



# National Training and Development Curriculum

FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS

## The National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC)



## Self-Assessment Guide for Professionals

June 2022

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# Acknowledgements



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empower.



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# Introduction

The NTDC Self-Assessment provides prospective foster, kinship, and adoptive families with the opportunity to develop self-awareness regarding characteristics and competencies important to parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. The assessment is self-administered, which allows respondents to identify any areas that would benefit from additional support and information as well as areas of strength. The Self-Assessment characteristics and competencies align with the NTDC curriculum, enabling a cohesive and integrated learning approach.

## Development of the Self-Assessment

### Literature Reviews

To develop the Self-Assessment, researchers conducted three systematic literature reviews in order to identify key characteristics and competencies of successful families in different contexts:

1. Families who foster, provide kinship care, and/or adopt children from the child welfare system;
2. Families who adopt via the intercountry or private domestic process; and
3. American Indian Alaska Native families who foster, provide kinship care, and/or adopt children from the tribal welfare system.

Eleven researchers reviewed a total of 874 books, peer reviewed articles, government reports, and other literature materials (specifically, 420 sources related to child welfare foster care, adoption, and kinship parenting; 300 sources related to international/domestic adoptive parenting; and 154 sources related to tribal parenting). Researchers compiled the results of this process in a manuscript called “Systematic literature review of foster and adoptive caregiver factors for increasing placement stability and permanency,” which they published in the *Journal of Public Child Welfare* in 2021.

### Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the literature review, researchers conducted 41 interviews with four different stakeholder groups:

1. Tribal child welfare professionals and tribal resource parents
2. Intercountry/private domestic adoptive parents
3. Public domestic kinship, foster, and adoptive parents
4. Young adults who had experienced foster care, were raised by relatives, and/or were adopted as children

Nine reviewers coded the transcribed interviews for key themes related to competencies, characteristics, capacity, and training for prospective adoptive, foster, and kinship parents. These interviews supported and augmented the findings from the literature reviews on core competencies needed in preservice training.

## Delphi Surveys

Researchers also administered two rounds of surveys to content experts and child welfare professionals (collectively referred to as *panelists*) with the goal of narrowing down the list of themes in the Self-Assessment and curriculum. The list of themes stemmed from the aforementioned literature and stakeholder interviews. The survey included four components. First, the survey asked the panelists to indicate which of the listed competencies should be included in Classroom-Based Training rather than a Right-Time Training (a training designed for participants to access outside of the classroom space). Second, the panelists identified any competencies that they believed were missing from the competency list. Third, the panelists provided feedback on the competencies, including wording, ideas for instructional delivery, advice on content, and other curriculum suggestions. Fourth, the panelists provided their opinions on how much time should be spent on each theme.

## Focus Groups

In addition to the panelists, researchers conducted focus groups at the North American Council on Adoptable Children Conference in August 2018. The 28 participants included a mix of foster, adoptive, and kinship parents and professionals. Researchers provided participants with a copy of the themes derived from the Delphi survey process. During the focus groups, participants provided feedback on the listed themes and suggested other themes they felt might be missing from the list that would be helpful to parents who foster, adopt, or provide kinship care.

## Development and Testing of Self-Assessment Questions

After the literature reviews, interviews, surveys, and focus groups were complete, researchers compiled a list of characteristics and competencies to support successful foster, adoptive, and kinship parenting for the NTDC curriculum. A committee of child welfare professionals and researchers worked together to develop questions for each characteristic and competency. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement using a Likert scale ranging from **0 (Strongly Disagree)** to **10 (Strongly Agree)**. The committee reviewed and revised the questions to address concerns with readability and understanding of context.

Researchers programmed the completed Self-Assessment as an electronic survey and distributed it to more than 300 parents who foster, adopt, or provide kinship care to complete and provide feedback. Researchers then analyzed the survey for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha testing for internal consistency and revised the survey using both the participant feedback and the results from the reliability analysis. A second test of the Self-Assessment survey was sent out to more than 60 parents who foster, adopt, or provide kinship care and revised again based on the internal consistency testing and feedback from respondents. In the last few months of the pilot, researchers collected additional feedback from participants and conducted a new Cronbach's Alpha analysis.



# Competencies and Characteristics Included in the Self-Assessment

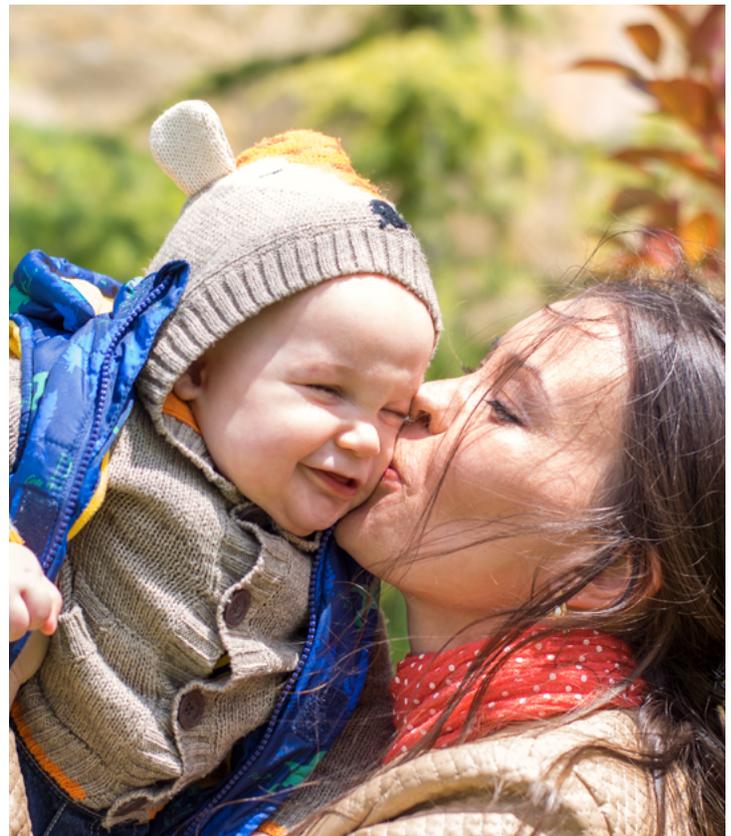
As a result of its final revision, the final Self-Assessment includes five core competencies and 14 characteristics highlighted throughout the NTDC curriculum. The final self-assessment consists of 58 questions and is estimated to take 30 minutes to complete. These competencies and characteristics are listed below.

## Characteristics

Adaptability and Flexibility
Appreciation for Diversity and Other World Views
Attunement
Belief in Self-Efficacy
Committed
Emotionally Supportive and Nurturing
Empathy and Compassion
Having a Sense of Humor
Realistic
Relationally Oriented
Resilient and Patient
Self-Awareness and Self-Reflection
Tolerance for Rejection
Trustworthiness

## Competencies

Attachment
Child Development
Separation, Grief, and Loss
Trauma-Informed Parenting
Trauma Related Behaviors



# Overview of the Self-Assessment Process

The Self-Assessment is a vital part of the curriculum because it supports families in identifying their individualized strengths and areas of challenge. The intent is for parents to complete the Self-Assessment individually and then discuss the results with their parenting partners and support system.

The Self-Assessment helps families:

- Determine if they have the characteristics that are effective in parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss.
- Explore realistic expectations for themselves and reflect on what effect unrealistic expectations may have on them and their family.
- Identify ways to help them strengthen areas identified as challenging.
- Pique their interest and curiosity about the curriculum content.

We recommend that families complete the Self-Assessment twice: prior to beginning the Classroom-Based Training and again 90 days after the last classroom session. The Self-Assessment will help participants discover more about their characteristics and competencies, as well as how these characteristics and competencies affect successful foster or adoptive parenting.

