Dianna Munford. YCS Northern PAC President & Treatment Home Parent



Lisa Smith Recalls a Pivotal Moment that transformed her Relationship with the Child in her home

As a treatment home parent, Lisa Smith learned very quickly that the children in her care would often, initially, do things that would be upsetting and personally hurtful. She recalled how one young girl in a fit of anger broke an expensive fountain that was mounted on the wall in her living room. This was especially upsetting to Lisa since the fountain had been a gift from her sister who had passed away more than 10 years earlier.

Lisa said she knew the episode could be a turning point in her relationship with the child, if she could briefly separate herself from the situation and calm down. With this space, Lisa was able to look at the incident objectively.

“I knew this child was used to acting this way to get the attention of the people she was angry with...She never had a stable home life and was allowed to get away with this behavior as she moved from one place to another,” said Lisa. “I was angry with the system and the adults in this girl’s past.”

Lisa said before she talked to the girl, she had to forgive her. “If I couldn’t forgive her, I wouldn’t be able to teach her about respecting the personal property of others.”

With tears in her eyes, Lisa explained to the child the sentimental value of the fountain and how much it had meant to her. When she told the child that through all her pain that she forgave her, the girl asked “Why?”

“I told her that I can’t carry around anger in my heart, because what is in my heart stays with me forever.” I knew if I wanted her to understand the importance of forgiveness, I had to model it for her.”

Something happened that day that changed their relationship forever. Yes, the girl still got angry and there were more problems to work through, but slowly the girl began to understand the power of forgiveness.

Lisa recalled one very special moment. “She told me that the next time she prayed, she was going to pray for her mother.”

Celebrating our Children's Accomplishments

Hugo is now a sophomore at Camden County College.

Megan moved on to Camden County Vocational Technical School and is studying Automotive Mechanical Repairs.

Rayvaugh graduated from Willingboro High School

Lamont received his NJ Drivers License, is working and has moved into his own studio apartment.

Willie Harris Brown has been selected to study in China during the summer of 2013 by the People to People Organization. Willie is in 11th grade at West Caldwell Votech. Last year he maintained an A average, and is majoring in carpentry.



Shout Out to Rayvaugh

Rayvaugh helped the YCS Team win the Quest for the Cup at this year's summer games.

A Special Congratulations and Best Wishes to

Balial Sloan El graduated from Monmouth University with a BS degree in Health Sciences. On behalf of all the staff and treatment home families, we'd also like to offer our congratulations to Balial's proud mom Miriam Sloan El.

A night to remember!



Aileen and her date were all smiles for this photo at her senior prom. Aileen graduated from Winslow Township High and is now enrolled as a full time student at Camden County College.

Artists' Corner



Jasmine, 16

This one simple exercise works all the muscles, builds strength and improves your over-all sense of well being and just maybe put a little extra spring into your step!

To your health!

Everyone knows how good it feels to stretch. Now, if you can do it with some weights, you'll not only feel better, but you'll build muscle and increase strength. And it only takes several minutes of your day.

Stand on either a bottom stair or a thick hard covered book Balance the balls of your feet at the edge of the stair with the weights held up to your ears. Start with light weights 1-3 pounds

Raise your arms and feet, then return to previous position. Repeat 10 times. Try to do this exercise six times a week at the same time each day for maximum benefit.

With practice you will be able to slowly increase the number of lifts. Aim to complete 35 stretches. It may be difficult to maintain your balance at first, but, with practice you will see your balance improve.

Please consult with your physician before tackling any new exercise routine.



For your mental well being

Try this simple exercise to transform negative feelings and thoughts you have when you are feeling angry or hurt with yourself or another.

Let your grievances come up. Notice what happens in your body -- acceleration of heart-beat, shallow breathing, tension, etc.

Now let go of this image and take some slow, deep abdominal breaths. Focus on your abdomen, and imagine the breath going down into it as you inhale. Expand your abdomen on each inhalation, and deflate your abdomen as you exhale. Take about five breaths and keep your focus on your abdomen. If your mind goes back to the person who hurt you or to anything else, bring the focus back to the rhythm of your breath and the movement of your abdominal muscles as you inhale and exhale.

Bring into your mind an image of someone you love very much, or a place of peace and beauty. Allow yourself to be flooded with the positive feelings this image elicits. Now bring those feelings down to the area around your heart. Allow the good feelings to penetrate your heart and soothe you.

Lastly, keep breathing the good feelings into your heart. Now take a look again at the person you are angry at. Let the good feelings protect you. The purpose of doing this step is to break the pattern of stress reactions that normally occur in your mind and body when you think of the person who hurt you. When you surround your heart with positive energy, the power the person has had over you begins to dissipate.

Resentment is a habit, and habits take 25 days to change

So if you do this exercise each time you think of the person who hurt you over twenty-five days, you will literally change your mental and physical reactions. They will no longer have power to hurt you.

If you have adopted a child with special needs, you may be entitled to a valuable tax credit that enables you to provide your child with additional educational supports*

Since 2003, families who adopted a child with special needs from foster care could claim a federal adoption tax credit even if they had no adoption expenses. Children who receive adoption assistance/subsidy benefits are considered children with special needs. Other adoptive families are also eligible for the credit, but must have (and be able to document, if requested by the IRS) qualified adoption expenses.

