

Winter 2017



RAFFT News

Special Adoption Event!

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This year RAFFT celebrated the adoptions that have occurred the last two years by going to the movies! November is National Adoption Month so we held our event on Saturday, November 14th at Paragon Theaters at Spotsylvania Towne Center. We rented a theater to see the Dreamworks movie “Trolls.” As our families arrived we set them up with tubs of popcorn, beverages and goodie bags for each child with snacks and candy. Following the happy and upbeat movie, we talked for a few minutes about some of the underlying themes of the movie, which included resilience, teamwork, and problem solving. We next recognized each family present with a special certificate of appreciation. As our families left, we passed out Troll cups and troll figures, and each child present was able to “adopt” a lovable stuffed animal to take home with them. We send out a special thanks to Paragon Theater and PetSmart, along with Spotsylvania DSS staff who came to help and honor our adopted children and their families. We appreciate you!

Spotsylvania DSS

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Upcoming Training Events

Congratulations to all our families that met or exceeded the in-service training goal of 10 hours in 2016! We are starting off the new year with two training opportunities!

- **Tuesday, 1/10,/17 from 7:00-9:00pm– Fredericksburg DSS**– regional training for

Spotsylvania, Fredericksburg, King George, and Stafford families on “Everything You Need to Know about Adoption Through Foster Care” with Bridget Diehl, Northern Region CRAFFT Coordinator

- **Wednesday, 2/8/17 from 6:00-8:30pm- 1st floor training room at Spotsylvania DSS.** RAFFT will offer a training on “The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children” taught by Michelle Swisher, Social Worker with the Spotsylvania Schools.

Trauma and Traumatic Events



Caption describing picture or graphic.

What is Trauma? A trauma is a scary, dangerous, or violent event that can happen to anyone. Not all dangerous and scary events are traumatic events however. When we face or witness an immediate threat to ourselves or to a loved one, often followed by serious injury or harm, it can become a traumatic event. We may feel terror, helplessness, or horror at what we are experiencing and at our inability to stop it or protect ourselves or others from it. Traumatic events can happen within a family such as physical or sexual abuse, or domestic violence. Traumatic

events also happen outside the family such as a natural disaster, car accident, school shooting, or community violence.

What is Child Traumatic Stress? When a child has had one or more traumatic events, they can have reactions that continue and affect their daily life long after the events have passed. This is often referred to as child traumatic stress. These continuing reactions in children may include: depression, anxiety, changes in behavior, changes in eating or sleeping habits, difficulties at school, trouble relating to others, or not want-

ing to be with others or take part in activities.

Experiences That Might be Traumatic: abuse, neglect, homelessness, sudden loss of a loved one, bullying, cyberbullying, economic stress and poverty, violence within the family, injury, crime, and community violence. Foster children are at very high risk for child traumatic stress. Understanding the effects of trauma on children is an important first step in understanding their behaviors and helping them to recover.

From The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child's Needs

“What is traumatic for one child may not be seen as traumatic for another child. Fear is guided by a child’s perception of what is frightening. It may be hardest for children who are neglected, even if they are not bruised or battered. These children worry about basic needs like food, love, or safety.”

An event is traumatic when it threatens the child or someone the child depends on for safety and love. Trauma takes many forms. It includes neglect, separations, violence between caregivers, natural disasters and accidents. A frightened child may feel out-of-control and helpless, and a “fight or flight” panic response may set in.

Trauma is more severe effects when:

- It happens again and again
- Different stresses add up
- It happens to a younger child
- The child has fewer social supports (healthy personal relationships)
- The child has fewer coping skills.

When something scary happens, the brain makes sure you do not forget it. Traumatic events are remembered in a special way. They are often imprinted as a pattern of sensations with sounds, smells, and feelings mixed together. Any one of these things can “trigger” a child to remember the traumatic event again such as smells, sounds, places, postures, tone of voice, or even emotions. This can cause a dramatic and unexpected behavior response like aggression or withdrawal. They may also freeze in a “fight or flight” response that may look like defiance or a tantrum. They may be very anxious or appear to be very controlling or manipulative and wanting to have things done their way. These are part of their inability to

cope with the trauma they have experienced.