The Self-Assessment takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. Once parents submit their answers, they will receive immediate feedback about how they scored, along with information as to why the characteristic or competency is important for parents who are fostering or adopting and recommendations for how they might be able to improve in this area.

Facilitators should encourage use of the Self-Assessment and discuss how important it is for parents to do some self-reflection as they begin this journey. Parents should not be expected to come to the table fully prepared to care for children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss.

Participants will need to be reminded to complete the second Self-Assessment after they complete the Classroom-Based Training. As with the initial Self-Assessment, participants will receive immediate feedback on their results. However, with the second Self-Assessment, participants will be able to compare their initial results with the results from the second Self-Assessment. This allows participants to see areas where they have a strong understanding and areas where there are opportunities to learn more through Right-Time Training and other supports and services offered in their local area. Facilitators need to emphasize the importance of completing this second Self-Assessment for their ongoing learning.

# Self-Assessment Instructions for Parents

## Overview of the NTDC Self-Assessment

The NTDC Self-Assessment is based on competencies and characteristics that have been identified as important when caring for children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. The Self-Assessment is a vital part of the NTDC curriculum because it supports you in identifying your individualized strengths and areas you could improve upon when parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss.

**The Self-Assessment is not a test; there are no right or wrong answers and it's not something you pass or fail.** Rather, the feedback is intended to allow you to better understand both your strengths and areas where you can further increase your knowledge. This way, you can be as effective as possible in parenting foster or adopted children in a manner that improves their physical, mental, and educational well-being.

Upon completion of the Self-Assessment, you will be given feedback that includes information on understanding your score in each competency and characteristic area, guidance about how these competencies and characteristics can be most useful in parenting and helping the child in your care, and recommendations for how you can strengthen areas where you do not have strong understanding.

The Self-Assessment results are **confidential** and available only to you. The goal is for you to learn as much as you can about yourself. You may also choose to talk openly with your parenting partner or support network about the results. These discussions will help you identify the best co-parenting strategies, using the strengths of all in your community through accepting that no one parent cannot do it all without support.

The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You will be asked to rate a series of statements on a scale from **0 (Strongly Disagree) through 10 (Strongly Agree)**. Choose the rating that best reflects your response to each statement.

## Self-Assessment Next Steps

After completing the Self-Assessment, a score is calculated for each competency or characteristic. We recommend selecting 3 to 5 competency or characteristic areas that the assessment indicates you have an “opportunity to learn more” or have “good foundation” in as areas of focus. You can review information about why the competency or characteristic is so important, consider the recommendations provided to build your skills, and notice which Classroom-Based Training and Right-Time Training themes contain information related to that competency or characteristic.

The information on the competencies or characteristics you select can help guide you in developing parenting goals for improvement. The recommendations included in your feedback will help increase your knowledge and skills when developing supportive relationships with the children in your home. The feedback will also help you focus on how you can adapt your parenting styles to best respond to the children's needs.

# Self-Assessment Tool

The Self-Assessment tool allows you to learn about different competencies and characteristics that may be important when parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss.

The questions are worded as if you already have a child in your home. It is understood that the first time you take this Self-Assessment you are just beginning your journey and therefore may not have a child in your home. As you respond to each question, consider how you would answer as though you *do* have a foster or adopted child in your home. The second time you take the Self-Assessment, you will have completed the Classroom-Based Training and may or may not have a child in your home. Again, if there is not a child in your home yet, respond to the questions as if there is a child in your home.

Please answer each question by selecting the number on a scale of **0 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree)** that best reflects your answer to each statement.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree		Moderately Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree

Self-Assessment		Score
1	I am committed to developing a healthy attachment with the children I parent, no matter how long it takes.	
2	I can recognize when the children I parent are not reaching typical developmental milestones.	
3	I know the various losses that children who are adopted or from foster care may experience.	
4	I know trauma-informed parenting strategies and techniques.	
5	I understand how early trauma, abuse, and neglect impacts brain development.	
6	I am able to adjust rules to meet the developmental and emotional needs of a child when a parenting technique is not working.	
7	I respect the opinions of a child I'm parenting, even if they are different from mine.	
8	I am good at anticipating how children will respond to difficult situations.	
9	In (most) difficult parenting situations, I can work with the child I'm parenting to find a solution.	
10	I know that even when a child is rejecting or hostile towards me, they need people who will commit to caring for them.	
11	I know how to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for children I am parenting.	
12	I believe that children need to be supported or helped to express their pain and grief.	
13	I believe humor can be used to decrease tensions associated with parenting.	

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree		Moderately Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree

<b>Self-Assessment</b>		<b>Score</b>
14	I may need to adjust my parenting techniques over time as the relationship between a child and me grows.	
15	I am careful not to say negative things to children about other people who are important to their lives.	
16	I notice even the smallest steps of a child's progress.	
17	In most situations, I can identify why I have responded inappropriately in a parenting situation.	
18	I do not need to receive love and affection from a child in order to provide love and affection as a parent.	
19	I understand the importance of being honest and reliable in building trust with a child I am parenting.	
20	I am willing to learn and practice new attachment parenting strategies.	
21	I know when to seek help if I have questions or concerns about the development of the children I parent.	
22	I understand how various types of losses related to foster care/adoption can impact children over their lifetime.	
23	I know the reasons why trauma-informed parenting strategies and techniques help children manage their behaviors and emotions related to separation and loss.	
24	I understand how children's behaviors and coping strategies are associated with underlying exposure to trauma.	
25	I am able to recognize when a parenting technique is not working.	
26	I value differences in others, including those in the children I am parenting.	
27	When children "act out", I am usually able to figure out what triggered the behavior.	
28	I am confident I can meet the specific needs of the children in my care.	
29	When children I'm parenting do something wrong, I reassure them that they are still loved by me.	
30	When children get emotional, I can be present and supportive to them.	
31	Children who have experienced loss should be allowed to express their pain and grief.	
32	I think that using humor is an important way for me to deal with parenting stress or challenges.	

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree		Moderately Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree

	<b>Self-Assessment</b>	Score
33	I recognize that success of the child I am parenting may look different than success for other children.	
34	I realize that a child's love for and loyalty to the birth parents and other family members, former foster families, and others is not a rejection of me.	
35	If the child I am parenting and I work together to solve a problem, we'll eventually find a way to resolve it.	
36	I reflect on what I have done successfully or unsuccessfully in my role as a parent.	
37	I can be nurturing toward a child without receiving affection in return.	
38	It is important to me that a child I am parenting sees me as a safe and trustworthy person.	
39	I believe it takes time to build trust.	
40	I believe it is my role to support children in reaching their unique and full developmental potential.	
41	I understand that grieving children often express emotions differently than adults.	
42	I know ways to build relationships with children who have been traumatized.	
43	I know how to recognize behaviors associated with the fight-flight-freeze response.	
44	I am open to new ideas and techniques to improve my parenting.	
45	I have an interest in and a curiosity for learning about those who are different from me.	
46	As I am parenting, it is important for me to be sensitive to what children are experiencing.	
47	I believe that I can change my parenting style to help a child heal and grow.	
48	I believe a parent's dedication to a child is expressed through unconditional commitment.	
49	I know that at times my being a supportive listener is one of the most important things I can do for a child.	
50	I know it is important to try and understand what is really going on with a child and not only focus on negative behaviors.	
51	I use humor to connect with the children in my care.	

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree		Moderately Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree

	<b>Self-Assessment</b>	Score
52	I accept that I may make mistakes in my parenting choices and can learn from those mistakes and adjust accordingly.	
53	I believe that current and former relationships have an effect on a child's self-perception and identity.	
54	I know ways of calming myself down after a difficult situation.	
55	I take the time to think about ways in which I can improve my parenting.	
56	I know how to stay calm in a situation when a child is pushing my buttons.	
57	It is my role as a parent to create an environment of trust.	
58	I change my own responses based on the moods and emotions I recognize in children.	

