



**Finding
Community**

Mental Health in Foster, Adoptive & Kinship Families

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Artwork Created Using AI

Introductions

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- Van Buren CMH PSP
- Co-Founder & Co-CEO Heart for Home Respite Foster Care Services
- Educator, Foster Mom, Adoptive mom



Courtney Stillman

- Adoptive Parent Consultant AFSN
- COR Parent, MDHHS & the Kinder Cares Program
- ~~Biological Step Adoptive~~ Kinship Foster Just Mom



Connection Before Content

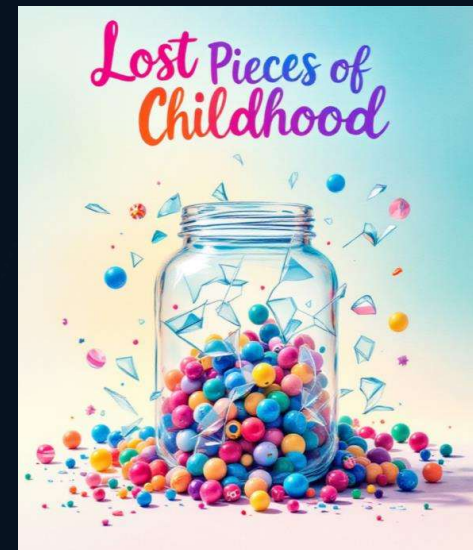
What helps you calm down
when you are feeling
overwhelmed?

1. Shared Mental Health Challenges in Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families



- **Negative Past**

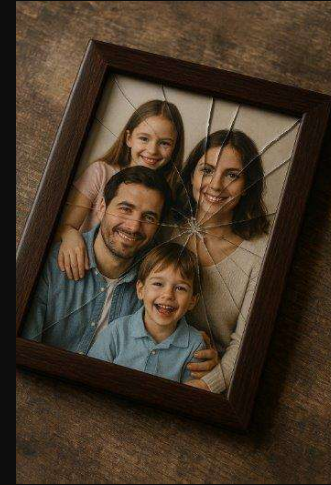
**Children in Care...
May Have**



- **Trauma**

This Often Brings

- **A Sense of Loss**
- **Struggles with Attachment**



Mental Health Struggles for the Children Could Be...

- Separation from Community
- Loss of Identity and Sense of Belonging
- Isolation
- Fear of Abandonment



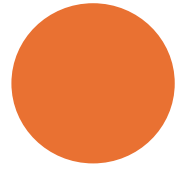


IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE
WHOLE STORY, SHUT UP

Quote: [RAISINGDEVON.COM](https://raisingdevon.com)

Which Can Lead to Child and Caregiver...

- Feelings of Guilt
- Embarrassment
- Overwhelm



Reflection:

Think about this week or the last month. Which of the following words-Guilt, Embarrassment, Overwhelm showed up the strongest?

Couple That With Common Diagnosis...

"Alphabet Soup"

