

SEPARATION, GRIEF AND LOSS: HELPING CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ACT 1809 Trainer Guide – Part 1

SECTION I – Introduction/Overview

TIME: 45 Minutes (9:00-10:00)

COA Standards Addressed

- ❖ G7.3.01
- ❖ G7.3.02
- ❖ G7.3.07

Competencies Addressed

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| ❖ 104-1 | ❖ 104-13 |
| ❖ 104-2 | ❖ 104-15 |
| ❖ 104-3 | ❖ 524-2 |

Objectives for Entire Workshop: Participants will:

- Become acquainted with Act 1809 of 2003 (AR General Assembly) that mandates 6 hours of annual training in the areas of separation, grief and loss.
- Experience first hand how painful losses can be and how they affect people's world view and their views of themselves.
- Recognize the different types of losses.
- Identify how to help clients manage losses through compassionate and effective intervention.
- Know the stages of grief.
- Recognize the variety of ways that people experience and manage loss.
- Recognize factors that influence how loss is experienced.

Materials

- Name tents
- PowerPoint Part I, Experiencing the Loss
- PowerPoint projector and computer
- Three pieces of paper for each participant and something to write with.
- Small container for the trainer
- Participant Manual

A. Introduction

Trainer Note: There is a PowerPoint presentation that supplements and supports this training. The introductory slide (slide 1) can be projecting on the screen at the beginning of the training, as participants are entering the room. There will be “cues” in the Trainer Guide about when to use other slides.

Begin the session by introducing yourself to the group and welcoming them to training. Cover a few basic housekeeping issues. These should include, but are not limited to:

- Sign-in sheets. Participants must sign in both in the morning and again in the afternoon to get credit for attendance.
- Smoking, break and bathroom areas. For participants who have not attended a MidSOUTH training, be sure to point out the smoking areas (outside the building), the break rooms and the location of bathrooms.
- Refer the participants to the **Participant Manual, page 1**, and quickly review the **agenda**.
- Review the major requirements of Act 1809 on **page 2** of the Participant Manual.
- Refer participants to **page 3** in the Participant Manual, Training Objectives, and briefly review the material.
- From the introduction, move into the orientation and overview of the work shop. The exercise that follows will serve as the ice breaker. **(Click to slide 2, Part 1, Experiencing the Loss.)**

B. Understanding Our Own Losses

In order to fully understand and experience loss, a person needs to experience attachment. Human beings experience attachment immediately upon entering this world. From the first touch of a hand to the breath of a loving caregiver to a warm embrace, an infant experiences varying degrees of comfort and response to his/her needs. This response to an infants needs initiates a foundation for attachment. This process of developing attachment will be described periodically in this training.

Participants will look back at their own experiences of attachment throughout this training. They will get a sense of their own attachments today by taking an inventory of how they experience attachments to people, places, social status, personal identity and roles.

Through a combination of lecture presentations, exercises and discussions participants will have an opportunity to experience losses of their own. This

experience will facilitate participants' understanding of their clients'/families' experiences of losses.

Click to **slide # 3 (Question of the Day)** and pose the question to the group: **How does my own experience help me understand and serve the needs of children and families? We will return to this question throughout the day. We can use our own experiences to more fully understand what children and their families experience.** Use this question to position for the following exercise, **"We Don't Have Attachments.... Attachments Have Us."**

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to invite participants to experience the loss of something/someone in a symbolic way. Another purpose of this exercise is for participants to compare their "exercise of loss" to the actual losses that children and families face.

Materials: This exercise requires the PowerPoint presentation, three pieces of paper for each participant, and a small container for the trainer.

Methodology:

1. Use **PowerPoint slide #4 (Types of Attachments)** and ask participants to reflect on the following types of attachments: place, role, identity, functioning, and people. These types of attachments are listed on **page 4** of the Participant Manual.
2. Give examples or let the class generate examples as the trainer shows each type of attachment in the presentation. Use humor to acknowledge that people become attached to a favorite chair or family role or hobby just as they can become attached to a significant person.
3. When addressing attachments to people, cover these questions:
 - How would that person describe you?
 - How did your relationship with that person become so important?
 - What do you like about yourself when you are with that person?
 - What would you feel if that person was no longer a part of your life?
 - How would your world change if that person was no longer here?
 - Have you ever felt responsible for a relationship changing or ending?
How do you THINK you were responsible?Let the group respond to the questions.
4. Letting GO: After participants have had time to reflect on the five types of attachment and to choose specific examples, instruct them to do the following:
 - Imagine how life would be if they had to do without three specific things, roles or persons they were attached to.
 - On three separate pieces of paper, write down the name of a person, place, identity, role or physical ability that you know you are attached to and **WOULD NOT** want to live without. These pieces of paper represent the actual person, place, etc that you will have to live without.

5. Collect the pieces of paper in the small container. As the trainer is picking up the paper, the trainer should say, "As I take these away from you, you need to know that you will NEVER get them back. These people/things are lost to you forever."

Processing

To process the exercise, ask the following questions and invite discussion:

1. How do you feel about giving up that person, place, etc?
2. How would your life be without the person? Place? Thing?
3. How do you feel about the trainer for taking it away from you?
4. Conclude by showing slides 5 and 6 (attachments Have Us/Grief Has Us).

C. The Experience of Loss (Adapted from Foster/Adopt PRIDE)

Material in this section (in green text) was adapted from Foster/Adopt Pride curriculum. This curriculum has been purchased by MidSOUTH for the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). It was purchased for the purposes of training prospective foster and adoptive parents for the Division. It is included in this training of DCFS program staff to ensure that workers and supervisors receive the same information on the effects of separation, grief and loss that foster/adoptive parents receive. The information in this section was adapted from Session 4 of the Pride curriculum.

1. Introduce the topic of separation, loss and grieving and set the tone for this discussion. Begin by defining terms. These definitions are on page 5 in the Participant Manual, Definition of Terms.

Separation is the change that occurs when there is a breakup in a relationship.

Loss is the effect on people when something important is withdrawn.

Grief is the process that helps people work through the pain of separation and loss. Many people go through predictable stages of grief as they work their way through the process.

The session will include some general information about the kinds of losses children and adults experience, and about how they grieve those losses.

The training will address the important role of foster parents, adoptive parents, and workers to help children, other adults, and themselves with their feeling and behaviors related to separation, loss and grief.

2. Set the tone. See the bottom of page 5 in the Participant Manual, Permissions.

This topic can be emotional for some of us. Please consider the following points:

- Separation, loss and grieving are part of the human experience. Reinforce that the group members will have many life experiences they can share as the workshop addresses separation, loss and grief.
- Separation, loss and grief are part and parcel of foster care and adoption.

Ask the group to stop and reflect on what the child loses when he or she comes into care. What does the parent feel when he or she loses a child to the foster care system. What do foster parents feel when a child returns to his or her home? This material is not intended to make you feel sad or frustrated. The purpose of the discussion is to emphasize the challenges presented to foster parents, adoptive parents, and DCFS workers in dealing with the issues of separation, loss and grief.

