

Life in the Trenches: Foster & Adoption Stress Management

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What we got planned... sort of 😊

Week 1 & 2
Framework/Tool to help us understand & manage family stress
▶ ABC-X: Stressors, Resources, Perceptions, & Crises

Week 3 thru 6
Discussion about Foster & Adoption Stressors & Challenges
▶ Trauma, Attachment, Cultural context, Community, Service system, Family system, Parents, Spirituality


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Session 1: Learning Objectives

- ▶ Recognize the meaningful and challenging paradox of F/A journey
- ▶ Understand that stress impacts us negatively
- ▶ List stressors and challenges of Foster/Adoption journey
- ▶ Introduce the ABC-X model of family stress
- ▶ Classify stressors based on source, type, duration, and density


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Imagine a friend just asked you about your foster/adoption journey. How would you describe it?



Icebreaker: Let's start the conversation...

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"In our one year with Emma, we have had our best and worst moments as parents and as a family."

Jessica Engel, adoptive mom reflecting on her one-year "golden anniversary"


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Caring for Vulnerable Children Is Beautiful & Challenging


THE BEGINNING IS ALWAYS TODAY.
-MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

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Values in Adoption



Love




Justice



Faithfulness


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Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus




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Challenging



ALONE




REJECTED



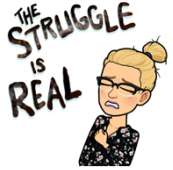
ISOLATED

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Challenges & Stressors of F/A Journey



- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Attachment
- ▶ Cultural context
- ▶ Community
- ▶ Service system
- ▶ Family system
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Spirituality



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The Paradox

<p>Deeply Meaningful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Beautiful ▶ Rewarding ▶ Purpose ▶ Laughter ▶ Tears of joy 	<p>Very Challenging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Difficult ▶ Hard ▶ Stressful ▶ Heart-breaking ▶ Tears of sorrow and pain
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Prayer of St. Stephen Carl

- ▶ Parenting is hard.
- ▶ Parenting children with trauma is harder.
- ▶ Parenting children in the broken system of foster care is even harder.

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Life in the Trenches: Challenges & Stressors

TO TRULY SERVE ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER FAMILIES,
WE MUST HONOR THE ENTIRETY OF THE JOURNEY.
- JEN R. HOOK

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Chronic Stress impacts us **NEGATIVELY**

<p>Physical Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ back and chest pain, ▶ obesity, ▶ erectile dysfunction, ▶ headache, ▶ heart disease, ▶ high blood pressure ▶ lowered immunity to fighting diseases, ▶ muscle aches, ▶ nail biting, ▶ stomach problems ▶ sleep difficulties 	<p>Emotional Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ anger ▶ anxiety, ▶ burnout, ▶ depression, ▶ irritability, ▶ difficulty concentrating, ▶ restlessness, ▶ sadness ▶ fatigue 	<p>Other Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ eating problems ▶ drug use ▶ Alcohol use ▶ tobacco use ▶ relationship difficulties ▶ exacerbate existing problems.
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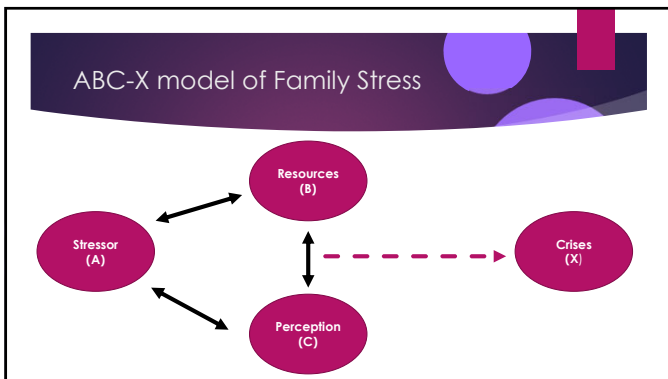
- On a scale of 1-5, how stressed are you?
- Is your stress negatively impacting you? How?
- Is your stress related to F/A?