ADD/ADHD

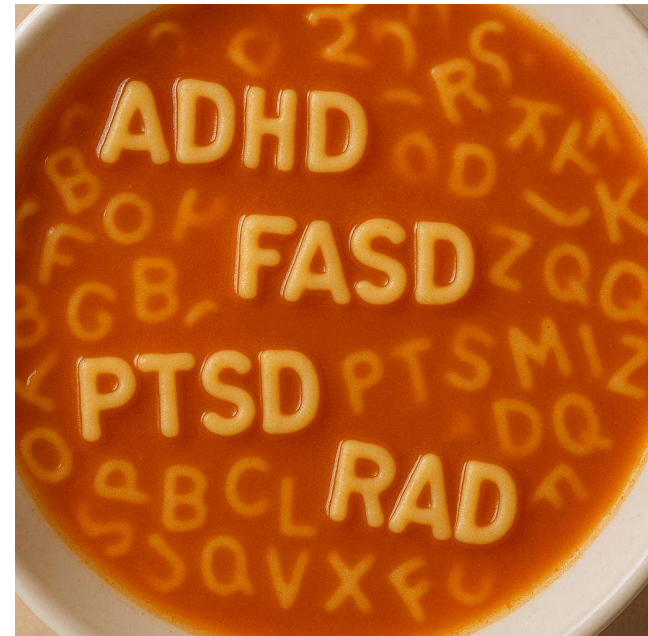
ASD

FASD

ODD/DMDD

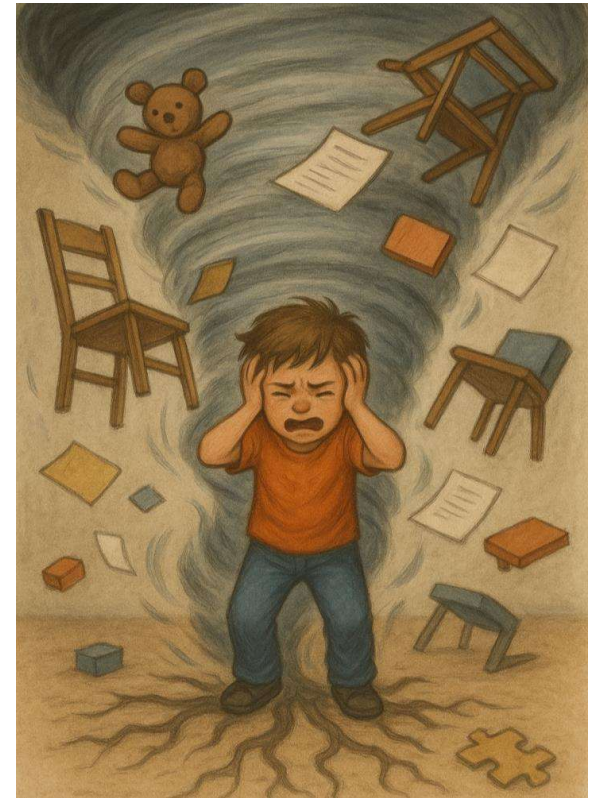
PTSD

RAD



Mental Health Challenges for the Entire Family

- **Stress**
- **Stigma**
- **PTSD**
- **Isolation**



**And caregivers can end up
with...**

- **Burnout**
- **Uncertainty**
- **Loss of
Hope**



Reflective Thought:

Take a minute and share the following statement with a neighbor.

Right now, I feel very _____,
and if I could address one thing it would
be _____.

ZEN DEN

CALM DOWN STRATEGIES



CALM DOWN STRATEGIES



2. Creative and Practical Tools that EMPOWER Caregivers to:

A. Support the Emotional Well-being of the Children: Using Physical Interventions

1. Sensory Calming Corners
2. Movement & Play
3. Weighted blankets
4. Physical exercise/sports

“We have used _____ and it helps sometimes!”



Creative and Practical Tools that Empower Caregivers cont...

B. Support the Emotional Well-being of the Children:...By Increasing Emotional Intelligence (EI)

1. Feelings Check In: emotion cards, emojis, *vocabulary*
2. Storytelling, Role Play, Rewind
 - Ask: What do you think the character would think, feel, do next...
 - Ask what word (emotion) might come next





Support the Emotional Well-being of the Children...By Increasing Emotional Intelligence (EI) cont..

3. CO-Regulation-calm breathing, gentle tone & presence.

“While trying to stay calm I _____.”