- The topics discussed today may raise strong emotions. No one is required to share his or her experiences. If you feel very uncomfortable with the issues we discuss, we hope you will tell us during the session or during the break. We will understand if you decide to leave the room for awhile.



BREAK

SECTION II – Learning from Early Life Experiences

TIME: 20 Minutes (10:15-10:35)

Materials

- Participant Manual
- Pen and paper for each participant

A. Exercise: One Day I Decided

After the break, begin with the following message:

Early life experiences and traumatic experiences at any age have a long-lasting impact on a person's view of the world and of him or herself. Strangely, many people do not realize how early traumatic events can still impact their lives in current situations. The following exercise will attempt to remind participants how they were and are affected by these early experiences and how it affects their response to loss.

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate how life experiences can affect a person's view of him or herself and of the world, even at a very early age. A second purpose is to help participants understand how current behavior can be a reflection of an unresolved loss of an attachment. This approach is based on the theories of Judith S. Beck as set out in the book, *Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond*.

Materials

This exercise requires the material on page 6 of the Participant Manual, and a writing implement. Please note: the questionnaire is based on the work cited directly above. It is intended to highlight the degree and nature of early life attachments.

Methodology

1. Refer participant to **page 6 in the Participant Manual, Earliest Loss**. Ask them to answer the questions on this page and to make brief notes about their answers. Write this caveat on the board: **If you do not want to recall an early loss, use one of the things you gave up earlier in the workshop.**

The questions are:

- a. Think back to your earliest memory of loss.
- b. Identify the type of loss (person, place, object, etc.)
- b. Rate how well your needs were met (1= Totally Disappointed and 10= totally satisfied)
- c. Who was there to meet your needs?
- d. What did they do or not do? Say or not say?

2. Allow about 5 minutes for participants to complete this part of the exercise.

Processing

To process the exercise, ask participants to respond to the following questions:

1. Ask permission to use one of the things “let go” (from the exercise Experience of Letting Go) as an illustration.
2. As a result of that experience, what did you decide about yourself and the world?
3. What did you learn about how to deal with the world?
4. What did you learn about how to deal with people?
5. After using one of the “things let go” ask someone to share what he or she had indicated on page six and answer the same sets of questions. Give all group members the opportunity to share.
6. Conclude the session by asking the group: How do you think or feel it would have affected your life if this kind of thing had happened over and over again in the first 5 years of your life?
7. From this exercise, transition into a discussion of types of losses. Begin the transition with the following question related to the losses just shared by group members.
[Thinking about the losses we were just talking about, would you say they were expected losses or unexpected losses?](#)

SECTION III – Types of Losses

TIME: 35 Minutes (10:25-11:00)

Material in this section (in green text) was adapted from Foster/Adopt Pride curriculum. This curriculum has been purchased by MidSOUTH for the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). It was purchased for the purposes of training prospective foster and adoptive parents for the Division. It is included in this training of DCFS program staff to ensure that workers and supervisors receive the same information on the effects of separation, grief and loss that foster/adoptive parents receive. The information in this section was adapted from Session ____ of the Pride curriculum.

Materials:

- Participant Manual
- PowerPoint presentation
- Projector
- Blank paper for all participants.
- Flip chart set up for the trainer or a white board and markers
- Slips of paper (one per participant) with half marked “Act Interested” and half marked “Act Bored”

A. Types of Losses

It can be helpful to review two different basic types of losses, expected and unexpected. Even though both types are losses, a person generally reacts to expected losses differently than unexpected losses.

B. PowerPoint Presentation (slide 7)

Show slide seven of the PowerPoint presentation and make comments along the way. Ask participants to generate examples as the different types of losses are presented and show the examples on the slides.

Expected Losses Teaching Points

- Expected losses are shared by all human beings.
- There is usually a lot of support for expected losses, because we all sense the universality of the loss. We know that we will experience such a loss at some time during our life.
- There are regrets and sorrow, but there is usually no great sense of blame or shame in experiencing expected losses.
- We are generally prepared by life for expected losses.
- Ask participants (large group format) to speak about the losses listed below. Remind them that even voluntary changes can result in a sense of loss (slide 8)

- Children first attending school or leaving home for school.
- Graduation, marriage, new jobs (anticipate that there may be some questions about how these things are 'losses').
- Menopause, the loss of childbearing ability.
- Retirement, the loss of a job through aging.
- The physical processes of aging.
- Loss of spouse, family and friends in the normal aging process.
- The loss of certain privileges and freedoms as we grow from childhood to adulthood.

Unexpected Losses Teaching Points (Slide 9)

- We are usually unprepared to cope with unexpected losses.
- For some kinds of unexpected losses, like infertility or for someone who is adopted, there can be little understanding or support from society about the need to grieve those losses.
- There is often a sense of personal shame or blame that can complicate unexpected losses.
- Unexpected losses are often not regarded as "normal losses." This sense of being different complicates the grieving process.
- Ask participants (large group format) to speak about these types of losses (slide 10):
 - Illness.
 - Injury.
 - Divorce.
 - Death of a child.
 - Death of a parent at an early age.
 - Loss of a job.
 - Car accident, fire, tornado or other natural disasters.

Summarize this section by asking participants to comment about the differences in the expected and unexpected losses in terms of how people reacted to them.

Encourage participants to voice some of their experiences with both types of losses. Move to the concluding exercises for this section.

But I Really Am Capable

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to provide an experience in loss for group participants. This exercise demonstrates how a simple loss of functioning can impact a person's view of himself or herself.

Materials

This exercise requires a page for participants to write on (separate from the Participant Manual), the PowerPoint presentation and projector, and the Participant Manual.

Methodology

1. Write the following on a flip chart or white board: **I am an effective and adequate leader.**
2. Ask group members to raise their non-dominant hands. (Do a quick check to be sure that they all know what the non-dominant hand is.)
3. Tell the group members to write the sentence on the board **in cursive** using their non-dominant hands.

Processing

Process the activity by asking:

1. How did it feel to write with limitations?
2. How might others look at us with those limitations?
3. How might a person negatively judge himself/herself because of this limitation (especially if it lasts over time)?

Loss of physical functioning is one kind of loss. Even though this loss can be temporary, the "victim" of the loss can view himself/herself in a negative light. Let's look at the impact of another type of loss, loss of communication or communication opportunities.

But I Still Need to Tell You

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate how sudden loss impacts relationships.

Materials

This exercise requires a flip chart and markers or a white board and markers. It also requires slips of paper marked "Act Bored" or "Act Interested."