*Be ready and willing to embrace your child's culture, and make sure you educate yourself.*

TIP FROM A FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT

# Using Your Scores

The Self-Assessment allows you to learn about the competencies and characteristics that may be important when parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. Your first Self-Assessment should be considered a baseline; essentially, you should use the scores to identify areas of the classroom training that you might want to pay particular attention to as you expand your knowledge and competencies.

When you take the Self-Assessment the second time and compare your scores to your baseline, you will be able to see the growth you achieved during the Classroom-Based Training and areas you may want to focus on for your continued learning. Lower scores on the second Self-Assessment should not necessarily be seen as a problem; many of the concepts presented during the Classroom-Based Training will cause you to reassess your capacities, resulting in your commitment to further learning and growth.

In general, you can think about the scores in this way:

- **Scores in the 9–10 range** indicate that you report the highest levels of skill or competence in the area. These are competencies where you are most able to show an understanding of the topic, have beliefs that support effective parenting, and can respond with behaviors that lead to good outcomes.
- **Scores in the 6–8 range** indicate that you see yourself as having some competence in that area, but you are not confident that you have the full range of skills.
- **Scores in the 0–5 range** indicate that you do not feel confident in your current knowledge and skill level for that area. To enhance these competencies, you may benefit from more training and skills practice.

## Scoring and Feedback for Participants

Use the scoring tables below that correspond with each competency or characteristic to calculate your score in each area. Add the responses for the questions related to that competency or characteristic and then divide by the number of questions for that competency or characteristic as shown in each table. You can then review information about why the competency or characteristic is important, consider the recommendations provided to build your skills, and notice which Classroom-Based Training and Right-Time Training themes contain information related to that competency or characteristic.



## Competency 1: Trauma-Related Behaviors

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(5) I understand how early trauma, abuse, and neglect impacts brain development.	
(24) I understand how children's behaviors and coping strategies are associated with underlying exposure to trauma.	
(43) I know how to recognize behaviors associated with the fight-flight-freeze response.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Trauma-Related Behaviors score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this theme and related competencies:

When children experience trauma, their brains often develop differently from children who feel safe and cared for. The effects of trauma can be far-reaching and can influence the development of the brain, how the body functions, and the way the child forms relationships. This means that you will need to be prepared for children who have experienced trauma to be affected in the way they think, feel and behave.

### Recommendations to strengthen the competencies for this theme:

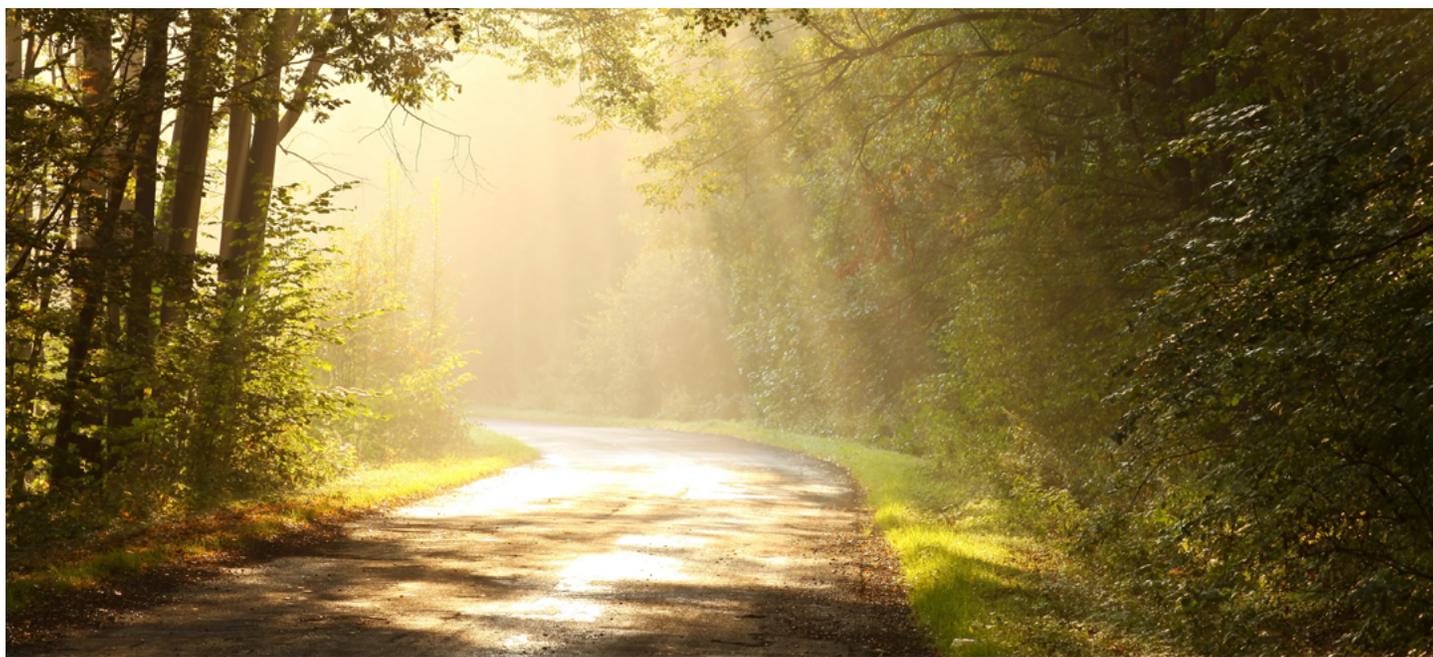
- A child who has experienced trauma may overreact to situations, take their anxiety and anger out on you, and engage in concerning behaviors. Learn more about the major stress responses used to cope with perceived and actual threats so that you can recognize them and adapt your parenting approaches.
- Children's responses are often rooted in survival instincts that made sense and protected them when they felt unsafe. Increase your understanding about how chaos, threat, neglect, and other adversity during development can alter the developing brain and how that, in turn, can change the ways children think, feel, and act. By understanding how exposure to trauma can affect brain development, your parenting responses will be better matched to the needs beneath their behavior.

- Your emotional reaction will influence the child's ongoing emotional reaction. Practice recognizing your feelings and noticing how you express them. Learn about the reasons for rejection and testing and develop awareness of the ways that you respond to the child.

Increasing your competency in Trauma-Related Behaviors includes having strengths in the following characteristics:

- Resilient and Patient
- Attunement
- Tolerance for Rejection
- Committed

In addition to participating in the Trauma-Related Behaviors Classroom-Based Training theme, you may consider reviewing your Self-Assessment results for these characteristics, where you will find additional recommendations to build, improve, or maintain strength in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in these areas.



## Competency 2: Trauma-Informed Parenting

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(4) I know trauma-informed parenting strategies and techniques.	
(23) I know the reasons why trauma-informed parenting strategies and techniques help children manage their behaviors and emotions related to separation and loss.	
(42) I know ways to build relationships with children who have been traumatized.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Trauma-Informed Parenting score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this theme and related competencies:

Children who have experienced trauma may have triggers that set off challenging behaviors. They need support from healthy adults in order to work through these challenges successfully. When a child is triggered, the child's intense emotion and challenging behaviors may trigger the parent as well. It is important for you to be aware of your own triggers and to regulate your own emotions and responses. This emotional co-regulation will help calm the child and de-escalate challenging situations.