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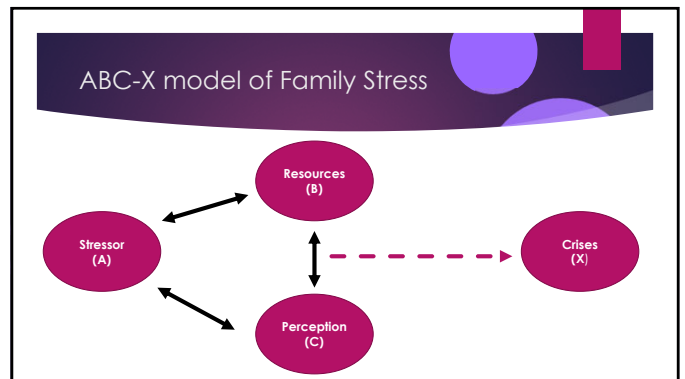
Challenges & Stressors of F/A Journey

- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Attachment
- ▶ Cultural context
- ▶ Community
- ▶ Service system
- ▶ Family system
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Spirituality

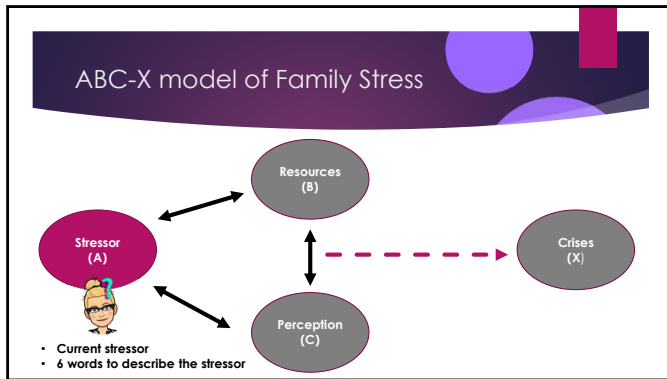
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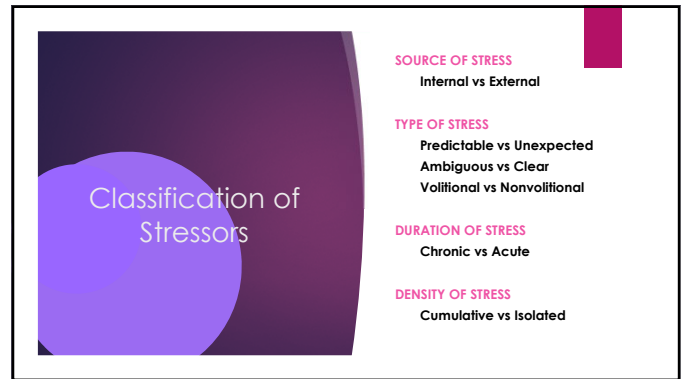
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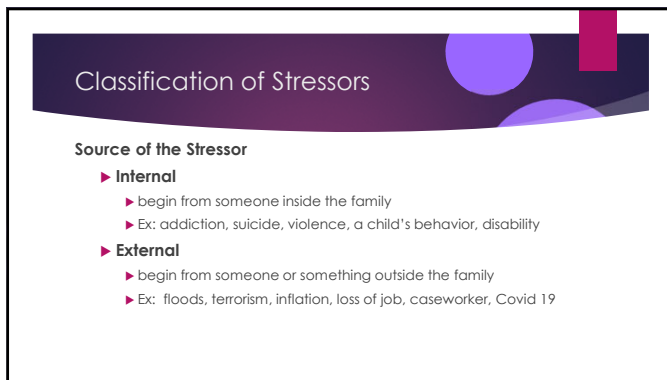
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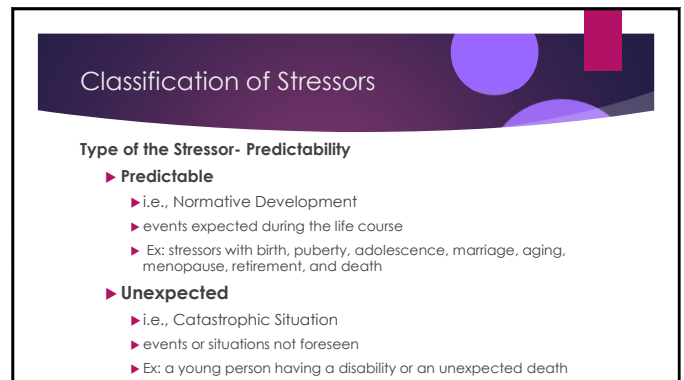
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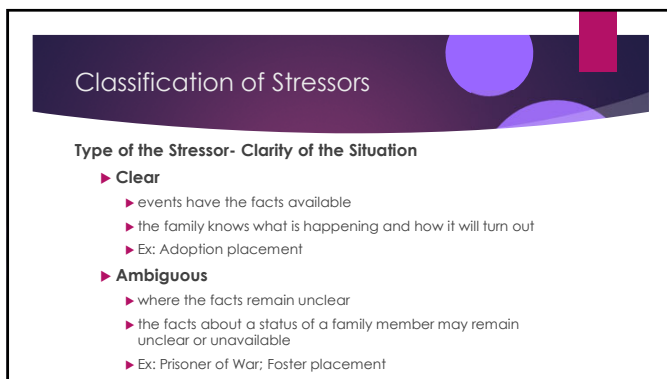
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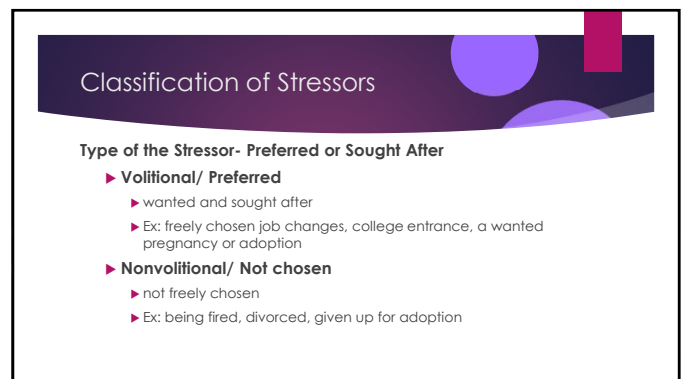
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Classification of Stressors