Methodology

1. Have the participants pair up (preferably with someone they do not know well).

2. Explain that each person will get to be both a “teller” and a “listener. Each person will have the opportunity to tell about some important event in his or her life. Ask the pairs to decide who will go first.
3. Tell the pairs to begin. Allow the first “teller” the entire 3 minutes to tell about the event. Then, call time.
4. Ask the “tellers” to come up to the trainer. Give each “teller” one of the slips of paper marked “Act bored” or Act Interested.” Remind them that will now be the “listener.”
5. Ask the new tellers to begin. There will probably be an increasing level of frustration in the pairs where the listener has been told to “Act Bored.” In addition, the trainer should feel free to do distracting things.
6. At no more than the 90 second mark, abruptly call time, using either loud clapping, a bell or something else that emphasizes the abruptness of the ending.

Processing

1. Ask for reactions to the abrupt and early ending. Record responses on the white board.
2. Acknowledge that the whole second storytelling episode was unfair – people were instructed to be disinterested, the trainer was distracting, etc.
3. What did it feel like to be ignored?
4. Parallel this experience to life’s experiences. Sometimes people don’t listen. Other times people who want to listen or want to “be there” for someone else get caught up in the distractions and demands of day-to-day life. Being listened to communicates interest and compassionate concern. Being ignored usually results in a sense of worthlessness and isolation. Regardless of the circumstances, being suddenly cut off from being able to communicate can leave a person with a profound sense of loss and regret for the things left unsaid.
5. If we can communicate compassion or worthlessness in so short a time, what might we communicate over several interviews with families or children who need to be listened to?
6. Use **slide 11** in the PowerPoint presentation to summarize the questions that people frequently have when there is an unexpected loss
 - Who am I now?
 - What good am I?
 - Where do I go from here
 - What happens next?
 - What did I do to deserve this?

- What do I have to do to change it back?
- Consider a brief break here.



SECTION IV – Loss and Grief In Child Welfare

TIME: 50 Minutes (11:10-11:30)

Materials

- PowerPoint presentation
- Projector
- Participant Manual
- Container with numbered wooden balls or small sheets of paper that are pre-printed with “events and actions.”

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A. Grieving Losses – It’s Enough to Make a Grown Person Cry (slide 12)

Present the material on “the nature of grief.” This review is intended to refresh what we know in our heads but can forget with our hearts if we are not ourselves experiencing loss and grief.

Refer participants to page 7 in the Participant Manual, Nature of Grief to follow along with the lecture. Some things to remember about grief include:

- Like attachments, we do not have grief... grief has us.
- Grief is a natural response to loss.
- Grief progresses through stages.
- No one can measure another person’s pain by his own pain. But we can come to understand through our experiences.
- We can study the body of knowledge about grief and loss.
- Time alone does not heal loss.
- Losses suffered in the child welfare system resulting in foster care and adoption are complicated by the traumatic events that initiated the need for child protection and/or removal from the biological family.

B. Loss and Grief in Child Welfare (Slide 13)

Children, parents and families experience loss when changes occur. These situations require adjustment. The following are three major factors in creating loss and the experience of grief:

- Disruption of a family’s world. Ask the group to give examples about how the lives of the families they work with are disrupted.

- Loss of control – feelings of mistrust, powerlessness, fear and uncertainty. Again, ask for examples.
- Change.

There is an additional adjustment when children in families bear the consequences of the following seven situations:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional maltreatment
- Abandonment
- Incapacity or unavailability of the parent
- Special medical circumstances.

The losses associated with these factors are often traumatic causes of loss. Circumstances that bring children into care are usually unexpected losses (at least for the children). Frequently, the losses children coming into care experience are multiple and serious.

It is easy to see how difficult it must be for a child to be separated from a parent. The child is also likely to experience losses that may not occur to many people. Ask the class to list the other losses children may experience. Make note on the white board or flip chart. If these areas do not come up in the subsequent discussion, be sure to address:

- Separation from extended family or other significant people (loss of people).
- Separation from school, church and community (loss of place)
- Separation from culture including ways of talking, playing, eating, and communicating (loss of role and identity).

C. **Reunification Roulette (approximately 30 minutes)**

Show the PowerPoint slide (slide 14) titled “Perception is Reality”. Ask participants to comment on what this saying means. This concept is important to remember when working with families. Despite a worker’s best efforts children and families may perceive a situation in ways the worker did not intend. Move into the Reunification Lottery exercise.

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to help participants gain an understanding of children and families’ perceptions of the reunification process. A second purpose is to help participants understand how the perceived lack of control over events in their lives can create feelings of helplessness during the reunification process.

Materials

This exercise requires the wooden balls or slips of paper that correspond to events and actions listed on the PowerPoint slide (slide 15) Reunification Roulette. The exercise also requires the PowerPoint presentation.

Methodology

1. Begin the exercise with the following statement: From the perspective of families (and especially the children) the reunification process and/or foster care/adoption process can seem like a random series of factors that happen by chance. Both workers and families experience the results of seemingly chance events and complex system and legal processes that affect the reunification process.
2. Ask for a volunteer to play a child in a family. Assign other roles to group members such as mother, father, worker 1, worker 2, judge, attorney-ad - litem, grandparent, adoptive parent. The number of roles will be determined by the size of the group.
3. Designate spots in the room to be jail, residential facility, family home, and foster family home. Point these out to class members.
4. bring up the PowerPoint slide 15, Reunification Roulette. Explain that the child will begin drawing numbers (or numbered wooden balls). The numbers correspond to the event listed on the slide.
5. Position the family as a sculpture, mother and child or children in the family home space. Have a father but make him a relative out of the family home. (So, he is visible but not in the family constellation.) The sculpture will change based on what the child draws.
6. To start the exercise, hand the child a slip of paper that says, "Mother incarcerated. Go directly to foster care." Move the mother out of the family constellation over to another part of the room that can be the "jail." Move the child (children) into another family constellation.
7. Then, begin drawing numbers and shifting the constellation. After each drawing replace the item back in the container. It is possible to draw it more than one time. If the child draws reunification with family, have family players move in closer. If the child draws foster parent decides the placement has disrupted, move the child to the residential space identified earlier.
8. Let the play progress through several turns. If time allows, switch children, start with the same opening scenario and play a few more turns. Ask participants to note whether the outcomes were the same or different.

Processing

Ask the child to discuss how he or she felt during this exercise. How did other family members feel? How did it feel when the placement disrupted? How did the class feel about the experience?

Point out that the families and the child can feel equally helpless in the reunification process when unforeseen events and actions occur. DCFS workers

and supervisors must understand how children and families may experience and perceive the events as random and out of their control despite the worker's best efforts to explain both the worker's actions and the court's orders.

Briefly recap the morning's content. Dismiss the class for lunch.

Conclusion of Part I

**SEPARATION, GRIEF AND LOSS:
HELPING CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE
ACT 1809
Trainer Guide – Part 2**

SECTION I – Pathway Through the Grieving Process

TIME: 90 Minutes (1:00-2:30)

The training objectives and the competencies addressed are a continuation of those listed in Part 1 of this training.