### Recommendations to strengthen the competencies for this theme:

- Learn more about the three Rs (Regulate, Relate, Reason) and how to apply them in your parenting. Recognize the reasons parents who are fostering or adopting need to manage their own anger, avoid reactive behavior, and increase their empathy.
- Children who have experienced trauma do not always understand how their actions influence situations, and this is especially true if they also had prenatal alcohol exposure. Adjusting your parenting expectations and strategies to align with the child's needs will help you be more successful. Learn more about the difference between discipline and punishment and how to be proactive versus reactive. Explore ways to promote healthy behaviors and become familiar with trauma support resources in your area.

Connected parenting and building a relationship with the child are foundational cornerstones of Trauma-Informed Parenting. Learn more about the effect trauma can have on attachment and relationship development. Sharing fun and playful moments is essential to connection. Learn what the child enjoys and use these playful opportunities to build relationships. Assess your ability to put relationship-building

first and reflect upon what could get in the way of that.

Increasing your competency in Trauma-Informed Parenting includes having strengths in the following characteristics

- Self-Awareness/Self-Reflection
- Trustworthiness
- Resilient and Patient
- Tolerance for Rejection

In addition to participating in the Trauma-Informed Parenting Classroom-Based Training theme, you may consider reviewing your Self-Assessment results for these characteristics, where you will find additional recommendations to build, improve, or maintain strength in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in these areas.



## Competency 3: Separation, Grief, and Loss

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(3) I know the various losses that children who are adopted or from foster care may experience.	
(22) I understand how various types of losses related to foster care/adoption can impact children over their lifetime.	
(41) I understand that grieving children often express emotions differently than adults.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Separation, Grief, and Loss score:

Score in 0-5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6-8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9-10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this theme and related competencies:

Children who have been in foster care or adopted frequently struggle with the effect of separation, loss, and the resulting grief. A child may express loss and grief through difficult behaviors, and the child's loss and grief may interfere with relationship building. You will need to support the child by acknowledging and affirming the loss and by using tools and skills to help the child communicate and understand their loss and grief.

### Recommendations to strengthen the competencies for this theme:

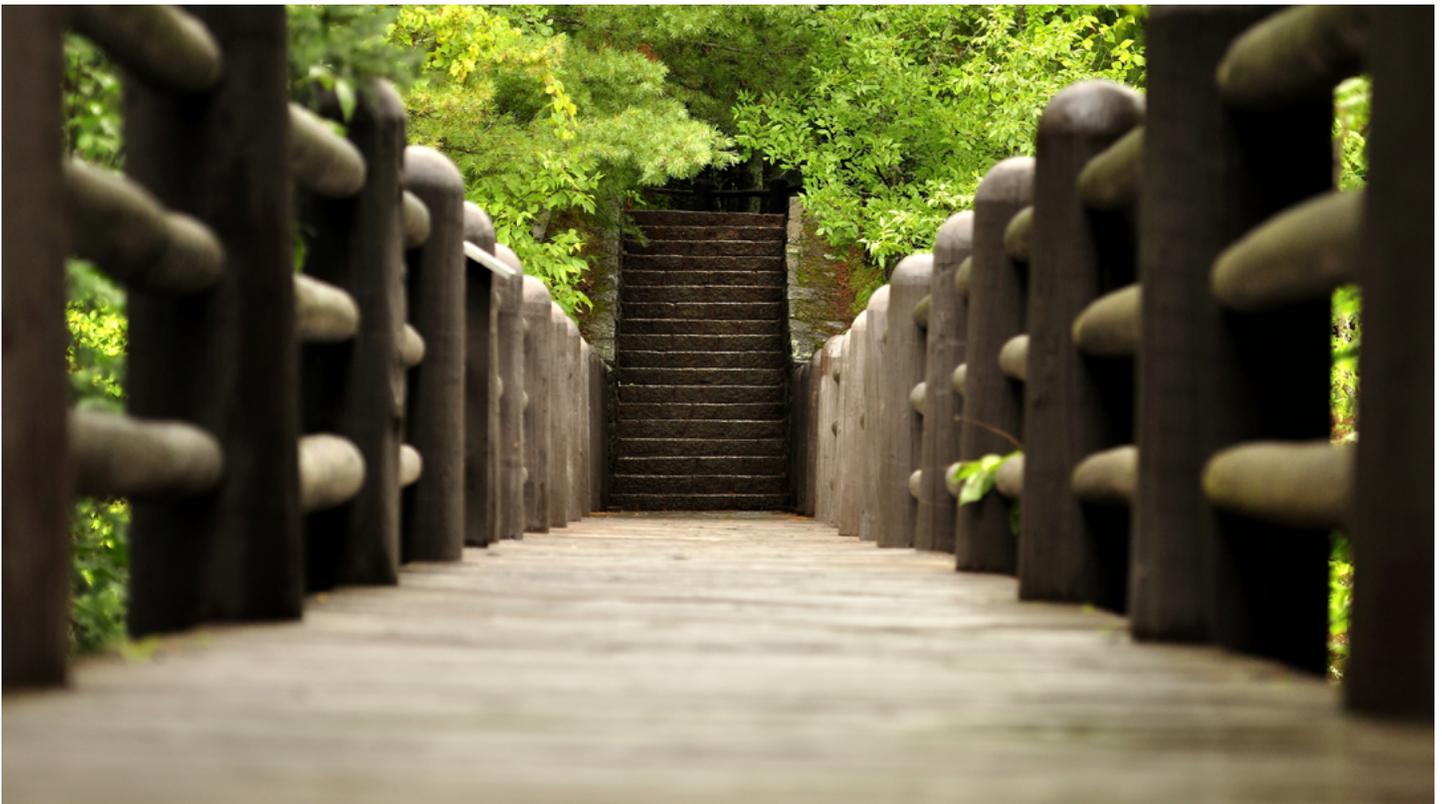
- The relationship losses experienced by children in foster care often occur along with trauma, abuse, and/or neglect, which can make the experience of grief and loss much more intense and painful. Children who have gone through challenging situations will not just "get over it." Learn more about the ways children grieve, lifelong grieving and the importance of providing opportunities for grieving. Explore strategies you can use to help children deal with grief and loss.
- Increase your understanding of loss and fractured attachments with the child's family members and previous placements and recognize the separation, grief, and loss experienced by all members of the foster/adoption network. Identify ways that you can establish and maintain essential relationships with and for children.
- Grieving the loss of someone who is alive but physically absent or unavailable creates

ambiguity for the child. Ambiguous loss is more difficult to resolve and may lead to depression and anxiety. Increase your understanding of the effect of separation and ambiguous loss. Consider ways you can create a symbolic ritual for a loss that may not otherwise be recognized and find ways to validate a child's feelings to support their work toward resolving their grief.

Increasing your competency in Separation, Grief, and Loss includes having strengths in the following characteristics:

- Self-Awareness/Self-Reflection
- Empathy and Compassion
- Emotionally Supportive/Nurturing

In addition to participating in the Separation, Grief, and Loss Classroom-Based Training theme to learn more, you may consider reviewing your Self-Assessment results for these characteristics, where you will find additional recommendations to build, improve, or maintain strength in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in these areas.



## Competency 4: Attachment

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(1) I am committed to developing a healthy attachment with the children I parent, no matter how long it takes.	
(2) I am willing to learn and practice new attachment parenting strategies.	
(39) I believe it takes time to build trust.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Attachment score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this theme and related competencies:

Attachment is the foundation of all parent–child relationships. It is an emotional dance between two distinct people, with no two the same. The way a child relates to you is directly influenced by what they experienced with their earlier caregivers. To really feel that the world is safe now, children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss will need you to show them safety by understanding and consistently meeting their needs. Prioritizing the relationship with the child becomes the most important, yet most challenging, part of parenting.