4. Safe Space for Big Feelings-All Emotions are Welcome

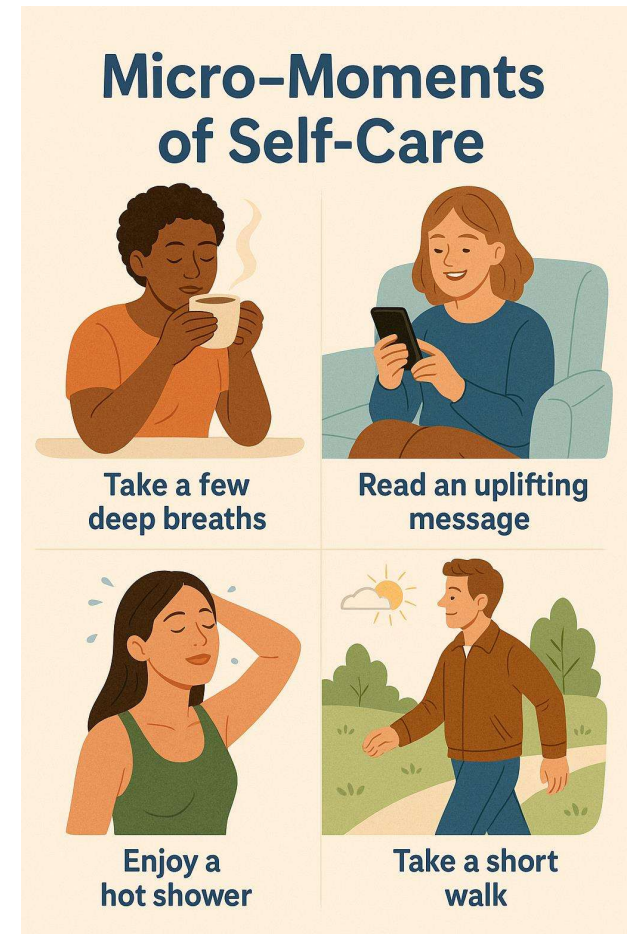
5. ROUTINES!

“The routine that worked best for me was _____”

3. Creative and Practical Tools that Empower Caregivers to Support the Emotional Well-being of Themselves :

a. Micro-Moments of Investing in Yourself

b. Reflective Journaling or Voice Notes
- “I like to use_____.”



Creative and Practical Tools that Empower Caregivers to Support the Emotional Well-being of Themselves cont...

c. Focusing on **Gratitude**

d. What works for YOU!!!!

****Wellbeing is intentionally investing in yourself!**

*What works for YOU may not be what works for others
and that is OK!*


Share with your neighbor... “What works best for me
is _____.”



Creative and Practical Tools that Empower Caregivers to Support the Emotional Well-being of Themselves cont:

e. Finding Support:

- A Support Group or “Support Groups”
- Boundaries with Compassion
- Care for Your Physical Health



Support groups—no matter what is going on in life—you need to make the time to attend... you need the time to connect with people that just get it

Finding support cont...

-Learn the language from others

*Other families *Trusted workers

-Learn from “mistakes”, “missteps”, and road BLOCKS - both yours and others?

“One time, I figured out how to _____ because I
_____.”

-Find encouragement from others

“One of the most impactful/encouraging things someone ever said to me was _____.”