Duration of the Stressor

- ▶ **Chronic**
 - ▶ long duration
 - ▶ Ex: trauma, diabetes, chemical addiction, discrimination, prejudice
- ▶ **Acute**
 - ▶ short time
 - ▶ Ex: broken leg, flu, surprise home visit from a caseworker

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Classification of Stressors


Density of the Stressor

- ▶ **Cumulative**
 - ▶ pile up, one after the other, so there is no time to cope before the next stressor occurs
 - ▶ Families are often worn down by multiple unresolved stressors.
- ▶ **Isolated**
 - ▶ One event with no other stressors
 - ▶ Ex: car accident

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Classification of Stressors


Think back to the stressful event that you were trying to describe. Now, which words would you use to describe the stressful event or situation?




- SOURCE OF STRESS**
Internal vs External
- TYPE OF STRESS**
Predictable vs Unexpected
Ambiguous vs Clear
Volitional vs Nonvolitional
- DURATION OF STRESS**
Chronic vs Acute
- DENSITY OF STRESS**
Cumulative vs Isolated

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Values in Adoption



Love



Justice




Faithfulness

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Hope

- ▶ Hope for things to get better
- ▶ Hope for healing and growth
- ▶ Hope for support



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Discussion

- ▶ What are other values that we live out in the F/A journey?
 - ▶ Love, Justice, Faithfulness, Hope...
- ▶ What are other F/A stressors?
 - ▶ Trauma, Attachment, Cultural context, Community, Service system, Family system, Parents, Spirituality
- ▶ Are you willing to share your stressor and the words you used to describe it? Is it helpful to have words to describe stressors? How?
- ▶ Do you need hope? How can this group support you?

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Resources

- ▶ Hill, R. (1949). *Families under stress: Adjustment to the crisis of war separation and reunion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- ▶ Hook, J. R., Hook, J. N., & Berry, M. (2019). *Replanted: Faith-Based Support for Adoptive and Foster Families*. Templeton Foundation Press.
- ▶ Boss, P., Bryant, C. M., & Mancini, J. A. (2016). *Family stress management: A contextual approach*. Sage Publications.

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