### Recommendations to strengthen the competencies for this theme:

- The ability to form an attachment between you and the child you are parenting will be the foundation for the relationship you develop with that child—and the foundation on which they will develop other relationships. You can create healing opportunities by keeping attachment-building as one of your primary parenting goals. Assess your willingness to accept the idea that children may have difficulty in relationships due to previous circumstances, to work on the development of healthy relationships with children over an extended period of time, and to commit the time needed to be attuned and present for children.
- It is important to discipline in ways that protect and/or build the parent–child relationship. Learn “JAR” (Joining, Re-Do’s, and Amends Making) as one strategy for correcting behavior while building attachment and healing opportunities. Before you try to change, correct, or discipline, practice taking a moment to consider how important it is and whether it’s better to

focus on building your relationship instead.

- It is important to support the child's attachment to others in their life, including their family members. Learn more about the importance of supporting children's primary attachments to their families in order for them to connect to others. Consider your willingness to support the concept that children are expanding family versus replacing family members.

Increasing your competency in Attachment includes having strengths in the following characteristics:

- Self-Awareness/Self-Reflection
- Trustworthiness
- Attunement
- Relationally Oriented

In addition to participating in the Attachment Classroom-Based Training theme to learn more, you may consider reviewing your Self-Assessment results for these characteristics, where you will find additional recommendations to build, improve, or maintain strength in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in these areas.



## Competency 5: Child Development

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(2) I can recognize when the children I parent are not reaching typical developmental milestones.	
(21) I know when to seek help if I have questions or concerns about the development of the children I parent.	
(40) I believe it is my role to support children in reaching their unique and full developmental potential.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Child Development score:

Scores in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Scores in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Scores in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this theme and related competencies:

Children grow and develop in different ways. A child’s development can be disrupted if the child experiences trauma. It is important to build a basic foundation for understanding child development so that you can better understand and meet the child’s needs.

### Recommendations to strengthen the competencies for this theme:

Learn as much as you can about child development. Having a strong knowledge of both typical and atypical child development helps parents understand how to adjust both their expectations and their parenting style in order to meet the developmental needs of the child in their home. Learn more about the four main domains of development (cognitive, social-emotional, language/communication, and physical). Consider what a child’s behavior tells you about their developmental stage and what building blocks they may have missed.

The child’s chronological age may not match their developmental age. Trauma and abuse typically cause children to get stuck in a younger emotional age. However, in other areas, such as sexuality, they may function at their chronological age. Watch for clues in the child’s behaviors that indicate the age that they are functioning for that area and then respond in a manner that is appropriate for that age. Commit to parenting children based upon their developmental level and not their chronological age.

When children are struggling to meet our expectations, we often interpret the behavior as being done on purpose; however, children need time, patience, and emotional support and nurturing to learn new skills. Learn more about the unique challenges associated with parenting children from each developmental stage and consider how you can support the child in reaching their unique and full developmental potential.

Increasing your competency in Child Development includes having strengths in the following characteristics:

- Emotionally Supportive/Nurturing
- Attunement
- Realistic

In addition to participating in the Child Development Classroom-Based Training theme to learn more, you may consider reviewing your Self-Assessment results for these characteristics, where you will find additional recommendations to build, improve, or maintain strength in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in these areas.



## Characteristic 1: Tolerance for Rejection

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(18) I do not need to receive love and affection from a child in order to provide love and affection as a parent.	
(37) I can be nurturing toward a child without receiving affection in return.	
(56) I know how to stay calm in a situation when a child is pushing my buttons.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Tolerance for Rejection score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Having a tolerance for rejection means not taking the hurtful comments or behaviors directed at you by a child personally. When you are able to acknowledge the rewards of parenting are not immediate, you are able to provide a loving, nurturing environment to a child without receiving any acknowledgment, gratitude, or reciprocal love.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- Children experience a profound sense of loss when they are separated from their family, and they often do not feel lucky or grateful to be in foster care or to have been adopted. Be careful not to measure your success as a parent by the way the child you are parenting views you. Identify how your expectations of the child to show gratification or acceptance may cause you to have a sense of rejection.
- A child’s survival behaviors will look like rejection of the parent who is fostering or adopting them. Starting to feel close to another adult may trigger a warning not to trust that adult and risk getting hurt again, and the child may try to push you away with their words or behaviors. The acronym “QTIP” (Quit Taking It Personally) can help you stay regulated in these moments. Practice identifying these moments and letting them roll off your back. Make time to talk to others about their experience as parents who are fostering. Share tips on how you navigate and handle rejection.

- Learn more about the four phases of a crisis and about how the fight-flight-freeze response gets activated so that you can identify triggers and prevent a crisis from escalating. Consider routines that you can create in your home to help the child feel calm and safe. Learn and practice the “Three Rs” (Regulate, Relate, and Reason), which is a response that incorporates safety and support.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma-Informed Parenting</li> <li>• Trauma-Related Behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to Children in Crisis</li> <li>• Common Feelings Associated with Being Adopted</li> </ul>



## Characteristic 2: Adaptability and Flexibility

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(6) I am able to adjust rules to meet the developmental and emotional needs of a child when a parenting technique is not working.	
(25) I am able to recognize when a parenting technique is not working	
(44) I am open to new ideas and techniques to improve my parenting.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Adaptability and Flexibility score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Adaptability and flexibility means having the willingness and ability to make changes in your parenting style/responses to be accommodating, encouraging, and supportive of the physical, emotional, and cognitive needs of the child. You share the responsibility of caring for children with your parenting partner (if applicable) and are not restricted by stereotypical or societal roles and expectations. You are comfortable acknowledging when something is not working and able to try a different approach or modify your expectations for the child(ren) you are parenting.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- It can be confusing and frustrating to parent to the child's emotional age. One minute the child's emotional maturity may match their chronological age, and the next minute their emotional maturity seems like that of a much younger child. Practice your detective skills, seeking information and understanding about your child's needs. Learn a variety of strategies for meeting the child's needs in the home, school, and community, and consider how each of these strategies might affect your attachment with the child.
- Parenting children with mental health concerns may look different than what you are accustomed to, and the child's needs may change over time. Observe what is happening when a parenting strategy is not working. Start with small adjustments in order to learn how to respond in ways that meet the child's specific needs. After you have spent some time practicing, reflect on what you learned from stretching your adaptability and flexibility muscles.

- The concurrent planning process can be challenging as permanency goals change and potentially disrupt the path you thought you were on, transform your role with the child, and add uncertainty regarding the child's future. Identify aspects of your family life and/or routines that are both in and out of your control and make note of how you feel as you experience these changes. Noticing more about how you react to situations where others are in the lead can help you learn ways to adapt and become more flexible.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reunification: The Primary Permanency Planning Goal</li> <li>• Cultural Humility</li> <li>• Mental Health Considerations</li> <li>• Impact of Substance Use</li> <li>• Building Resilience for Kinship Caregivers</li> <li>• Intercountry Adoption Process Overview (Intercountry/Private Domestic Adoption)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory Integration</li> <li>• Preparing for Adulthood</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Preparing for and Managing Visitation</li> <li>• Family Dynamics</li> </ul>