The tax credit became refundable for 2010 and 2011. A refundable tax credit is one you get back regardless of what you owe or paid in taxes for the year. Families who adopted from 2005 to 2009 may be able to benefit from the refundable credit because credits from those years can be carried forward until 2010. (Families who adopted in 2004 may be able to take some limited advantage of the credit but will not benefit from refund ability. Families who adopted earlier will not benefit from the credit if they did not take it already.)

The amount of the credit is based on the year the adoption was finalized:

2012	\$12,650
2011	\$13,360
2010	\$13,170
2009	\$12,150
2008	\$11,650
2007	\$11,390
2006	\$10,960
2005	\$10,630
2004	\$10,390

The credit is claimed one time for each adopted child with special needs.

To be eligible for the credit, you must:

- ◆ Have adopted a child other than a stepchild — Children who receive a monthly adoption subsidy payment have been determined by the state to have special needs, so these children are eligible for the full tax credit without documenting expenses. Families who adopted children without special needs are also eligible, but need to have (and be able to document, if asked) qualified adoption expenses.
- ◆ Be within the income limits — How much of the credit you can claim is based on income. In 2010, families with a federal modified adjusted gross income above \$222,520 cannot claim the credit; families with incomes above \$182,520 can claim part credit. In 2011, families with a federal modified adjusted gross income above \$225,210 cannot claim the credit; families with incomes above \$185,210 can claim part credit. Anyone with incomes below the lower amount should be able to claim the full credit. (Adoptions from previous years had different income limits.)
- ◆ Prove the adoption by providing the IRS with a copy of the adoption decree. Families who adopted a child with special needs must also provide a copy of the adoption assistance agreement or a letter from the state determining that the child has special needs.

* excerpted from the NACAC website: <http://www.nacac.org/>

NACAC's resources focus on adoptions
of children with special needs from foster care.
North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)

800-470-6665 or
800-847-5027

For complete details visit
njadoptionssubsidy.org

or

www.nacac.org/taxcredit/taxcredit.html

The time to act is now!
Funding for this one
time tax credit that may
be cut in 2013

***Paying attention to the small print reaps big rewards
for one mom and her adopted daughter***

Mary Conyers's daughter was just getting by in school. "As long as she behaved, they gave her passing grades...That's how it is with kids in special ed," bemoaned Mary. While fretting over how to help her 13 year-old daughter, who reads on a fourth grade level, she recalled a message on the bottom of the page of congratulatory letter that she received from the Department of Children & Families & DYFS when she was about to adopt. She pulled out the letter and in small print found a number to call for a special subsidy that could be obtained for additional services for children with special needs.

After calling the office (see numbers on this page) Mary took the letter and all the usual documents she would bring to file her taxes to her tax preparer (H&R Block). According to Mary, they knew exactly what to do to file for a one-time federal income tax credit.

However, several weeks later she received a letter from the IRS requiring additional documentation explaining her daughter's special needs. This time Mary contacted the NACAC Subsidy Representative. She told Mary that she should have received a package of information with all the necessary documentation from DYFS at the time of the adoption. Mary had never received this. Luckily, the subsidy representative was able to secure the packet and send it to Mary.

Within several months from the time she filed for the subsidy, Mary received a check in the mail for \$13,000. "I used \$8,000 to enroll my daughter in an intensive program at a Huntington Learning Center," said Mary, adding that the remainder of the money went into a college fund for her daughter.

For Additional Help Contact

State Subsidy Contact Person

Marisol Garces

Department of Children and Families, DYFS

Phone: 609-888-7460

E-mail: marisol.garces@dcf.state.nj.us

**NACAC Subsidy Representative
(parent/volunteer)**

Irene Lando

973-697-8346

E-mail: silando2001@yahoo.com



Congratulations!

In every issue of Fostering Hope, we have exhorted parents to take advantage

of a quarterly compliance bonus that they are eligible to receive if they complete all of the necessary medical, dental and paperwork requirements for their children.

We are happy to report that every family has qualified for the compliance bonus for at least one quarter or more.

Did You Know...???

If you have maintained a child in your treatment home for 6 months or more, you may qualify to claim the child as a dependent. Please check with your accountant or tax preparer.



The Mailbox is Open!

We welcome all your comments and suggestions. Our hope is that we can make *Fostering Hope* relevant for every parent. But for that to happen, we need your input. So please drop us a line or give us a call...

Bill Waller - wwaller@ycs.org

Janis Nicolosi-Endo - jnendo@ycs.org or

201-678-1312 ext. 134

Fostering Hope

Autumn 2012

Message from William Waller Adoption News	3
Reflections on Forgiveness	4
Advice from the Frontlines	5
Our Children's Achievements	6
Exercises for physical & mental health	7
Federal Income Tax Subsidy for Additional services for adoptees	8
One mother's efforts reap big rewards or her child Did you know?	9

Self Expressions



Keyon, 10