Materials

- PowerPoint presentation
- Projector
- Materials for Pathway through the grieving process
 - 34 chairs
 - 5 Stage Cards (to be posted on the backs of chairs and to function as mile markers)
 - 20 Chair Cards (to be marked as indicated below and to be placed in the seats of the chairs in accordance with the Game Board Diagram)
 - 62 Draw Cards (including two wild cards as set out below)
 - Game Board Diagram
 - Dice
 - Team Name tags – 2 Jones, 2 Martins, 2 Smiths, etc., depending on how many teams end up playing
- Handout 1 – Give an Example - (see Back from Lunch Exercise)
- Handout 2 – Key Points
- White boards and markers

TRAINER SET UP NOTE:

1. During the lunch break, write the factors that influence how loss is experienced on the white board. Use the Foster/Adopt Pride material from **Session 4, Resource 4-G** as a resource for additional information if needed. The Pride curriculum identifies 7 factors. This workshop will address 9 factors. The factors to be listed are:
 - Nature of the loss
 - Age at the time of the loss
 - Degree of attachment
 - Ability to understand why there was a loss
 - Amount of emotional strength
 - Cultural influences
 - Circumstances surrounding the loss
 - Number of previous losses/separations
 - Help given prior, during and following the loss
2. Write the five stages of grief on the white boards around the room.
3. Set up the room for the game, Pathway Through the Grieving Process. If there are two training rooms available, consider setting up the game in a separate room than the training room (just for space and time considerations). See the Trainer Resource Section for detailed instructions on the game.

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A. Review (brief) and Exercise

Have **PowerPoint slide 16** showing when participants return to the classroom after lunch. When the group returns from lunch, there will be a long, snaky line of chairs in the room and no table arrangement. As participants come back from lunch, hand them a task card and ask them to begin the following exercise:

Purpose

The purpose of this brief exercise is to have participants identify and list examples of the factors that influence loss. A second purpose is to have participants think about behaviors they have seen children exhibit in the various stages of grief.

Materials

This exercise requires Handout 1, Factors that Influence How Loss is Experienced – Give an Example. This exercise also requires a writing implement for each student.

Methodology

1. As each participant returns from lunch, give them a copy of **Handout 1**.
2. Ask each student to look at the factors that influence loss, written on the white board, and to jot down **on the board** an example from his or her own practice that illustrates the factor.
3. Ask them to look at the stages of grief written on the board, and to write down **on the board** a **behavior** they have seen children exhibit during that stage in the grieving process.
4. Use the handout to make notes of other participants' material written on the board.
5. Allow the participants to mingle through the room, until all or most of the class has returned from lunch.
6. Call time. Tell participants to stand where they are (unless the trainer has set up the game in a different room). Explain that they need to hold onto their handouts but the class is not going to address the answers just yet.
5. Briefly review the last few points of the morning session. These points include:
 - Like attachments, we do not have grief... grief has us.
 - Grief is a natural response to loss. Separation involves loss.
 - Time alone does not heal loss.
 - Losses suffered in the child welfare system resulting in foster care and adoption are complicated by the traumatic events that initiated the need for child protection and/or removal from the biological family
 - The process of protecting children and attempting reunification can **feel** or **seem** like a random process over which the child or family has little or no control.
 - Grief progresses through stages.
 - Show PowerPoint slides 17 and 18 as a quick review of the stages of grief.

6. Use the discussion of the stages of grief to move into the exercise on Pathway Through the Grieving Process.

Purpose

The purposes of this exercise are to visually demonstrate the stages of grief and the fluid nature of the process of grieving. In addition, the exercise requires participants to think about the behaviors a child or adult might demonstrate in each stage.

TRAINER NOTE: This exercise is written up in detail in the Trainer Resource section of this guide. Please refer to that section to run this exercise.

Processing

In part, the processing of this exercise will be determined by what happened during the game. Explore participants' feeling about:

1. Being dead-ended through no fault of your own
2. Sibling who started together but got split up by circumstances. How did it feel to finish ahead of your sibling?
3. Aging out or being sent home by the court. What feeling might you have had about leaving the foster home?
4. Was it a different experience if you were the 11 year old or the 3 year old?
5. What could someone have done for you at various stages?
6. Use the Handout material to recap key points about the factors that influence how loss is experienced and the developmental nature of grieving.

B. Factors that Influence How Loss is Experienced

Direct participants to look at **Handout 1, Give an Example,** and **Handout 2, Key Points.** Review this material with them. There are nine factors that affect how loss is experienced.

The nature of the loss refers to the type of loss and whether or not it was expected. For children, the loss of a parent is a significant loss.

The age at the time of each loss is important because children have different developmental issues at different ages. For example, the loss of physical health may be more significant for a teen who is struggling with identity and independence.

The degree of attachment to the persons from whom the child is being separated is another factor. The greater the attachment, the greater the loss.

The ability to understand why there was a separation affects how well children are able to move through the grieving process.

The amount of emotional strength that the child had before the loss is another factor. Think about Baby A and Baby B and the difference in their ability to trust that another adult will meet their needs.

Cultural influences may affect how children express their grief. If a child is taught not to cry, the child is likely to hold grief inside.

The circumstances causing the loss will certainly influence the impact on the child. A planned move is less traumatic than being taken from the family by a policeman in the middle of the night.

The number of previous separations is important because we know that after multiple losses, a child can start losing the desire to attach. Or a child may be overwhelmed with a number of losses in a short period of time, making the grieving process more difficult.

The help given prior to, during, and after the separation may be key in helping children grieve.

C. **Developmental and Behavioral Aspects**

Referring back to the exercise, reflect on the different behaviors children might show at different stages in the grieving process. Ask participants to share from their experiences and point out the answers on the white boards around the room. **Page 9 in the Participant Manual** has a place for participants to take notes.

Discuss the issue of “triggers.” Some of the Red cards in the game had “triggers.” These were seemingly innocent events that reminded children of their losses and caused a regression in their working through the grief process. Other triggers may be a more obvious cue that remind people of a loss. Ask participants to share either some of the things that have triggered foster children’s grief or things that trigger their own grief issues. **Write down** the responses on the white board.

Discuss Developmental grieving. Ask the question: **Why do you think that when children reach another developmental stage, they may need to grieve an old loss again?** Make notes of the answers.



SECTION II – The Role of the Loss Manager

Time: 15 Minutes (2:45- 3:00)

A. Recap and Review

When the class returns from break, use the first 15 minutes to revisit and recap the idea of foster parents, DCFS workers and adoptive parents as Loss Managers.

Reiterate that participants will bring their own experiences in managing loss into play in order to help children work through the process and to help them learn to manage the losses they suffer in their lives.

