



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

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

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



Icebreaker: Let's start the conversation...



“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 “gotcha” anniversary



Caring for Vulnerable Children Is Beautiful & Challenging

THE BEGINNING IS ALWAYS TODAY.

-MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

Values in Adoption



Love



Justice



Faithfulness

Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus



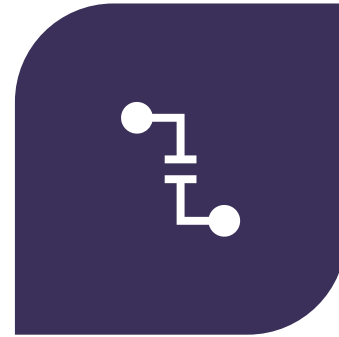
Challenging



ALONE

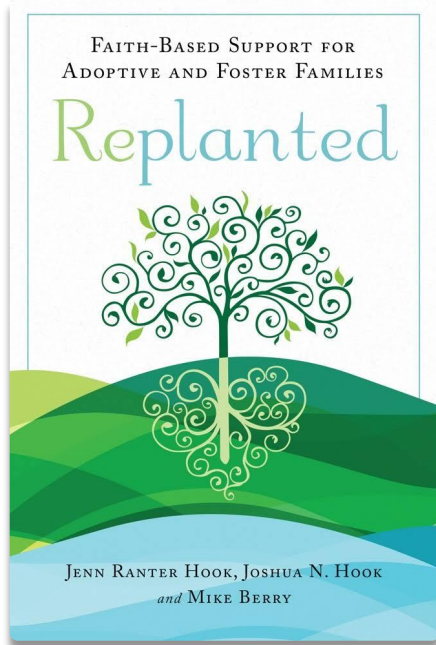


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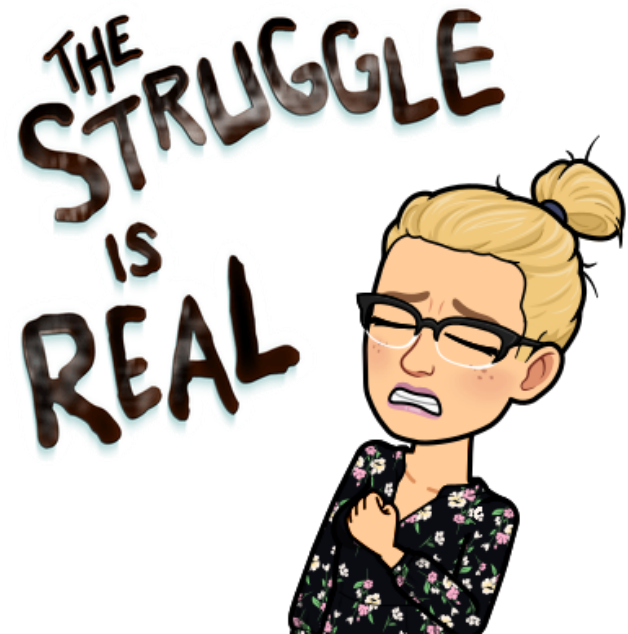


ISOLATED

Challenges & Stressors of F/A Journey



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



The Paradox

Deeply Meaningful

- ▶ Beautiful
- ▶ Rewarding
- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Laughter
- ▶ Tears of joy

Very Challenging

- ▶ Difficult
- ▶ Hard
- ▶ Stressful
- ▶ Heart-breaking
- ▶ Tears of sorrow and pain

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.



Life in the Trenches: Challenges & Stressors

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

- JEN R. HOOK

Chronic Stress impacts us **NEGATIVELY**

Physical Health

- ▶ 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

Emotional Health

- ▶ anger
- ▶ anxiety,
- ▶ burnout,
- ▶ depression,
- ▶ irritability,
- ▶ difficulty concentrating,
- ▶ restlessness,
- ▶ sadness
- ▶ fatigue

Other Concerns

- ▶ eating problems
- ▶ drug use
- ▶ Alcohol use
- ▶ tobacco use
- ▶ relationship difficulties
- ▶ exacerbate existing problems.

