

Life in the Trenches: Culture, Community, & Church

Session 6. Culture, Community, & Church

In this session, we apply the ABC-X model to discuss stressors from culture, community, and the church as we journey F/A.

Learning Objectives:

- Review ABC-X Model
- Identify the stressors from culture, community, and the church.
- Describe the type of stressor that these are in F/A family.
- Discuss the supports available to F/A family.

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:

We have learned a tool to help us think about common foster and adoption stressors. Today, we are going to discuss the common stressors from culture, community, and the church.

2 minutes **CONTENT: Introduction**

Section 1.1 Review: Caring for Vulnerable Children Is Beautiful & Challenging

The purpose is to remind the participants that the F/A journey is both deeply meaningful and extremely challenging.

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

- **Meaningful—living out Christian values through adoption**
 - Love- as it involves caring and sacrifice for a child in need.
 - Justice—as it involves meeting the needs of vulnerable children and the “least of these”.
 - Faithfulness—as it involves sticking with a child for the long haul, whether that is permanently or temporarily.
 - “being the hands and feet of Jesus”
- **Challenging**
 - At times, the challenges can feel overwhelming and leave you feeling alone, rejected, and isolated
 - F/A Stressors: Trauma, Attachment, Cultural context, Community, Service system, Family system, Parents, Spirituality

Section 1.2 Review: ABC-X Model

The purpose is to quickly remind participants of the ABC-X model discussed in Week 1-2

- **ABC-X Model**
 - To help us understand this stress, for the last couple of weeks we have talked about a theoretical model in family studies, called ABC-X model of Family Stress. This is a tool that helps us understand why some families are able to stress, while other families have difficulty and sometimes end up in crises. The ABC-X model is used for analyzing stress and helping families cope. There are three main components for us to consider how well a family is managing a specific stressful event.
 - ▶ (A) the provoking event or stressor,
 - ▶ (B) the resource, strengths, and assets available to a family at the time of the event,
 - ▶ (C) the family's perceptions of the stressor,
 - ▶ It is the relationship between these 3 things help us understand how well the stress is managed, and
 - ▶ (X) the likelihood of a family crisis occurring.
- **Supports: Resources & Perceptions**
 - In week 2, these concepts of resources and perceptions were discussed in great detail to identify the nuances
 - This week, we will summarize all of these concepts into three types of supports: **Emotional supports** help us feel like we are not alone. **Tangible supports** help us meet our daily needs. And

informational supports help us understand how to handle our situation better.

2 minutes **CONTENT: New Material**

Section 1.3 Introduction to Stressors: Culture, Community, & Church

Purpose of this section is to briefly overview service systems stressors.

- **Culture, Community, & Church**
 - Think about these collectively, as the important *external supports* that we often rely upon during *our F/A journey* that can become stressors when in certain situations, these dear loved ones in our life seem less tolerant, less forgiving, or less informed than is needed for the situation.
 - Examples:
 - The stigmas that come with foster/adoption families-- this might happen when your family is introduced to a new group as foster/adoption family—and people ask if they couldn't have kids OR if there is something wrong with your kid and if your kids is going to hurt their kid—sometimes people can say or think things that are just inappropriate.
 - Help our children figure out how to tell their stories to their friends and peers at school.
 - A child that is a different race or ethnicity AND we want to help them understand their culture
 - Finding people in the community who are role models and teach us what it looks like to be a good foster/adoption parent
 - Asking for FMLA when a new child comes into the home, but being required to take your vacation time instead;
 - The lack of community celebrations and rituals for adoption families—like not having a baby shower OR the church not providing a child dedication
 - Wrestling with feelings that you have been abandoned after hearing our churches say that adoption is the heart of God, but then not being supported by your church OR even being frustrated with God that HE has called you to something that is not easy

5 minutes **PARTICIPATION DISCUSSION: Share your experience (small group)**

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

The purpose of this activity is to have participants connect to and personalize the content.