Tips that may help:

- Learn their “triggers”
- Give choices to give them a sense of some control
- Try to stay calm and de-escalate the situation
- Try not to take it personally
- If they are distant, stay available and responsive
- Let your child feel how they feel. Teach them better ways to handle difficult feelings
- Be patient, consistent, predictable, and caring.

Taken from the American Academy of Pediatrics at www.healthychildren.org

KIDS' PAGE– Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow!

Snowblower Game– Ready, Set, Blow!



What you need:

- * Empty paper towel rolls
- * Bag of cotton balls
- * Plastic cups
- * Tape
- * Bowl for extra cotton balls
- * Timer

How to do it:

- * Tape cups to the edge of a kitchen island or table as shown
- * Have children stand on the opposite side of the surface from the cups.
- * Place one cotton ball in front of each child to start
- * Start timer and have each child blow through the

paper towel roll to move their cotton ball into their cup

- * Repeat with more balls until time ends
- * The child with the most balls in their cup when time is up wins!

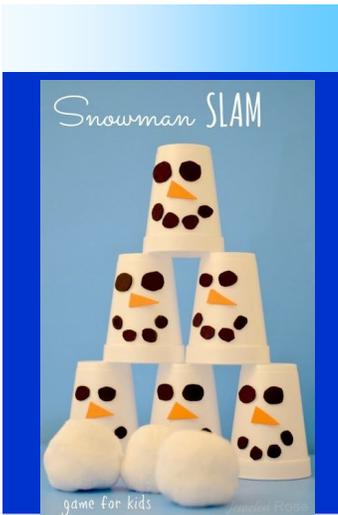


Taken from Pinterest.com

How many snowballs can you blow into your cup?



Snowman Slam: Bowling with Socks!



What you need:

- * White cups
- * Black and orange craft foam or construction paper
- * White socks
- * Glue
- * Scissors



How to do it:

- * Cut out circles for eyes and mouths and carrot shapes for noses
- * Glue snowman faces on upside down white cups
- * Take white socks and roll them into a tight ball (a good way to use those

single socks that have lost their mate)

- * Stack the snowman cups into a pyramid shape
- * Decide how far away to stand
- * Try to knock down as many snowmen as possible by bowling with socks

Taken from Pinterest.com

Turn Those Tootsies into Snowmen



What you will need:

- * Construction paper
- * White paint/paint brush
- * Sharpie marker
- * Colored markers, construction paper, or scraps of material
- * Scissors

How to do it:

- * Paint the bottom of the child's foot with white paint and press it onto a piece of paper
- * Turn the footprint picture so toes are at the bottom and draw eyes, mouth, and arms

- * Add a hat and scarf with materials of your choice
- * Add the caption: "My love for you will never melt!"

Taken from Pinterest.com



Learning to Trust After Trauma– Where **You** Come In



All newborn babies are helpless and dependent. Consistent and loving caregivers help babies learn to trust others, and to feel valuable. This is important for healthy development. We cannot thrive without the help of others. This is most true when times are hard. Supportive, caring adults can help a child recover from traumas. Some children may not know that adults can help or that they can be trusted. They may resist the help of others. Not trusting adults can be mistaken as disrespect for authority. This can cause problems at home and at school. It can also make learning harder.

It can be hard to tell who is affected by trauma. Mistreated children often withdraw from people and seem shy and fearful. They may also be very friendly with everyone they meet. They may cross personal boundaries and put themselves at risk for more abuse. They are choosing between “trust no one” and “trust everybody, but not very much.”

Usual parenting practices may not work as well with traumatized children since they may perceive and respond to the world in ways that you do not. Remember that children who are in foster care live with more anxiety and see and respond to threats and triggers that others do not. Their brains might always be “on guard.” It might be hard to ignore things or focus on a book or lesson. It takes time to ease their fear, reduce their anxiety and for them to trust adults again. Speak with your worker and seek out help if needed from their counselor. Continue to educate yourself on the impact of abuse and neglect on children and techniques to help them heal.

Remember that kids are doing the best that they can with what they have been given. It is our job to provide them with the tools they need and to guide them as they grow. It may be a slow process with many setbacks, but the rewards are worth the effort. By understanding that your foster children’s past experiences have affected the way they respond to the world, you have taken the first steps to building a safer healthier one.

Taken from Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child’s Needs from the American Academy of Pediatrics



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