

Facilitator's Guide

MODULE 4

Equipped to Love

Supporting Adoptive
and Foster Families in the Church



“Why” and “How”

MODULE 1

Why children need adoptive families or a temporary home through foster care

- Reasons why children need adoptive families
- Reasons a child may need a temporary home through foster care

How to support and encourage adoptive and foster families

- What you can do to help

MODULE 2

Why interactions with these children need to look different

- What defines a child from a “hard place?”
- What are some potential effects of experiencing these hardships?

How to interact with children who have been adopted and children in care

- “Do’s and don’ts” in interacting with a child who has been adopted or a child in care—The “DON’TS”
- “Do’s and don’ts” in interacting with a child who has been adopted or a child in care—The “DO

MODULE 3

Why these children act differently

- Understanding attachment (attachment cycle)
Delays and differences

MODULE 4

How to meet the unique needs of the children

- Defining and responding to needs

MODULE 5

Why there is a need for overall sensitivity

- Sensitivity to emotional needs of adoptive and foster parents
- Sensitivity toward children

How to show sensitivity toward parents and children

- Language sensitivity
- Respecting boundaries

MODULE 6

Why there is a need for parenting differently

- Understanding differences
- Attachment Parenting vs. Traditional Parenting

How to help families in Attachment Parenting

Connect

Option 1:

Collect several board games, card games, or table games. Rearrange the game rules so that no game has its own rules. As people arrive place them in groups and instruct them to adapt the game that they have to be played by the rules that they have been given. Once they have a general idea of how to adapt, tell them to begin playing the game using the rules as they understand them.

Ask the following questions:

- Q *How did you like playing the games?*
- Q *How did it feel to play the game when the rules didn't match the game?*
- Q *How did the rules help or hurt your game playing?*
- Q *How did your group adapt to the rules or change the game?*

Say: We have all learned rules of discipline, structure, and limits from our own experiences. What we have learned has helped us to live well as disciplined adults. Children coming from hard places have equally been shaped by their experiences, and the way they respond to conventional discipline techniques and limits may be very different from what we have been shaped to expect. Just like you struggled to make sense of a game whose rules didn't match the game itself, these children may struggle significantly to respond to how we are used to maintaining order and discipline. In this session, we will consider how trauma and other hurts impact that way the children from hard places experience the world and how we can help them grow to be well-adjusted and disciplined people and people who are prepared to follow Jesus as His disciple.

Option 2:

On a whiteboard or large piece of paper, write the heading, “Basic Rules of the Road.” Ask your group to list some of the basic essential rules for driving. After they have given a list of several items, **Say:** “These are all things that we have been taught and learned through our experience. What can you imagine that might be different on this list if we had first learned to drive in another country?”

Here are some interesting differences:

- In Europe, you call 122 not 911 for an emergency.
- In many European countries, drivers are required to carry reflective vests and to put them on if they exit their car roadside for a breakdown.
- In many countries, police collect fines for automobile violations on the spot.
- It is illegal to honk your horn in several European countries. Drivers signal each other by flashing their headlights.
- And of course, many countries drive on the left side of the road instead of the right.

Say: Similar to someone who has learned to drive in another country, kids who are coming from hard places have probably learned from their experiences a different way of looking at the world. Things that seem very normal to us in discipline or creating a healthy environment may be really difficult or even hurtful to them. In this session, we are going to explore some common differences and suggest ways that you can love these children well and help them to become disciplined and well-adjusted people who are prepared to follow Jesus as His disciple.



Explore

 DISTRIBUTE COPIES OF THE LISTENING GUIDE (MODULE 4, HANDOUT 1) AND

 PLAY THE VIDEO ENTITLED: “HOW TO MANAGE DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS”.

Say: “To help us love these children well and help them through their difficult behaviors, we need to understand the reasons behind the behavior and employ a few simple strategies to help them. In the following video, we are going to address both the ‘whys’ of behavior and the ‘hows’ of shaping positive change.”

Apply

-  **CUT OUT THE SCENARIOS** from the handout *Difficult Behaviors* (Module 4, Handout 2).
-  **DIVIDE THE CLASS INTO GROUPS OF TWO.** Give each of the pairs one of the scenarios.