- Have you ever experienced stress from ___?
- Currently, is ___ a stressor for your family?
- What is your personal experience with this stressor?

Section 1.4 Applying the ABC-X Model

The purpose of this section is to apply the ABC-X model the stressors. The facilitator will describe the types of stressor (A) and then lead the group into a discussion about supports—i.e., resources (B) and perceptions (C).

- **Classification of Stressor: Service Systems**
 - *Caveat:* Each person may perceive or experience these stressors differently. These stressors have been analyzed at a very general level. Your personal experience may be very different from what I describe. Each of you is the expert on your specific situation.
 - *Source of Stressor:* Service system stressors are primarily **EXTERNAL** in that it comes outside the household,
 - *Type of Stressor:* I chose to use the words volitional, predictable & unexpected, and clear to describe our stressful situations with our external support systems.
 - To unpackage this... I will start by saying as we have mentioned every week, the F/A journey is a choice— and so we use the word **volitional** to describe it.
 - Additionally, these stressors are **CLEAR** as we can identify the source of the stress as typically coming from our external support system. Like when we say, “I can’t believe that women said that to me”
 - Now, what is more difficult is identifying whether it is Predictable or Unexpected—And I chose both—because when we chose F/A as part of our story, we knew that we would be doing something that is counter cultural—It was **PREDICTABLE** that these things would occur. BUT while we knew these things might happen, what was **UNEXPECTED** was when these issues arise and sometimes from the most unexpected places and people—AND that is what often causes the stress— is that we weren’t expecting someone at the church to make *that* comment....
 - *Density & Duration of Stressors:* these stressors will be **chronic** as there will always be someone, somewhere who says the wrong thing

at the wrong time. And most the time these are little nagging stressors that might just choose to ignore...but over time, and every once in a while we can have our limit and we might just blow up on the person in the checkout line who didn't say anything super egregious; but we have had our fill of comments ... and this is because these little nagging stressors become **cumulative** overtime and can wear us down.

15 minutes **DISCUSSION ACTIVITY: F/A Supports**

- What supports have helped you manage these stressors in your foster/adoption journey? If you are willing, share a little context about trauma and attachment stressors that you have encountered.
- During our discussion, I would like for us to consider the *type of support* as well as the *source of the support*– did the support come from within us, from a family member, our community, or from God.

1 minute **CONTENT: Conclusion**

Section 1.5 Conclusion: A message of Hope

The purpose of this section is to wrap-up the session on a positive note and provide a message of hope in the midst of dealing with/discussing stressors.

- Values in Adoption: love, justice, faithfulness (mentioned above), AND→
Hope
 - Hope for things to get better
 - Hope for healing and growth
 - Hope for support
 - Hope for God to meet us where we are at

Cultural and Ethical Considerations based on Population:

- *Cultural and Ethical Considerations based on Population: Reminder there are many different types of fostering and adoption pathways (i.e., fostering, foster to adopt, match adoption, private adoption, embryo adoption, international adoption, etc).*
- Single vs Couples

Program Resources

Presentation Slides/Notes Handout:

- PPT Handout
- Handout of Supports: Service Systems

Activities Handouts:

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

- N/A

Additional Resources

Highly recommend facilitators and interested parents invest in a personal copy of the book, *Replanted*.

Hook, J. R., Hook, J. N., & Berry, M. (2019). *Replanted: Faith-Based Support for Adoptive and Foster Families*. Templeton Foundation Press.

Program References

Hook, J. R., Hook, J. N., & Berry, M. (2019). *Replanted: Faith-Based Support for Adoptive and Foster Families*. Templeton Foundation Press.

Supporting Resources:

Hill, R. (1949). *Families under stress: Adjustment to the crisis of war separation and reunion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Boss, P., Bryant, C. M., & Mancini, J. A. (2016). *Family stress management: A contextual approach*. Sage Publications.