Using the PowerPoint slides 19 through 24, review the stages of grief and the things that each player (worker, foster parent, and adoptive parent) can do to help children through the process. Be sure to point out the following:

- Depending on their own strength and resilience, some children will get through some stages of grief with little formal intervention.
- An “intervention” may in reality be more of the types of things written on the blue cards – appropriate nurturing, understanding and addressing the feelings behind the behavior, “hanging in there” with the child through difficult times.
- The above statement is not intended to minimize the need for formal interventions such as counseling, behavior management techniques, etc.
- Conclude with slide 25, Summary of What Children Need.

SECTION III – Team Work

Time: 60 Minutes

Materials

- Pen and paper for participants
- Handout 3, Teamwork to Manage Loss
- Empty envelop for each participant on the tables

A. Teaming – It Takes A Village

Begin this section of the training with a brief discussion of the value of the foster parent, parent and DCFS worker as a team that will minimize the impact of the separation and loss for children who are coming into care.

Ask the group: [How many of you really see the parents as part of the “Team” that will help children negotiate the pathway through grief and loss?](#) Make note of the answers and make note of any suggestions offered by participants that indicate an understanding of why the parents still have an important role to play on the team.

Use this discussion to move into the following exercise on the value of team work.

B. Role of Team Work

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate the need for communication between workers, foster parents and biological parents when it comes to helping children through grieving.

Materials

This exercise only requires a pen or pencil for each participant and page 10 in the Participant Manual, The Role of Team Work.

Methodology

1. Divide the larger group into 3 small groups.
2. Refer each group to [page 10, Role of Team Work](#), in the Participant Manual.
3. Explain that each group will need to consider three key players when a child has come into foster care – the worker, the biological parent and the foster parent.
4. Assign each group to be the Bio Parent Group, the Foster Parent Group or the DCFS Worker group.
5. Tell the groups to answer the questions on page 10 based on whether they are a bio parent, foster parent, or DCFS worker.

6. Give each group approximately 10 minutes to read over the information and write down the answers.
7. Call time. Ask each group to designate a spokesperson to report out to the larger group.

Processing

As the groups report back, focus on:

1. Were there discrepancies in what one group wanted and what another group did, especially around communication?
2. What were the most common areas of misunderstanding or tension between workers and bio parents? Similarly, what were areas of misunderstanding between parents and foster parents or between workers and foster parents?
3. How can the three “players better communicate?
4. Conclude the day in the following manner. Show **slide 25**.

We have spent the day looking at our own experiences with separation, loss and grief and learning how these can help us in working with children in foster care. We recognize that loss and grief are universal experiences. We have looked at expected and unexpected losses. We understand that many factors influence how a loss will be perceived.

State law requires that DCFS and foster parents try to mediate and work out a solution to minimize the number of times a child is moved once he or she comes into care. The rationale behind this part of the law is that these moves pile loss upon loss onto children who have already suffered many losses in their lives.

What I want you to do at this time is think of three ways you can use the information you received today to help families and children manage the loss of separation and placement. Write these things on a slip of paper and drop it into the empty envelopes on your tables. Take the envelope with you. Open it in two weeks as a reminder of your commitment to be a loss manager for the children and families on your caseload.

Remind participants to complete the evaluation of the session and dismiss the class.

PATHWAY THROUGH THE GRIEVING PROCESS

Materials and Instructions

This exercise requires the following materials:

- 34 chairs
- 5 Stage Cards (to be posted on the backs of chairs and to function as mile markers)
- 20 Chair Cards (to be marked as indicated below and to be placed in the seats of the chairs in accordance with the Game Board Diagram)
- 62 Draw Cards (including two wild cards as set out below)
- Game Board Diagram (page 5)
- Dice
- Team Name tags – 2 Jones, 2 Martins, 2 Smiths, etc., depending on how many teams end up playing.

Preparation

Chairs (34)

Thirty (30) chairs will make up the main line of the game board. Four (4) chairs will be used for dead end paths (2 chairs for each dead end path).

Stages Cards

Make one card for each stage in the grieving process. The “Shock/Denial” card must be RED. The “Acceptance” card must be YELLOW. The other three cards – Bargaining, Anger, and Depression – should be blue. These cards will be mounted on the backs of chairs to indicate mile markers on the Pathway Through Grieving.

Cards for the Chairs

These cards will be placed in the seats of the chairs on the game board with the solid color side face up and side with the writing face down in the chair. Use five green cards, 7 red cards, five blue cards and 3 yellow cards. Label the backs of each card as set out below.

Green = Behavior (5)

1. Shock and denial. Based on your age, name a behavior you might exhibit in this stage.
2. Bargaining. Based on your age, name a behavior you might exhibit in this stage.
3. Anger. Based on your age, demonstrate a behavior you might exhibit. (anger out)
4. Anger. Based on your age, demonstrate a behavior you might exhibit (anger in)
5. Depression. Based on your age demonstrate a behavior you might exhibit.

Red = Triggers for Regression (7)

1. Foster parent takes you see Finding Nemo. This is the last movie you saw with your mother. Go back one red. Get Over It.
2. FP cuts your hair and mom and dad are upset at the visit. Go back one red.
3. Mother misses 3rd visit in a row. Go back two reds if you are eleven one red if you are 3.
4. Red Card With Arrow. Go to End of Path.
5. It's your birthday. FP takes you for ice cream at BR. She does not know that you ALWAYS get cupcakes for your birthday. Go back two reds. Get over it.
6. Red Card with Arrow. Go to End of Path.
7. Foster placement disrupts because foster parents move out of state. (Put this one near the Acceptance card). Go back to Start.

Blue = Appropriate behavior or response by care giver, worker, etc. (not necessarily an intervention) (5)

1. Caseworker explains why you had to leave your home
2. Foster parent explains that it is not your fault that you are not with mom
3. Foster parent not only corrects bad behavior but also addresses the feeling leading to the anger
4. Worker lets you know it is OK to be sad
5. Mother and father play and interact with you on visits

Yellow = Intervention (3)

These cards will be placed in the seat of the chair at each mile marker.

Cards for the Draw Stack

Make approximately 12 red cards, 12 green cards and 12 blue cards.

Make one double blue card and one double green card.

Make 20 yellow cards.

Make four wild cards – One says “Age Out of Foster Care”; one says “Court Returns You Home Against Agency Recommendation,” one says “3 y/o Adopted/ 11 y/o go back 1 Red,” and the final card says “11 y/o place in with relatives/ 3 y/o go back one Red.”

Setting Up the Game Board

1. Arrange 30 chairs in a long winding path through the classroom. Make two dead end paths that branch off the main line. One path should be between "Anger" and "Depression." The other spur should be between "Depression" and "Acceptance."
2. Label the first or "Start" chair in the chain with a Red Card marked "Shock/Denial." Put this label on the back of the chair.
3. Label the last chair or "End" chair in the chain with a Yellow Card marked "Acceptance." Put this label on the back of the chair.
4. In between, evenly spaced, place cards on colored paper, marked "Bargaining," "Anger," and "Depression." Put "Bargaining" on the back of chair 8. Put "Anger" on the back of chair 16. Put "Depression" on the back of chair 24.
5. Put the labeled Red, Green and Blue cards in the seats of the chairs. See the game board diagram for placement of Red card #1, Blue card #1, etc.