## Characteristic 3: Having a Sense of Humor

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(13) I believe humor can be used to decrease tensions associated with parenting.	
(32) I think that using humor is an important way for me to deal with parenting stress or challenges.	
(51) I use humor to connect with the children in my care.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Having a Sense of Humor score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Having a sense of humor means that you have the ability to laugh at yourself and not take everything too seriously. You can use humor to manage the stress that can result from parenting, to vent feelings and de-escalate tense situations, and to build rapport and relationships with a child.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- Humor can be used to reduce the level of anger, aggression, or anxiety that children experience. You can use your sense of humor to find the lighter side of situations and to look for the silver lining, such as finding the ways that parenting has made you stronger. Beware of sarcasm because children who have experienced trauma may not understand that you are joking and see this as uncaring or aggressive.
- Laughing can tell your brain to produce chemicals that help you make sense of your emotional experiences, improve your mood, and manage feelings related to pain and stress. Practice using humor throughout the day by being playful, introducing silliness in tense situations, or joking about making a mistake. One of the most useful tools in your toolbox is the ability to laugh good-naturedly at yourself.
- Intrusive questions will come in many forms, and although they may be insensitive, they are often asked out of ignorance. While being sensitive to the child's feelings, you can help the child see where a situation may just be downright silly or laughable so that they do not interpret it as meaning something is wrong with them.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing for and Managing Intrusive Questions</li><li>• Kinship Parenting</li><li>• Building Resilience for Kinship Caregivers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building Parental Resilience</li></ul>



## Characteristic 4: Belief in Self-Efficacy

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(9) In (most) difficult parenting situations, I can work with the child I'm parenting to find a solution.	
(28) I am confident I can meet the specific needs of the children in my care.	
(47) I believe that I can change my parenting style to help a child heal and grow.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Belief in Self-Efficacy score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Self-efficacy is the feeling of competence and confidence in your ability to effectively parent. Parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss will sometimes require you to challenge what you know and force yourself to expand your parenting strategies.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- No one is a perfect parent all the time. Effective parenting takes time to learn and may require you to learn new tools and techniques. Identify three aspects of your parenting that you would like to improve. Ask other parents who are fostering or adopting about their favorite parenting resources and spend some time each week learning more. Keep an open mind, learn from your mistakes, and believe in your capacity to grow.
- Helping children think through what they want to share and with whom can help them feel prepared and less caught off-guard when intrusive questions are asked. Talk through possible scenarios for responding to questions in order to build the child's self-efficacy and confidence in managing these situations.
- Managing stress effectively when faced with challenges and adversity will help you feel better and be a more nurturing caregiver. Assess how well you are able to manage stress. Practice with minor stressors so that you can build capacity for the bigger and unexpected issues. Each time you are successful, your ability to face challenges competently will grow and your confidence will build.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foster Care: A Means to Support Families</li><li>• Preparing for and Managing Intrusive Questions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education</li><li>• Accessing Services and Support</li><li>• Intercountry Adoptions: Medical Considerations</li><li>• Managing Placement Transitions</li></ul>

*There is no expiration date for trauma. It may pop up at times throughout our lives because it is part of our story.*

TIP FROM A FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT

## Characteristic 5: Realistic

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(14) I may need to adjust my parenting techniques over time as the relationship between a child and me grows.	
(33) I recognize that success of the child I am parenting may look different than success for other children.	
(52) I accept that I may make mistakes in my parenting choices and can learn from those mistakes and adjust accordingly.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Realistic score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Being realistic means that you have an understanding that there will be varying degrees of success with different situations and with each child. You understand that your efforts may not result in a change in a child's understanding or behavior until much later. You are able to make mistakes, adjustments, and allowances as you re-evaluate expectations. You know what your expectations are for your child and can identify when those expectations are not being met and may need to change.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- When children are struggling to meet our expectations, we often interpret the behavior as being done on purpose; however, children need time, patience and emotional support, and emotional support and nurturing to learn new skills. Learn more about the unique challenges associated with parenting children from each developmental stage and consider how you can support the child in reaching their unique and full developmental potential.
- Children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss see the world in a different light and they are not always able to think or function in a cause-and-effect manner. Practice adjusting your parenting expectations and strategies and the different ways you need to respond based on the needs of the child.

- The concept of “success” may need to be redefined for each child. Practice celebrating small victories, understanding that each small step is progress. Assess whether you understand and can accept that the efforts you make on behalf of a child may not be realized until much later. Allow yourself permission to make mistakes and adjustments as you re-evaluate your expectations of the child and yourself.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Development</li> <li>• Mental Health Considerations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing for Adulthood</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Accessing Services and Supports</li> <li>• Intercountry Adoptions: Medical Considerations</li> </ul>



## Characteristic 6: Trustworthiness

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(19) I understand the importance of being honest and reliable in building trust with a child I am parenting.	
(38) It is important to me that a child I am parenting sees me as a safe and trustworthy person.	
(57) It is my role as a parent to create an environment of trust.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Trustworthiness score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

It is your role to create an environment of trust in your home. Trust is based on understanding the importance of honesty, consistency, routines, and rituals and then being able to implement these. It requires the ability to be careful in what is promised to a child so that you can keep your word and meet the expectations you have set.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- Children who have experienced loss and trauma oftentimes experience the world and people as unpredictable and unreliable. You will need to put your relationship with the child first in order to slowly earn their trust. Consider how you will create predictability in the child's world, including following through in daily things like picking the child up on time or taking them somewhere when you said you would. Remember that predictability builds patterns, and patterns create ways of being in relationships with others.
- Learn more about the 4 Ss of Parenting, including how spending time with children and connecting physically and emotionally will create a strong foundation of stability and trust. Remember that experiences speak much louder than words, so activities that involve touch, movement, and use of our senses are particularly helpful in cementing positive patterns and loving messages into brains and bodies.

- When children do not feel safe, their arousal levels go up, and traumatic responses may kick in (overused fight-flight-freeze responses). Reflect on the differences between physical safety and felt safety for a child. Develop strategies for creating felt safety by modifying the environment and learning how to respond to the child in ways that help the child *feel* safe.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attachment</li> <li>• Creating a Stable, Nurturing, and Safe Home Environment</li> <li>• Trauma-Informed Parenting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Dynamics</li> <li>• Building Children’s Resilience</li> <li>• Managing Placement Transitions</li> </ul>



## Characteristic 7: Attunement

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(8) I am good at anticipating how children will respond to difficult situations.	
(27) When children “act out”, I am usually able to figure out what triggered the behavior.	
(46) As I am parenting, it is important for me to be sensitive to what children are experiencing.	
(58) I change my own responses based on the moods and emotions I recognize in children.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 4=</b>	

### Feedback on your Attunement score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Attunement is the ability to be aware of, understand, and be sensitive to the specific responses and needs of a child at any given time, despite the degree to which the child expresses or does not express these needs directly. Being in tune with moods; exhaustion; hunger; rhythms; responses; and needs for physical contact, affection, security, stimulation, and movement supports the goal of building a trusting environment. Attunement requires being sensitive and staying regulated while helping the child regulate their emotions.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- Being attuned to the child’s emotional needs (e.g., moods, anxiety level) and physical needs (e.g., hunger, level of exhaustion) can help you respond positively to those needs and build trust and sense of safety. Practice listening skills such as paying attention to the child’s body language, tone of voice, and what they don’t say with words. Increase your capacity to validate the child’s point of view, even when some topics may be challenging to discuss.
- Learn as much as you can about child development. Children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss are at increased risk for developmental delays. Attuned, emotionally supportive caregiving can create an environment that helps a child make progress toward developmental milestones. Having a basic understanding of child development and being attuned to the child will allow you to give good feedback on the child’s needs, challenges, and positive gains.