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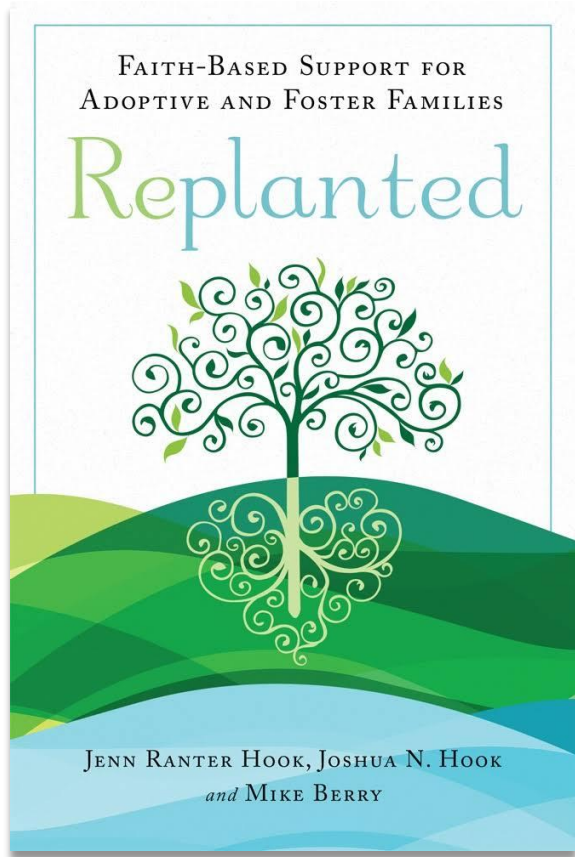
Other Concerns

- ▶ eating problems
- ▶ drug use
- ▶ Alcohol use
- ▶ tobacco use
- ▶ relationship difficulties
- ▶ exacerbate existing problems.

- On a scale of 1-5, how stressed are you?
- Is your stress negatively impacting you? How?
- Is your stress related to F/A?