Be sure to put the Red Arrow cards (there should be two) at the junction where the dead end spurs branch off the main line.

Be sure to put the Red marked Foster Parent Moves Out of State- Placement disrupts close to the acceptance card.

There will be some chairs with no cards (the chairs in the spurs and 10 chairs in the chain).

6. Be sure the cards are well shuffled and stack the draw cards in the middle of the room.

Rules of the Game

1. Select four – six teams of two people (depending on the class size). Select one person to draw cards from the stack. (This person can be the trainer if the group is relatively small). One person on each team will be 3-years-old. The other person will be 11-years-old. The teams are siblings starting down the path together.
2. The rest of the class members are "Intervention Specialists."
3. Each team starts at Shock/Denial (the first chair in the path). Teams roll the dice to see who goes first. The high roll takes the first turn, second highest the second turn, etc.
4. The object of the game is to move through the stages of grief on the Pathway Through Grieving and arrive at acceptance of the loss. Remember that grief is

- a fluid process, not a straight line. The game ends when one team or individual reaches "Acceptance."
5. Teams move by drawing a card and moving to that color square. Blue squares will represent things that have gone well. Green squares will ask about behaviors in various stages. Red squares will be triggers that cause players to regress. When a player or team lands on a colored space, turn over the card, read it out loud and act accordingly.
 6. If a player or team lands on a red square, there are only two ways to get off.

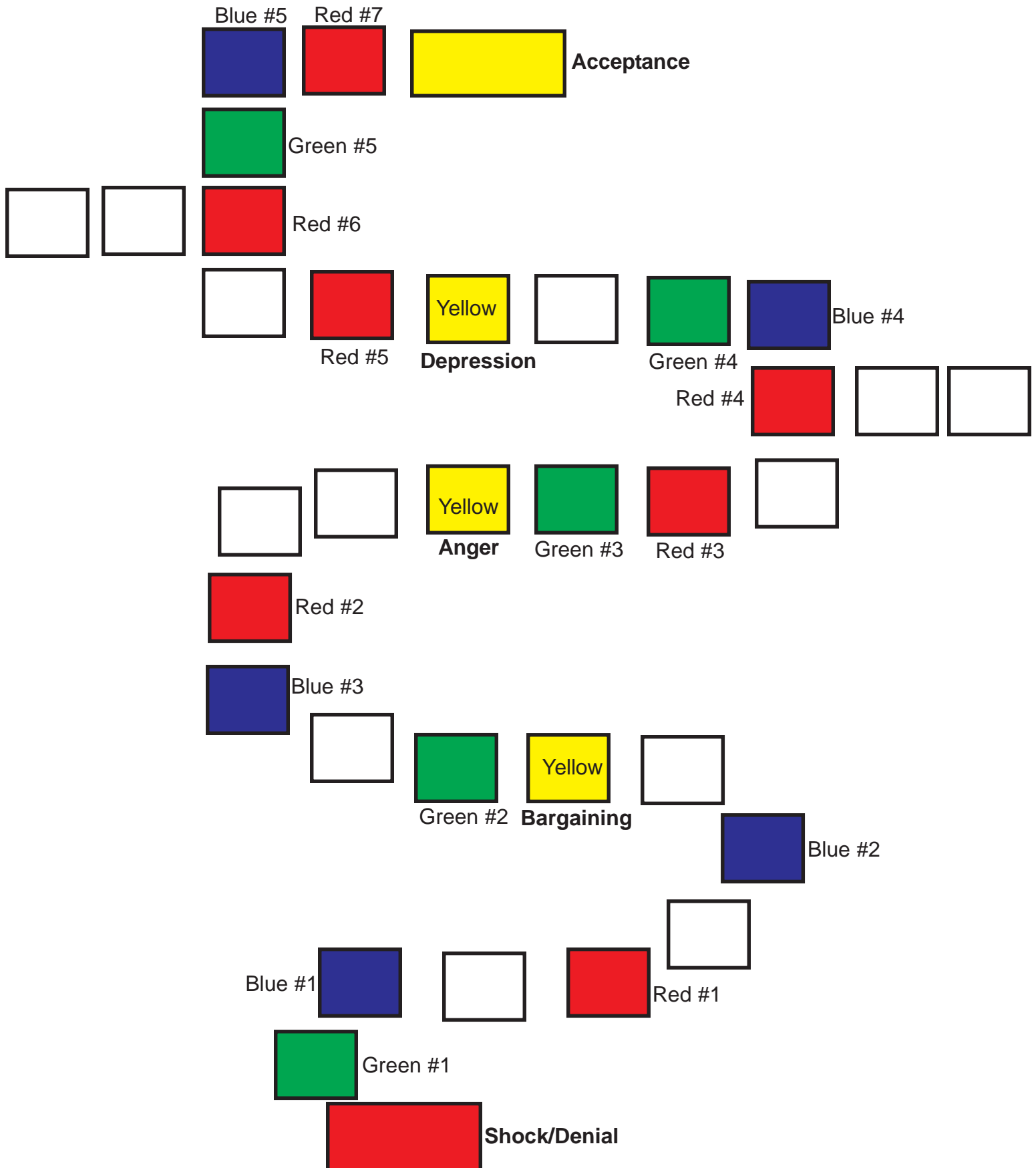
Some Red Squares will say "Get Over It." These words indicate that the player will recover from the loss in his or her own time. Players who draw one of these Red cards will continue to play in the normal manner on their next turn. (If the players draw a yellow card on the next turn, the Intervention Specialists design an intervention as set out below.)

If the Red card does not say "Get Over It" the only way a player can advance is to draw a yellow card from the stack. Yellow cards equal interventions. When a player or team on a red card draws a yellow intervention card, the Intervention Specialists must come up with an appropriate intervention for the stage where a player or team is stuck. If there is an appropriate intervention, the player or team advances to the next yellow square. (Note: Advancing to the next yellow square automatically moves a player into another stage in the grieving process.)

If a player or team lands a Red card with an arrow, the player or team must take the dead end spur. In essence, the player or team is stuck in the stage.
 7. There are two wild cards in the deck. If one of these cards is drawn, the player or team whose turn it is must comply with the instructions on the card.
 8. Occasionally, a player or team may draw a yellow intervention card that they do not need (the player or team is on a blue or green space). Return the card to the bottom of the stack and move to the next empty (no color card) chair.
 9. It is permissible for more than one person or team to be on the same square at the same time.
 10. If for any reason a team is split up, the person drawing the card for the team will draw a card for each team member. The team member who is the furthest from "Acceptance" will get the first card.