- Children’s behaviors often communicate their unmet emotional needs. A child who has experienced trauma, separation, and loss will need you to be aware of their emotional states, which can change rapidly. Children who have experienced trauma are often quick to become dysregulated and will need you to stay calm so that you can help the child calm. Learn and practice “STEPS” (Safety, Tone of Voice, Empathy, Positive Reinforcement, Support) to help you and the child stay calm and to avoid escalations in behaviors.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Development</li> <li>• Attachment</li> <li>• Trauma-Related Behaviors</li> <li>• Effective Communication</li> <li>• Creating a Stable, Nurturing, and Safe Home Environment</li> <li>• Parenting a Child with a History of Sexual Trauma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to Children in Crisis</li> <li>• Preparing for and Managing Visitation</li> <li>• Family Dynamics</li> <li>• Sensory Integration</li> <li>• Sexual Trauma</li> </ul>

*Along with your heart,  
knowledge and training are essential.*

TIP FROM A FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT

## Characteristic 8: Resilient and Patient

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(16) I notice even the smallest steps of a child's progress.	
(35) If the child I am parenting and I work together to solve a problem, we'll eventually find a way to resolve it.	
(54) I know ways of calming myself down after a difficult situation.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Resilient and Patient score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Being a resilient and patient parent means that you see your role as helping children achieve success in small steps, beginning with measurable, daily tasks. You do not dwell on past mistakes or the future to pressure yourself or the children. You celebrate small successes, teaching the child to appreciate the accumulative effect of each effort. You have an ability to wait for answers and solutions without giving up and are able to withstand your child's "testing" behaviors, including hurtful, angry, or rejecting comments and actions.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- Understanding trauma triggers can help you intercept or minimize the effect of these events. If you escalate by getting angry when a child's unexpected triggers occur, the child may escalate more, and the emotional intensity will increase. The Three Rs are the essential steps to reaching the child's "thinking" brain. With each interaction with the child, ensure that you and the child are both **regulated** (calm), find ways that you and the child can **relate** (feel connected), and move to **reason** with the child (think about what is happening and perhaps learn from it) only after you are both calm and connected.
- Children who have experienced trauma will need many experiences with a trusting caregiver over time to feel safe. This will not happen quickly or easily. Reflect on how you share responsibilities with your parenting partner so that you do not become depleted. Develop and use your support system so that you will have strength to respond when challenges arise. If you are parenting alone, consider whom you can bring into your parenting circle to help out at different times.

- Caring, patient caregivers who have realistic expectations will be most successful with children who have experienced trauma. Practice noticing and celebrating the small steps of progress. Each one matters, and they will be fuel to help you keep going.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trauma-Informed Parenting</li> <li>• Trauma-Related Behaviors</li> <li>• Impact of Substance Use</li> <li>• Kinship Parenting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to Children in Crisis</li> <li>• Preparing for Adulthood</li> <li>• Building Children’s Resilience</li> <li>• Accessing Services and Support</li> <li>• Building Parental Resilience</li> </ul>

*Be willing to make yourself vulnerable.*

TIP FROM A FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT

## Characteristic 9: Emotionally Supportive and Nurturing

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(11) I know how to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for children I am parenting.	
(30) When children get emotional, I can be present and supportive to them.	
(49) I know that at times my being a supportive listener is one of the most important things I can do for a child.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Emotionally Supportive and Nurturing score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Creating an emotionally supportive environment gives the child a safe space to verbalize and process their emotions, including the positive ones. Children need a supportive space to share and a calming guide to listen and empathize. This could mean listening more than you speak, helping the child to find solutions for their problems, giving your child room to make mistakes and learn from them, and continuously emphasizing your support of them regardless of their decisions or their behavior.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

- Children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss will need you to be extremely supportive and loving. It can be hard to listen to sensitive subjects or the child's pain, yet this is often very healing for the child to have support in this way. Practice your ability to be supportive when children talk about their past experiences and people they may miss. You will be showing that it is OK to have and express these feelings.
- Children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss often need to feel calm and secure. You can help by staying calm, being a good listener, and allowing the child to verbalize and process their feelings of loss and grief. Your ability to be empathetic, emotionally supportive, and nurturing when they talk about the feelings or memories that intrusive

questions from others bring up for them will help create a sense of felt safety.

- For children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss, behaviors are often tied to a lack of emotional safety. You can create a sense of safety for the child through safe, stable, and nurturing parenting. Be present for the child by showing up physically and creating a safe place for the child you are parenting to process and talk. Be sure to find quiet times each day to give the child your full attention. Practice your listening and communication skills, avoid interrupting, and be careful not to jump in too much with advice.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child Development</li><li>• Separation, Grief, and Loss</li><li>• Effective Communication</li><li>• Preparing for and Managing Intrusive Questions</li><li>• Creating a Stable, Nurturing, Safe Home Environment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Life Story: Birth Story and Adoption Story</li><li>• Managing Placement Transitions</li><li>• Sexual Development and Identity</li></ul>



## Characteristic 10: Appreciation for Diversity and Other Worldviews

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(7) I respect the opinions of a child I'm parenting, even if they are different from mine.	
(26) I value differences in others, including those in the children I am parenting.	
(45) I have an interest in and a curiosity for learning about those who are different from me.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Appreciation for Diversity and Other Worldviews score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Appreciation for diversity and other worldviews entails having an understanding and a sense of respect for children who bring a different set of values with them. It means having an ability to reconcile that the child's behaviors and values may not align with your personal values and that this will feel uncomfortable. If not resolved/accepted, this can be a real source of discontent, tension, and conflict.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

Children have a story that started before they moved into your home, and this story has shaped their values and beliefs. Embrace curiosity and ask the child you are parenting about their perspective. Practice curiosity by asking a family member or friend about their perspective on a topic, then seek to understand their worldview without arguing or criticizing their beliefs. When you hear someone voice an opinion that differs from your own, ask yourself why they might see the world that way, then try to empathize with their experience.

Parents who honor their children's culture will be better able to incorporate elements of the child's ethnic and cultural heritage into their home environment and their family systems. Learn and appreciate the values that children bring with them. Practice adopting a nonjudgmental approach when communicating with the family and refrain from making negative and destructive comments that may shame, blame, or manipulate the child, other family members, foster parents, or agency staff.

Appreciating diversity in others puts you in a stronger position to partner with a child's family to collaborate on meeting their child's best interests. Identify how many times in one week you encounter different worldviews at work, in your community, or in your circle of friends and family. Find

ways to open up your world to other views and perspectives.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cultural Humility</li><li>• Parenting in Racially and Culturally Diverse Families</li><li>• Intercountry Adoption Process Overview</li><li>• Maintaining Children’s Connections</li><li>• Connections with Birth Families After Adoption (Intercountry/Private Domestic Adoption)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing for and Managing Visitation</li><li>• Sexual Development and Identity</li><li>• Common Feelings Associated with Being Adopted</li></ul>



## Characteristic 11: Committed

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(10) I know that even when a child is rejecting or hostile towards me, they need people who will commit to caring for them.	
(29) When children I'm parenting do something wrong, I reassure them that they are still loved by me.	
(48) I believe a parent's dedication to a child is expressed through unconditional commitment.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Committed score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Commitment is the ability to be dedicated to a child, sticking with them no matter how difficult the journey. It includes the ability to carefully and consciously consider the requirements of parenting a child and understanding that it is not about fulfilling your own parental needs. Being a committed parent means you recognize the role may not offer much validation or reinforcement of your skills and talents, but you are willing to commit to the long-term work of unconditional parenting and promoting child well-being. Commitment allows you to persevere in the face of adversity. Committed parents are secure in their commitment to their children and know that they are doing the right thing.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

Children need committed parents who offer stability. Assess the factors that would affect your ability to stay committed to a child. Consider questions such as these:

- How much are you willing to sacrifice?
- Will you stand by your commitment, even though it will cause interruptions in other areas of life?
- Can you identify the meaning and purpose that drives your parenting?
- What steps are you willing to take to work through challenges?

Discuss these questions with your parenting partner, if you have one, before a placement is made so that you can feel comfortable with the commitment.

Children who have a history of trauma need parents who will stay committed to understanding their needs and who hang in there while the child gradually develops trust. It can feel overwhelming to parents when children's behaviors are not pleasant. Remain determined to understand what the behaviors mean, rather than just reacting to them.

Parenting children who are experiencing mental health needs or were exposed to substances prenatally presents additional challenges. Learn more about the effects of mental health issues and exposure to substances so that you can understand the child's needs and stay on top of getting them met.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trauma-Related Behaviors</li><li>• Mental Health Considerations</li><li>• Impact of Substance Use</li><li>• Intercountry Adoption Process Overview (Intercountry/Private Domestic Adoption)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing for Adulthood</li><li>• Intercountry Adoptions: Medical Considerations</li></ul>

*Know that you have to parent differently than the rest of the world, and that you will be judged by many.*

*Learn to be OK with the judgment...*

TIP FROM A FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT

## Characteristic 12: Empathy and Compassion

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(12) I believe that children need to be supported or helped to express their pain and grief.	
(31) Children who have experienced loss should be allowed to express their pain and grief.	
(50) I know it is important to try and understand what is really going on with a child and not only focus on negative behaviors.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Empathy and Compassion score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes, and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Empathy and compassion are the ability to perceive/feel others' emotions, particularly others' disappointment or sadness. It requires that the parent look past the current behavior and find the core distress related to the child's response. Parents who practice empathy and compassion know they cannot shield the child from pain, but they must allow the child to experience and express pain and grief.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

Children express feelings of loss and grief in their behavior, and they will need your support in processing these feelings. When you recognize painful feelings and respond, they will feel more connected to you. Practice an empathic response, including being willing to initiate difficult conversations about loss and grief, helping the child tell their story through Life Books or other means, and being aware of your own grief history and possible triggers.

Remember that most children who come into foster care very much want to be with their parents, and being away from the family and community often results in feelings such as sadness, fear, and anger. Practice your ability to recognize when the child expresses these feelings through difficult behaviors. As you increase your understanding of what is underneath the behavior, notice how that changes the way you respond to the child.

Remember that being separated is emotionally difficult not only for the child, but for their parents. Work toward developing a positive partnership with the child's parents in order to best meet the child's needs. Know that allowing the child to see this partnership will be beneficial.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Separation, Grief, and Loss</li><li>• Reunification: The Primary Permanency Planning Goal</li><li>• Foster Care: A Means to Support Families</li><li>• Parenting a Child with a History of Sexual Trauma</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building Children's Resilience</li><li>• Sexual Trauma</li></ul>



## Characteristic 13: Self-Awareness/Self-Reflection

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(17) In most situations, I can identify why I have responded inappropriately in a parenting situation.	
(36) I reflect on what I have done successfully or unsuccessfully in my role as a parent.	
(55) I take the time to think about ways in which I can improve my parenting.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Self-Awareness/Self-Reflection score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

You show self-awareness/self-reflection when you are able to discern why you have responded to a child in the manner that you have. You can identify what was good, bad, and different about the way they were raised while adjusting your own parenting to meet the child's needs. You can identify and forgive yourself for having negative feelings towards a child, moving from disappointment to acceptance. You know your own history of experiencing loss and being hurt, and you can identify how this history might influence your parenting in negative ways if you are not careful.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

Parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss can be challenging and requires parents to understand their strengths and their weaknesses. Identify those areas you can enhance from your self-assessment results. Develop a plan for strengthening each characteristic, including timeframes and concrete tasks. Allow yourself to be open to expanding your parenting paradigm and learning new tools that will help you enhance your parenting.

Maintaining relationships can be challenging. It is important to know and understand yourself and any issues about which you may be insecure or feel threatened. Reflect upon your feelings toward the child's family members so that you do not sabotage relationships between them and the child. This will allow you to make parenting and relational decisions based on love and empathy instead of fear and anxiety.

A child's grief reactions may trigger your own unresolved loss and grief and may prevent you from being able to respond to the child in a supportive, nurturing way. A child may worry when you express strong feelings because children tend to blame themselves when they see you upset. Increase your awareness of your emotional state, especially in times of stress. Consider seeking support from people who care about you, and be sure that you are practicing good self-care strategies.

**Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:**

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attachment</li><li>• Building Resilience for Kinship Caregivers</li><li>• Cultural Humility</li><li>• Kinship Parenting</li><li>• Parenting a Child with a History of Sexual Trauma</li><li>• Parenting in Racially and Culturally Diverse Families</li><li>• Separation, Grief, and Loss</li><li>• Trauma-Informed Parenting</li><li>• Maintaining Children’s Connections</li><li>• Connections with Birth Families After Adoption (Intercountry/Private Domestic Adoption)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sexual Trauma</li><li>• Sexual Development and Identity</li><li>• Responding to Children in Crisis</li><li>• Building Parental Resilience</li><li>• Life Story: Birth Story and Adoption Story</li></ul>



## Characteristic 14: Relationally Oriented

SURVEY ITEMS	SCORE
(15) I am careful not to say negative things to children about other people who are important to their lives.	
(34) I realize that a child's love for and loyalty to the birth parents and other family members, former foster families, and others is not a rejection of me.	
(53) I believe that current and former relationships have an effect on a child's self-perception and identity.	
<b>TOTAL=</b>	
<b>DIVIDE TOTAL BY 3=</b>	

### Feedback on your Relationally Oriented score:

Score in 0–5 Range: Opportunity to Learn More	Score in 6–8 Range: Good Foundation	Score in 9–10 Range: Strong Understanding
Your score indicates this is an area where you can benefit from additional learning. The recommendations below will provide some initial steps to building your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates you have a good foundation to build upon in this area. Use the recommendations below to strengthen your knowledge, attitudes and skills.	Your score indicates strong understanding of this area. Knowing that challenges may arise as your child ages, the recommendations below will help you maintain strength in this essential area.

### Understanding the importance of this characteristic:

Relationally oriented parents recognize and value the importance of relationships to the child. They show respect for the child's family and previous relationships, and to the child and move beyond any anger or jealousy they may feel toward the child's family in order to help the children resolve relationship issues with their family members and former foster families to ultimately grieve losses, maintain connections, and feel good about themselves.

### Recommendations to strengthen this characteristic:

Children have relationships with people prior to moving into your home. Take time to invest in developing a relationship with the child while honoring and respecting the relationships the child has with people outside of your family. Ask the child who is important to them and, if possible, establish contact with them so that you can help the child maintain these connections. Ensure that people who have played a key role in the child's life are honored in a Life Book or photo album for the child.

When parents prioritize relationships with children and value the relationships children have with others, trust will build. Build attachment with the child by placing your relationship with them above all else. Consider where you can grow your communication skills so that you can be more effective in interacting with the child in a way that is relationally oriented.

It is important to build a relationship with parents focused on what is best in meeting the needs of the child. You may be seen as the person with the power in the relationship, and the child's parent may be feeling judged and insecure. Make it a priority to express a warm, welcoming, and nonjudgmental attitude so that the parent will feel like you can be a positive resource for their child and for them.

Learn more about this characteristic in the following themes:

Classroom-Based Training Themes	Right-Time Training Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attachment</li><li>• Effective Communication</li><li>• Foster Care: A Means to Support Families</li><li>• Maintaining Children's Connections</li><li>• Connections with Birth Families After Adoption (Intercountry/Private Domestic Adoption)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Life Story: Birth Story and Adoption Story</li><li>• Common Feelings Associated with Being Adopted</li><li>• Preparing for and Managing Visitations</li></ul>

*Be intentional about creating a support system for yourself. This work is not done in a silo. You need an entire village to wrap around you so that when your life gets crazy for a spell, you have those people to fall back on to help you through the challenges.*

TIP FROM A FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT

*Fostering and adopting is not a journey for everybody; however, for those who stay on this course, it can teach you how to love unconditionally and to truly value what is important in life.*

TIP FROM A FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT



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