Say: “You have been given a scenario involving a child who has come from a hard place and a teacher or adult volunteer. Using the information that you just received from the video, act out a role play for the class illustrating a way for the adult to handle the situation not considering the child’s background and then act out how you might respond differently by accommodating the child’s unique needs.”

After each pair has completed acting out both options, discuss with the class why the adaptation the pair acted out is appropriate and discuss how else they might respond in light of the child’s needs.

Pray

- Pray for children who have experienced significant hurts and trauma in the past to find healing and restoration.
- Pray that the Church will respond well to the needs of children from hard places and reinforce to them that they can truly find safety and security in Jesus.
- Pray for discernment in recognizing the hurts that lie behind a child’s behavior.
- Pray that families of children from hard places will feel loved and cared for by the Church through how we minister to their children.

How to Manage Difficult Behaviors

Attachment sounds can affect all aspects of a child's development, including:

- Behavior
- Emotions
- Thoughts
- Relationships
- Physical being
- Moral/spiritual view of life

Behaviorally, we can expect a child who has experienced trauma might be:

- Oppositional
- Aggressive
- Hyperactive
- Lie, steal, or hoard food
- Overly controlling

Children learn to devise strategies to get their needs met. Many of these behaviors are coping mechanisms or survival techniques.

There is a need behind every behavior. Many times, if you can meet the need, then the behavior goes away.

Emotionally, these children may exhibit:

- Intense anger or sadness
- Be fearful or anxious
- Exhibit grief
- Be very sensitive to shame

- Be easily stressed
- Have negative beliefs about themselves, others, and the world in general.

Exercising authority or teaching discipline

- Discipline at its simplest is teaching a new positive behavior to replace an old negative behavior.

The child's parents need to be the primary disciplinarian.

Appropriate ways to redirect:

- "Be kind."
- "We want you to obey."
- "If this behavior continues, we are going to have to get your parents."
- "We want you to be a role model for the younger children."
- "Let's make a compromise."

Responding to negative behavior:

- Stay playful. Keep voice light and cheerful.
- Get on the child's level. Do not stand over or talk down.
- Move closer to the child when correcting him. Never yell from afar.
- Incorporate physical touch when possible.
- Stay calm with a gentle tone of voice.
- Separate the child's behavior from the child.
- Give choices. Control issues are very common.
 - "Do you want to sit here or there?"
 - "Do you want to read this book or that book?"
- Help these children calm down.
 - Ward off emotional outbursts:
 - Be attentive to chaos and separate a child from overstimulation if needed.
 - Ask the child to count to ten slowly.
 - Have the child take several slow, deep breaths.
 - Help the child to use his words, not his actions to convey how he feels.
 - Your goal should always be to help the child feel safe and to calm down.

- Provide predictability.
 - Create a predictable environment.
 - Help the child become familiar with his surroundings.

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Difficult Behaviors

Scenario 1

This 6-year old child struggles with safety and security issues related to being insecurely attached. He has been dropped off for only the second time in Sunday School and is acting out by being very angry and oppositional.

Scenario 2

This 4-year old child has sensory processing issues. He is in a children's worship experience that involves loud music, flashing stage lighting, and children doing motions along with the worship songs. Instead of participating, she is running around screaming, flailing her arms, and running into the other children.

Scenario 3

This 8-year old child has control issues. He never wants do the activity that the other children are doing. Instead, he throws an angry tantrum until he is allowed to do whatever it is that he wants to do.

Scenario 4

This 5-year old child has food issues that are rooted in years of neglect and hunger. Whenever she comes to church, she will steal extra cookies or crackers from the class snacks and fill her pockets.

Scenario 5

This 7-year old child is fearful. When his parents leave him for Sunday School, he cries and clings to them like a much younger child and then sits alone in the corner and refuses to participate with his classmates.

Scenario 5

This 8-year old child cannot sit still. She will get up at random times and leave the activity her Sunday School class is doing or begin talking or laughing or fidgeting at inappropriate times during class.

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