When the class is clear on the instructions, roll the dice and begin the game.

PATHWAY THROUGH THE GRIEVING PROCESS
Game Board Layout





Separation, Grief and Loss: Helping Children in Foster Care (Act 1809)

Participant Manual

U·A·L·R

School of Social Work

AGENDA

PART I

Competencies and Objectives

Brief review of legislation (Act 1809)

Introduction

The Experience of Loss

Learning from Early Life Experiences

Types of Losses

Exercises in Loss

Grieving Losses

Loss and Grief in Child Welfare

Reunification Lottery

PART II

Review Points

Factors That Influence Loss

Pathway Through the Grieving Process

Role of the Loss Manager for Children

Role of Teamwork

Final Summary

ACT 1809 SUMMARY

For Those Parts of the Law Related to Training and Placement

For a copy of the legislation, go to www.arkleg.state.ar.us under the regular session of 2003

- Clean up language for the Juvenile Code
- Specifies time frames for notice if the Court is placing a child in DHS custody (other than when the Agency petitions for custody)
- Major provisions relevant to this training:
 - To reduce the number of placements, if a foster parent requests that a child be removed from their home, the foster parent must:
 - Attend a staffing arranged by DCFS within 48 hours to discuss services or assistance to stabilize the placement
 - DCFS must notify the attorney ad litem, CASA (if appointed)
 - If the placement cannot be stabilized, the foster parent must continue to care for the child until an appropriate placement is located or for 5 business days
 - All DCFS caseworkers, supervisors and area managers shall have at least 6 hours of annual training on separation and placement issues, as well as issues related to the grief and loss children experience in foster care with multiple placements.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

- Become acquainted with Act 1809 of 2003 (AR General Assembly) that mandates 6 hours of annual training in the areas of separation, grief and loss.
- Experience first hand how painful losses can be and how they affect people's world view and their views of themselves.
- Recognize the different types of losses.
- Identify how to help clients manage losses through compassionate and effective intervention.
- Recognize the variety of ways that people experience and manage loss.
- Recognize factors that influence how loss is experienced.

TYPES OF ATTACHMENTS

- Places
- Roles
- Identities
- Functioning
- People

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Separation is the change that occurs when there is a breakup in a relationship.

Loss is the effect on people when something important is withdrawn.

Grief is the process that helps people work through the pain of separation and loss. The process of grieving progresses through recognizable stages. These stages are:

- Shock/denial – this can't be happening
- Bargaining – what do I have to do to get things back like they were
- Anger – can be directed outward or can be directed inward
- Depression
- Acceptance

PERMISSIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Separation, loss and grieving are part of the human experience. During the training, we hope you will feel comfortable enough to share some of your experiences.

Separation, loss and grief are part and parcel of foster care and adoption. Take a minute to reflect:

- What does the child lose?
- What does the family lose (besides losing the child)?
- What does the foster parent lose?
- If a family cannot be reunited, what does the worker lose?

No one has to share information about their personal issues or losses in this session.

EARLIEST LOSS

Think back to your earliest memory of loss.

Identify the type of loss (person, place, object, etc.)

Rate how well your needs were met (1= Totally Disappointed and 10= totally satisfied)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Who was there to meet your needs?

What did they do or not do? Say or not say?

How do you think or feel it would have affected your life if this kind of thing had happened over and over again in the first 5 years of your life?

Was this loss expected? Did anyone do anything to prepare you for the loss?

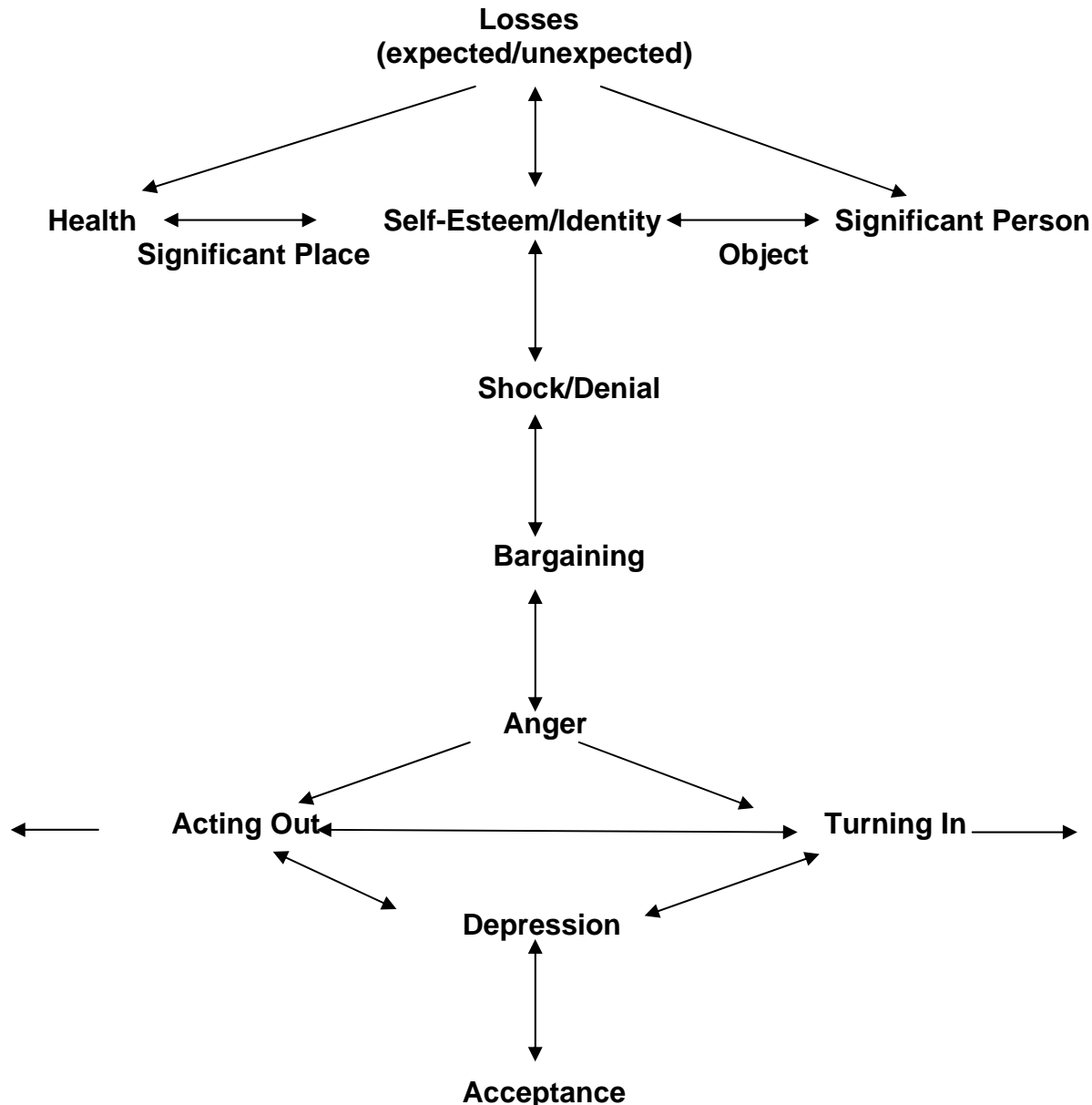
NATURE OF GRIEF

Some reminders about grief:

- Like attachments, we do not have grief... grief has us.
- Grief is a natural response to loss. Foster children have experienced multiple losses both those associated with placement into care and losses associated with the effects of abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and other maltreatment that necessitated removal from the parents.
- Grief progresses through stages.
- Through your own experiences you can begin to understand the pain that the child and family experience.
- We can study the body of knowledge about grief and loss.
- Time alone does not heal loss.
- Losses suffered in the child welfare system resulting in foster care and adoption are complicated by the traumatic events that initiated the need for child protection and/or removal from the biological family.