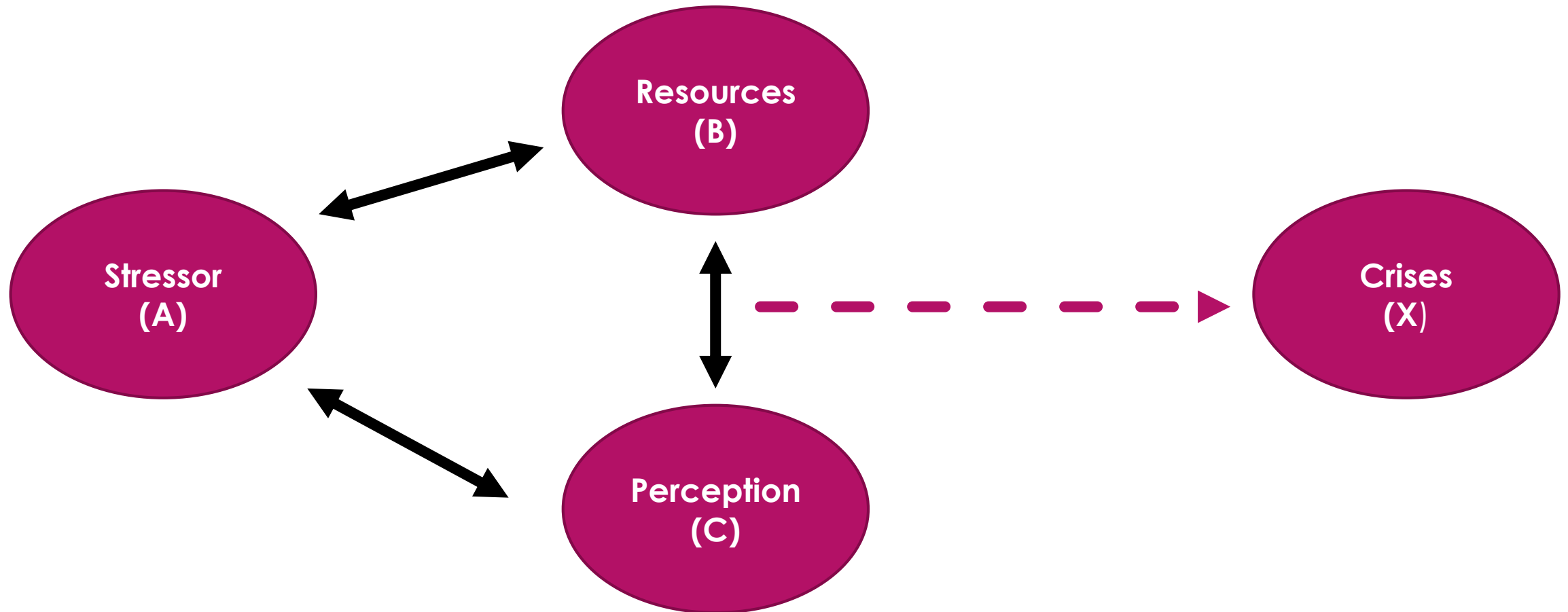


Challenges & Stressors of F/A Journey

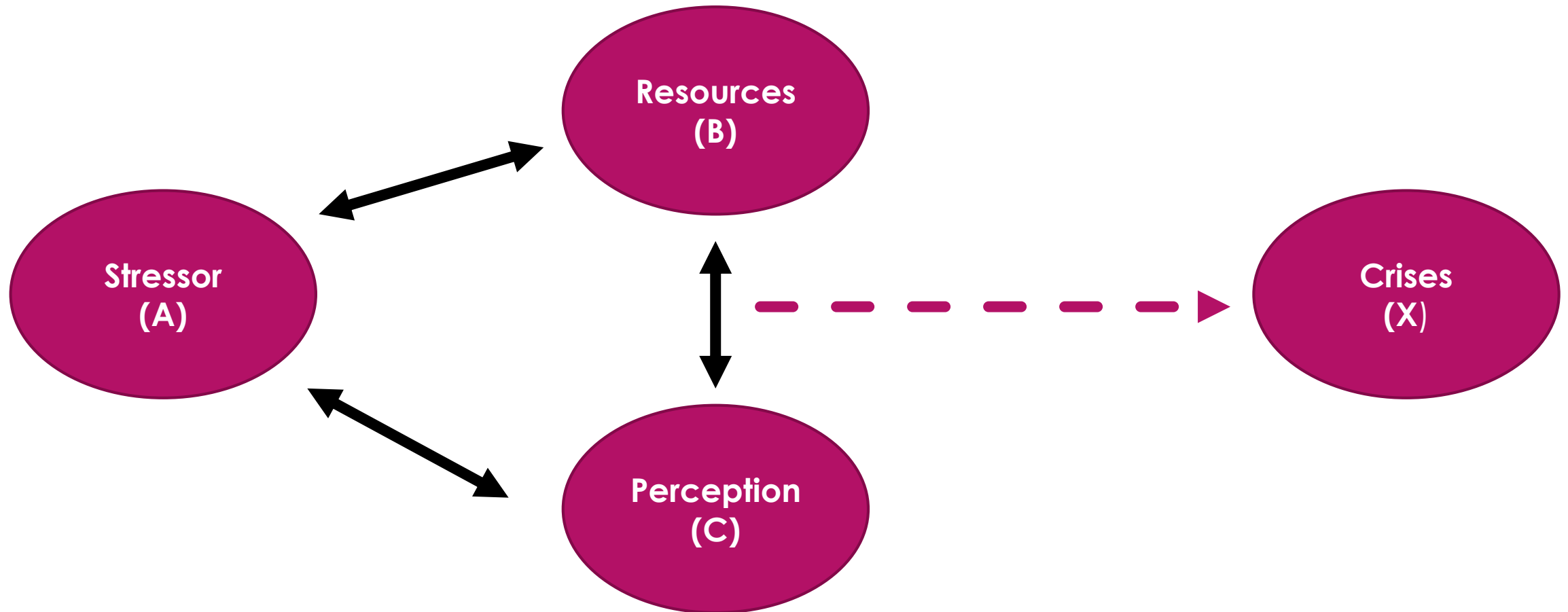


- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Attachment
- ▶ Cultural context
- ▶ Community
- ▶ Service system
- ▶ Family system
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Spirituality