Strength of Collective Storytelling: Building Resilience & Connection

1

Normalizing
Experiences

2

Building
Empathy and
Understanding

3

Creating a
Sense of
Belonging

4

Transforming
Trauma into
Meaning

5

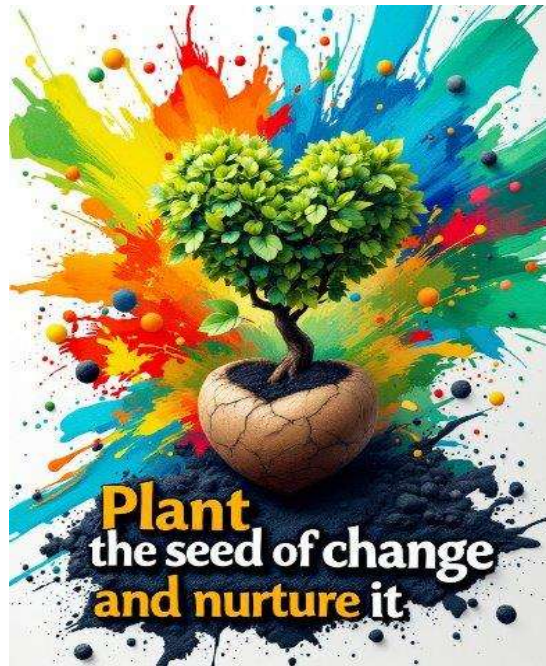
Sharing
Strategies and
Wisdom

4. How to Promote Long-Term Mental Wellness in Caregiving Homes

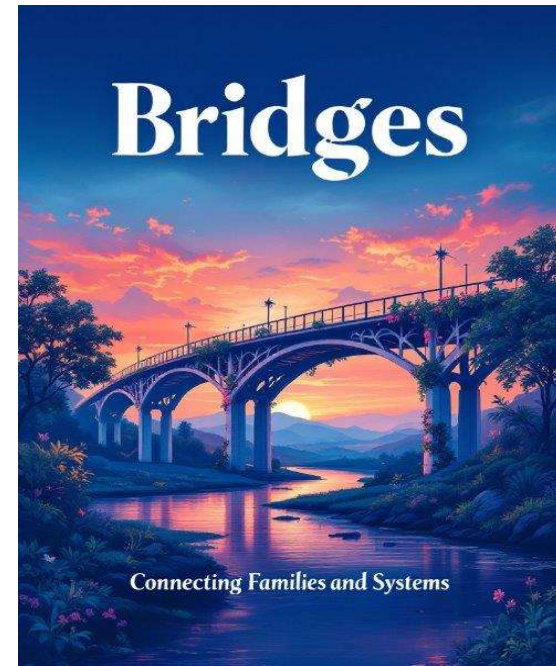
- Collaboration: Building a Circle of Support
- Reflection: Turning Experience into Growth



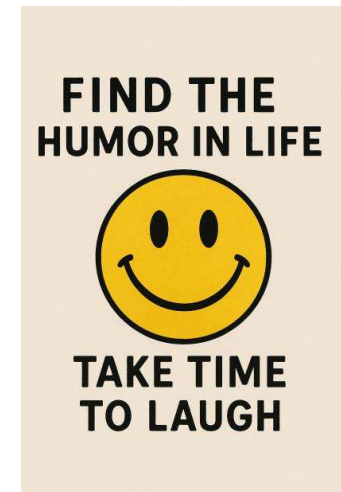
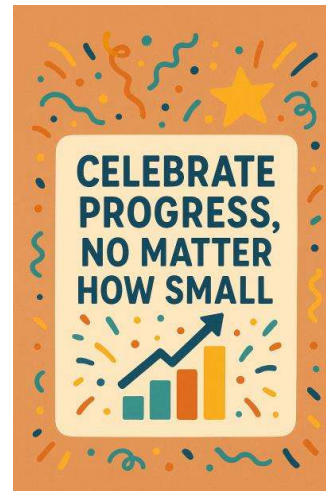
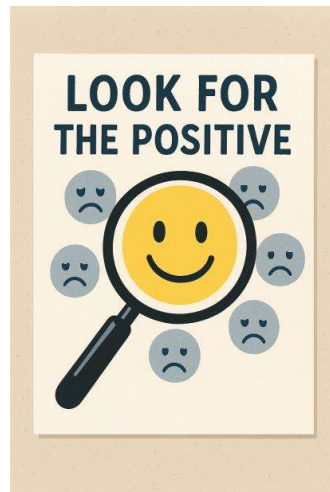
How to Promote Long-Term Mental Wellness in Caregiving Homes cont...



Resource-Sharing:
Equipping Homes with
Tools



Professional Guidance
Access



5. Sustaining Long-Term Wellness

- Individualized Wellness Plan
- Preventative Check-Ins
- Celebrating Progress - No Matter How Small
- Finding the Humor



SO WHAT IS NEXT...

Join us for
more
Collective
Conversations
on FAK
Families and
Mental Health:

