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# ***A Time to Heal: A Guide to Resource Parent Self-care After a Child has Left the Home***

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# Learning Objectives

- **Understanding the stages of grief and loss and how it affects the resource parent**
- **Learn ways to cope with separation/loss when a foster child moves on (planned or unplanned) from the home**
- **Knowing when and where to seek help available to resource parents**
- **Learn self-care strategies**
- **Feel empowered continuing in your foster parent journey**

# What's Your Experience?

How many total years of experience do you have as a foster parent?

- a) 0-2
- b) 3-5
- c) 6-10
- d) 11 +

# Examples of Loss

- Reunification
- Death of a loved one
- The end of a relationship
- Loss of a friendship
- Loss of health
- Changes in a role or job
- Loss of financial stability
- A miscarriage or still birth
- Loss of a cherished dream
- A loved one's serious illness
- Loss of safety after a traumatic experience

# Talking with Family and Children About Change

## *A Family Meeting*

- A time to discuss challenges, successes, and plans
- May occur during regular family events
- Should include the child in care, as well as others when appropriate
- Develop a simple agenda
- Create something during the meeting; Family calendar, a gift for the child leaving, poster, scrap book page

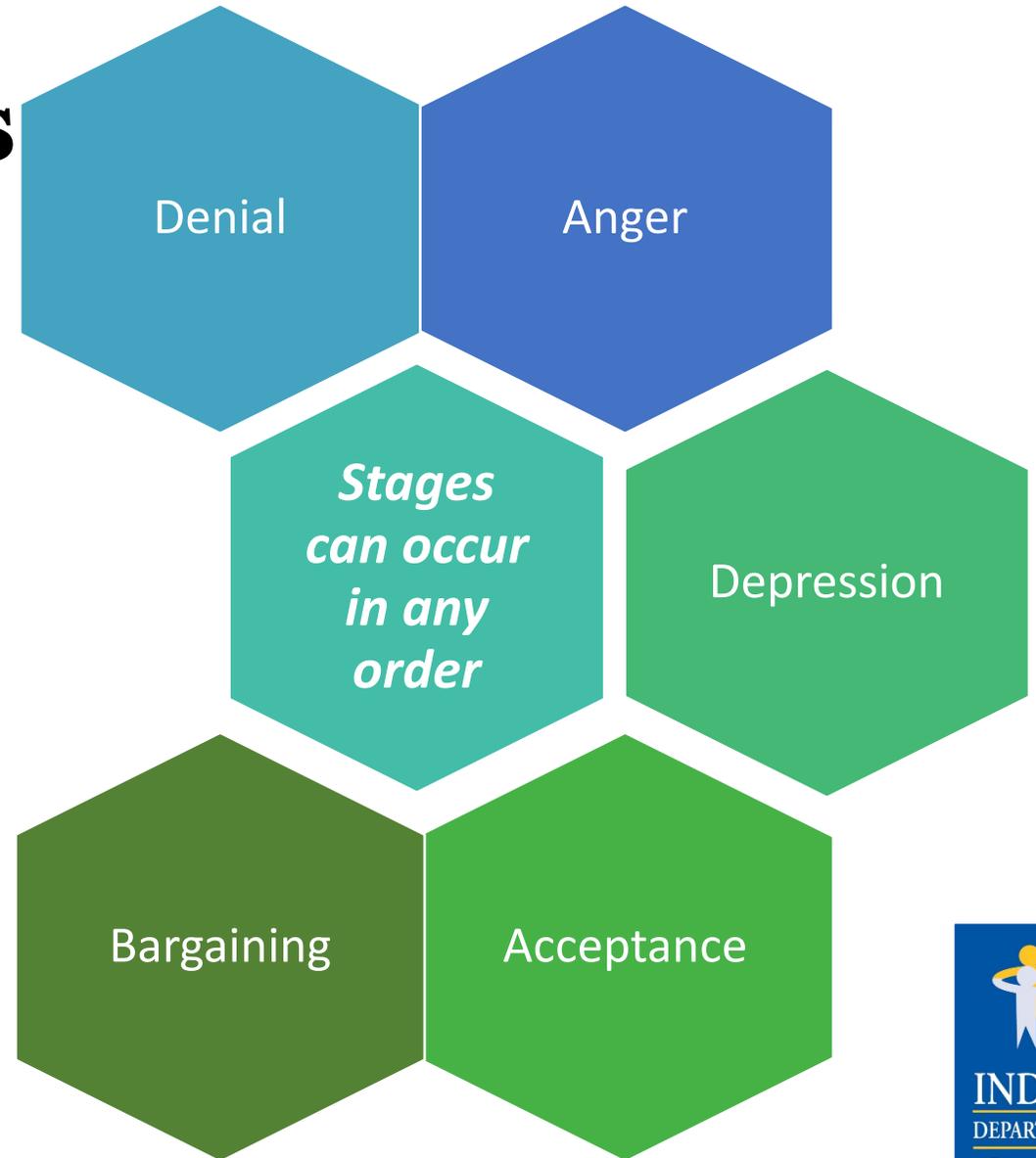
# Helping Children Cope with Planned Moves

- Include the child's biological family during the reunification process
- Plan a celebration: when appropriate
- Create memories: letters, videos, life books, family outings
- Create photo albums for yourself and for the child in care



# Stages of Grief and Loss

- Denial: “This cannot be happening to me!”
- Anger: “Why is this happening? Who is to blame?”
- Bargaining: “Make this not happen and in return, I will \_\_\_\_\_”
- Depression: “I am too sad to do anything.”
- Acceptance: “I am at peace with what happened.”



# Knowing When to Seek Help

These feelings can be a normal part of grief and loss, however **when they affect your daily functions, relations with others, ability to do your job, physical health, mental health, etc.**

- Depression
- Prolonged Shock and disbelief
- Prolonged Guilt
- Prolonged Anger
- Prolonged Fear
- Physical symptoms

# How to Cope

- Recognizing and acknowledging your own feelings
- Talking with your loved ones about your feelings
- Dealing with grief and loss as the resource parent



# Self-Care Strategies

- The single most important factor in healing from grief and loss is having supportive people around you.
- When you are grieving, it is more important than ever to take care of yourself. Face your feelings.
- Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way.
- Look after your physical health. The mind and body are connected.
- Don't let anyone tell you how to feel and don't tell yourself how to feel. Your grief is personal.

# Self-Care Strategies

- Plan for “Grief Triggers”. Anniversaries and holidays can reawaken memories and feelings.
- Feelings of grief and loss can be uncomfortable and overwhelming. But the feelings are common, maybe even inevitable.
- Keep a lookout for signs of grieving in yourself.
- Having a plan and knowing where to look for support will help you get through it.
- Don’t get alarmed if you’re suddenly feeling the pain of grief again, this doesn’t mean you are regressing; these feelings will come up from time to time when you least expect them.

# From Recourse Parents to Resource Parents

“When a child is leaving our care, we have a routine where my kids first choose the type of food they want to eat to get them in a good mood and then we start with the fun stuff. We celebrate positive memories of (the child) to make them laugh. That helped my little ones remember the good times. I gave my children time and space to ask questions and talk about anything they wanted. We talked about coping skills and what they will help with. I even let (older child) help the other kids identify what good coping skills look like. I reminded my kids that when one child leaves it means that things are going well for that child.”

~Alecha R. (Resource Parent)



# From Recourse Parents to Resource Parents

“It was actually quite difficult. Preparing them and (our biological child)... basically we explained that they would be going in hopes of being reunited with their mom and dad. We told (our biological child) that their parents are working on making things better for the boys at home so they can move back in with them. He was kind of excited to have us to himself anyway, but soon after departure was very sad.”

~Ray M. (Resource Parent)

# Continuing Your Fostering Journey

- ❑ Individual Therapy Referrals through DCS, make the request to the Foster Care Specialist or Foster Care Specialist Supervisor
  
- ❑ Resource Parent Support Groups are available virtually and starting to occur in person in some locations
  - Most often include training topics & training hours
  - DCS Support Group providers are open to accepting topic ideas
  
- ❑ Community support groups are available at your local hospitals if dealing with death; these are not specific to resource parents

# Continuing Your Fostering Journey

- ❑ National Foster Parent Association <http://www.nfpaonline.org/>
- ❑ Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center  
<https://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/>
- ❑ National Alliance for Grieving Children  
<https://childrengrieve.org/find-support/9-find-support/20-programs-in-indiana>
- ❑ Child Welfare Information Gateway  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/resources-foster-families/>
- ❑ Fostering Perspectives <https://fosteringperspectives.org>
- ❑ Indiana Foster Care [www.indianafostercare.org](http://www.indianafostercare.org)

# Questions and Comments



# References

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