

Life in the Trenches: Resources & Perceptions

Session 2. Resources & Perceptions

Identifying the type of resources and perceptions that can help manage the challenges and avoid crises of foster and adoption journey.

Learning Objectives:

- Review the ABC-X model and the categories of stressor events.
- Identify resources in family life that mitigate stressful events,
- Explore family-level perceptions of stressors that balance reality and optimism,
- Recognize the influence of resources and perceptions in creating outcomes during stress.

Program Specifications

Length of Program: 30-45 minutes

Targeted Population: Parents in Foster/Adoption Care, Christian

FLE Approach(es):

Activity Overview: Discussion Questions, Content

Supplies List: Projector, Laptop

Citation: Melton, K. & McAninch, N. (2020). *Life in the Trenches: Foster & Adoption Family Stress Management*. Waco, TX: Baylor University.

Program Outline

Introduction:

Today, we are going to continue the series called *Life in the Trenches*. The purpose of this series is to empower foster/adoption parents to manage common stressors and challenges of the foster/adoption journey. Last week, we were introduced to a tool that can help manage our stress by understanding the stressors that influence our journey. This week, we are going to explore the tool by looking at the resources and perceptions that impact whether stressors become crises or coping. Then in the following weeks, we will discuss the top 8 stressors and challenges of foster/adoption life.

Find more resources on our website: <https://intentional.family/>

2 minutes **CONTENT**

Section 1.1 Life in the Trenches: Resources & Perceptions

In this section, we review the characteristics of stress. Then we break down the remaining components of the ABC-X model, including resources, perceptions, and outcomes.

• **ABC-X Model Review**

Last week, you were introduced the ABC-X model of family stress. This is a tool that helps us understand why some families are able to adapt to stress, while other families have difficulty and sometimes end up in crises.

The model includes three main components for us to consider how well a family is managing a specific stressful event.

- (A) is the initial event or stressor,
- (B) are the resources available to a family at the time of the event,
- (C) is the family's perception of the stressor.
- (X) is the outcome of the stressor event, either in coping or in crisis, dependent on the relationship between these 3 components.

Last week, we processed through the challenges of the foster/adoption journey and stressor events. This week, we are going to explore the resources, perceptions, and outcomes of stressor events in family life.

2 minutes **PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY**

The purpose of this activity is to have participants connect with their own experiences of resources.

- What or who has been the most helpful resource to your family on your FAM journey?
 - What has made them or it helpful?

8 minutes **CONTENT**

Section 1.2 The ABC-X Model and Family Resources

• **Family Resources**

Resources are practical ways of handling stressor events. Being able to accurately and clearly identify the resources available to us during a stressor event is key for families in handling stressors effectively.

TYPES of RESOURCES – What kind of resources help in stressful events?

- Instrumental resources

Find more resources on our website: <https://intentional.family/>

Instrumental resources help support us tangibly and physically.

- Emotional resources

Emotional resources help support us mentally, relationally, and spiritually. Being open to receiving both instrumental and emotional resources is important for any family experiencing a stressor event. Also, being open to receiving resources from a variety of sources is vital for having resource capacity – or the ability to access all resources available to us.

SOURCE – Where do we access resources in stressful events?

- Personal resources

You identify personal resources by answering the question, “what does each person bring to the table uniquely? These include personality traits, intelligence, education, and employment.

- Family resources

Family resources are identified by answering the question, “because we are all committed and connected, what resources do we have as a family?” While this can include tangible resources, oftentimes the most important family resources are intangible, such as:

- How adaptable are we to new situations? Best outcomes typically come from those with a flexible structure, or structured flexibility.
- How connected are we to work through this together?
- Community resources

Community resources are identified by asking the question, “who and what has God placed around us that helps us meet this challenge?” Families who are able to meet the demands of their stressors with adequate resources tend to cope with stressor events more effectively.

2 minutes

PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY

The purpose of this activity is to connect with the information that next information being discussed—the classification of stressors.

- Think of a current stressor
- Identify 6 words to describe the stressor

8 minutes

CONTENT

Section 1.3 The ABC-X Model and Perceptions

- **Perceptions of Stressors**

If resources are the practical ways families handle the stressor events in life, then perceptions are the cognitive ways families deal with the stressors in their life.

Find more resources on our website: <https://intentional.family/>

- **Context of the Stressor**
 - **Relational**

Relational context speaks to the current quality of your relationships. Positive or negative relationships will affect how optimistic we can be with stressor events.
 - **Emotional**

Emotional context speaks to the current state of your emotional well-being. If you are already feeling overwhelmed, that will affect your ability to be positive about a stressor.
 - **Spiritual**

Spiritual context speaks to the current state of your relationship with God and how you view His role in impacting the stressor event.

- **Cognition**
 - **Appraisal of the Situation**

During appraisal, families are gathering information that help them classify the severity of the stressor and define the meaning in relation to their family.

The importance here is to gather sufficient information to make an informed decision about

 - **Outlook on the Situation**

Once information has been gathered,

- **Communication**

Vitally important in handling a stressor is how we choose to talk about it – what words and narratives we choose both during a stressor, and even after the initial stressor event has ebbed.

 - **Self-Fulfilling Prophecies**

This concept in the ABC-X Model suggests that you “get what you expect more of.”

Section 1.4 The ABC-X Model and Outcomes

- **Mediating Influences**

It's important to remember that the stressor (A), the resources (B), and the perception (C) influence one another. For example:

 - Having enough time, money, or helping hands to deal with a stressor can help improve the way we look at or think about an event.

- Having a positive outlook on a situation can help reveal the resources we have to handle the event.
- Thinking optimistically about our situation can help change some of the words we use around the stressor, thereby changing how we classify that event.

- **The Outcome**

And the sum of the stressor event, the resources, and our perception helps influence the outcome of that event.

- **Families can experience crisis.** Crisis often occurs when the family feels they do not have the resources to cope with the stressor, and/or have a pessimistic view of the stressor.
 - Crisis often creates additional strain and stress on family life, and can lead to diminished functioning and well-being over time.
- **Families can experience coping.** Coping occurs when families have a realistically positive outlook on the stressor, and meet the stressor head-on with the resources available to them.
 - Coping often helps families re-establish their typical functioning after the stressor event, or can even help them establish healthier ways of functioning.

- **Resilience**

Not all stressors end in crisis. Just because you're dealing with a stressor - and likely a series of stressors -- doesn't mean your family will inevitably end up in crisis. And just because your family has found yourself in crisis before because of a series of stressors doesn't doom you to constantly experience crisis.

Families who learn from their past mistakes, show up in grace, use the resources available to them, and lean into hope eventually create resilience.

10 minutes **Discussion Activity**

- What resources have you utilized during your F/A journey?
 - What resources are available to your family that you think you could probably access more?
 - What resources feel tapped out right now?
- How would you describe your overall perception of your current F/A stressor?
- Would you consider your family to be coping or in crisis?

Find more resources on our website: <https://intentional.family/>

Program Resources

Presentation Slides/Notes Handout:

- PPT Handout

Activities Handouts:

- N/A

Additional Resources

Program References

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.

Day, R. D. (2010). *Introduction to family processes* (5th ed). Routledge Publishing.

Smith, S. R., & Hamon, R. R. (2017). *Exploring family theories* (4th ed.). Oxford Publications