Material in this section was adapted from Foster/Adopt Pride curriculum. This curriculum has been purchased by MidSOUTH for the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS). It was purchased for the purposes of training prospective foster and adoptive parents for the Division. It is included in this training of DCFS program staff to ensure that workers and supervisors receive the same information on the effects of separation, grief and loss that foster/adoptive parents receive. The information in this section was adapted from Session 4 of the Pride curriculum.

THE PATHWAY THROUGH THE GRIEVING PROCESS



A person who successfully navigates the path will be able to manage the loss and move on with his or her life. One role of the DCFS Case worker, foster parent and/or adoptive parent is to help be a loss manager for the child.

Adapted from Pastor, E.M., Premise #1 Activity, "The Pathway Through the Grieving Process," in University of Oklahoma Advanced Training Course for Residential Child Care Workers. Tulsa, OK. University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Services.

See also, Pastor, E.M. and Leighton, M. Helping Children and Youths Manage Separation and Loss, #1 (At-Home Training Resources for Foster Parents and Adoptive Parents). Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America, 1992, p. 13.

Ross, EK, M.D. On Death and Dying. Touchstone; New York, NY; 1969.

BEHAVIORS, TRIGGERS and DEVELOPMENTAL GRIEVING

- **Recap of Behaviors During Stages**

- **Triggers**

- **Developmental grieving**

Since grief is an on-going process, when children hit another developmental stage in their lives it may trigger the need to grieve a loss again.

Why do you think this might be the case?

ROLE OF TEAM WORK

Imagine that three siblings, ages 4 months, 24 months, and 4 years old have just come into foster care. There was physical abuse of the 4-year-old by mother's live-in boyfriend that included a broken arm, dislocated shoulder and multiple old and new bruises. There was neglect of all the children, including inadequate food, leaving them alone for long periods of time, lack of routine medical care and no utilities in the house. The children are placed together.

During these early days of foster care:

Workers: List the 3 most important things you want the bio parents to know about the children and the 3 most important things you want the foster parents to know.

Foster parents: List the 3 most important things you want to know about the children.

Bio parents: List the 3 most important things you want to know about your children.

Workers: What is your preferred way to communicate with the parents? With the foster parents?

Parents and foster parents: How do you like to get information from the workers? From the other "parents?"

Imagine that it is 4 months later. The children have remained in the same home. When they go for visits, the 4-year-old and two-year-old are clingy and demanding. They cry at separation from the foster parents and cry at separation from the biological parents. The baby just appears apprehensive around the bio parents, cries easily and settles down upon return to the foster home.

During this period of foster care:

Workers: List the 3 most important things you want the bio parents to know about the children and the 3 most important things you want the foster parents to know.

Foster parents: List the 3 most important things you want to know about the children.

Bio parents: List the 3 most important things you want to know about your children.

Workers: What is your preferred way to communicate with the parents? With the foster parents?

Parents and foster parents: How do you like to get information from the workers? From the other "parents?"

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GIVE AN EXAMPLE*

Based on your personal experience – with foster children, your own children or yourself – write down an example of each of the following factors that influence how loss is experienced:

The nature of the loss

The age at the time of each loss

The degree of attachment

The ability to understand why there was a separation

The amount of emotional strength

Cultural influences

The circumstances causing the loss

The number of previous separations

The help given prior to, during, and after the separation

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STAGES OF GRIEF

Based on your personal experience – with foster children, your own children or yourself – write down on the white board an example of behaviors that a child might exhibit while in this stage. Use the Handout to capture other people's responses.

- **Shock/Denial**

- **Bargaining**

- **Anger**

- **Depression**

- **Acceptance**

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Key Points*

Purpose of Discussing Loss and Grieving

- All children who are attached to a parent or caregiver will experience a crisis when they are separated from that person. Even if the parent or caregiver was abusive, an attachment usually remains.
- Separation from that attachment typically is a serious loss for the child.
- Children placed with foster families and adoptive families have changed families at least once or twice and, in too many cases, more often. The feelings that children have about this loss will cause them to behave in ways that indicate they are angry and sad.
- While the child's feelings are appropriate, the behaviors may be harmful to the children themselves, to others, and to property.
- Foster and adoptive parents need to understand feelings and behaviors associated with loss. This is part of protecting and nurturing children, meeting developmental needs, and addressing developmental delays.
- Finally, loss is what we call an "equal opportunity employer." Each of us probably has experienced some kind of personal loss. Therefore, our own experiences probably will affect the way we help children with theirs.

Challenge of Working with Loss and Grief

- Separation, loss, and grief are painful experiences.
- It makes us uncomfortable to be with children who are sad and angry.
- Other people's grief can remind us of our own painful experiences.
- Our own painful experiences can help or hinder the way we help others.
- Dealing with painful losses can take a long time, sometimes a lifetime.

Factors that Influence How Loss is Experienced

The nature of the loss refers to the type of loss and whether or not it was expected. For children, the loss of a parent is a significant loss.

The age at the time of each loss is important because children have different developmental issues at different ages. For example, the loss of physical health may be more significant for a teen who is struggling with identity and independence.

The degree of attachment to the persons from whom the child is being separated is another factor. The greater the attachment, the greater the loss.

The ability to understand why there was a separation affects how well children are able to move through the grieving process.

The amount of emotional strength that the child had before the loss is another factor. Think about Baby A and Baby B and the difference in their ability to trust that another adult will meet their needs.

Cultural influences may affect how children express their grief. If a child is taught not to cry, the child is likely to hold grief inside.

The circumstances causing the loss will certainly influence the impact on the child. A planned move is less traumatic than being taken from the family by a policeman in the middle of the night.

The number of previous separations is important because we know that after multiple losses, a child can start losing the desire to attach. Or a child may be overwhelmed with a number of losses in a short period of time, making the grieving process more difficult.

The help given prior to, during, and after the separation may be key in helping children grieve.

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