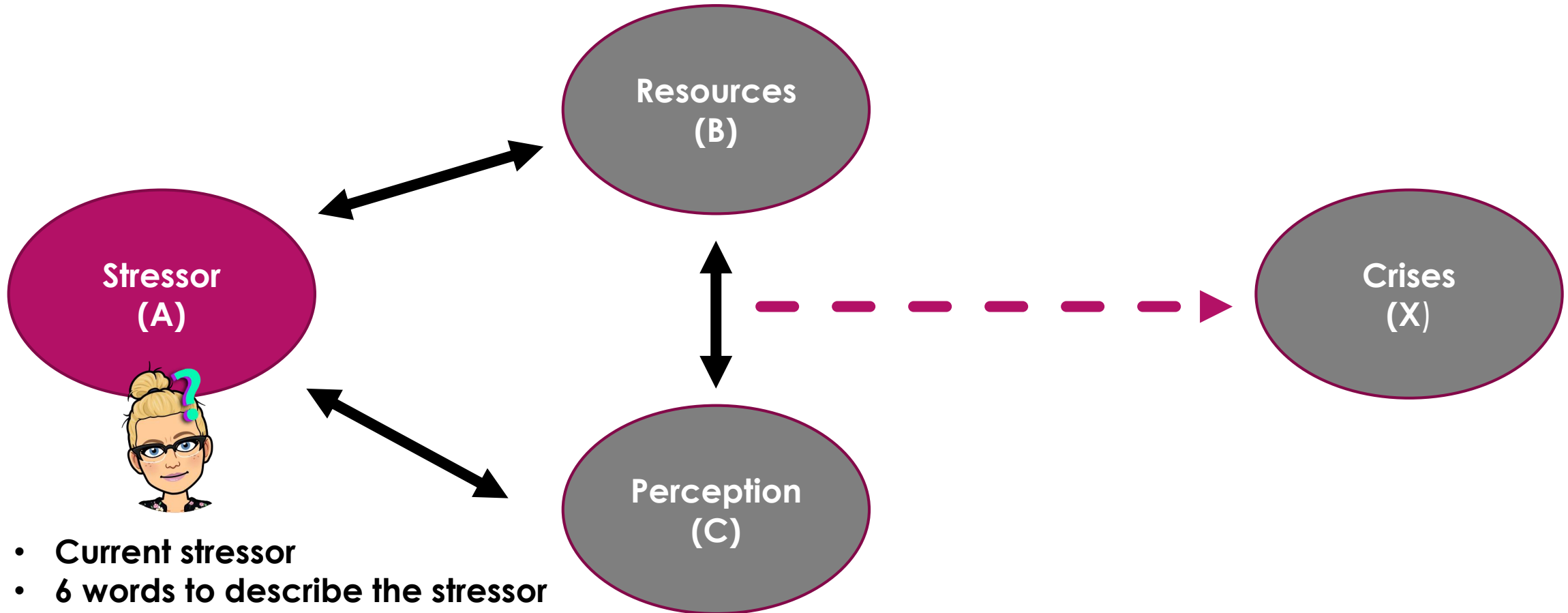
ABC-X model of Family Stress



ABC-X model of Family Stress



ABC-X model of Family Stress



Classification of Stressors

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

Classification of Stressors

Source of the Stressor

▶ Internal

- ▶ begin from someone inside the family
- ▶ Ex: addiction, suicide, violence, a child's behavior, disability

▶ External

- ▶ begin from someone or something outside the family
- ▶ Ex: floods, terrorism, inflation, loss of job, caseworker, Covid 19

Classification of Stressors

Type of the Stressor- Predictability

▶ Predictable

- ▶ i.e., Normative Development
- ▶ events expected during the life course
- ▶ Ex: stressors with birth, puberty, adolescence, marriage, aging, menopause, retirement, and death

▶ Unexpected

- ▶ i.e., Catastrophic Situation
- ▶ events or situations not foreseen
- ▶ Ex: a young person having a disability or an unexpected death

Classification of Stressors

Type of the Stressor- Clarity of the Situation

▶ **Clear**

- ▶ events have the facts available
- ▶ the family knows what is happening and how it will turn out
- ▶ Ex: Adoption placement

▶ **Ambiguous**

- ▶ where the facts remain unclear
- ▶ the facts about a status of a family member may remain unclear or unavailable
- ▶ Ex: Prisoner of War; Foster placement

Classification of Stressors

Type of the Stressor- Preferred or Sought After

▶ **Volitional/ Preferred**

- ▶ wanted and sought after
- ▶ Ex: freely chosen job changes, college entrance, a wanted pregnancy or adoption

▶ **Nonvolitional/ Not chosen**

- ▶ not freely chosen
- ▶ Ex: being fired, divorced, given up for adoption

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

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

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

Values in Adoption



Love



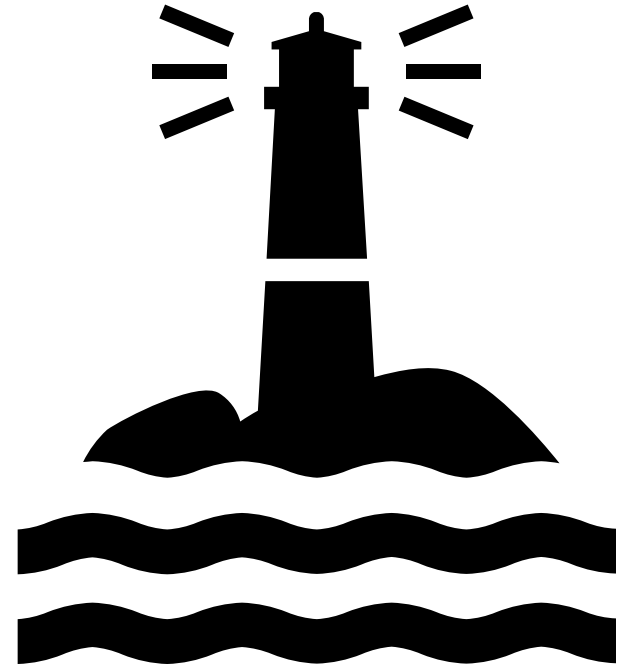
Justice



Faithfulness

Hope

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





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?

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.