

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

To learn about foster care adoption and view photolistings and videos of waiting children, visit our website at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org).



# Attachment Disorders: A Parent's Perspective, With Tips For Workers

STORY BY KELLI OSTROSKY, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR

**A**ttachment disorders manifest themselves in many ways in children's behavior, so it's important for workers to respond to an adoptive parent who reaches out before times get too tough and before major issues or disruptions happen.

Now, while I am by no means an expert on the topic, I can vouch for what tips and behavior from others have helped me. Some of it can be found in a book, but some are just "been there done that" approaches that have saved me a little sanity on those crazy days of "trauma mama mother-

hood."

The fact is, attachment challenges will affect all adopted children (and subsequently their adoptive parents) to a degree because they have all suffered from broken attachments, no matter their age! It may take years to surface, but trust me, it's there, hiding in the depths.

Here's my best advice to you, warrior workers, because even when you think your pre- and post-adoption families aren't listening, they are!

**1. KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS:** They include an aversion to physical contact or too comfortable with strangers, issues surrounding control, problems with expressing self and communicating effectively, difficulty showing affection, managing anger, an underdeveloped conscience, difficulty being around other children or animals.

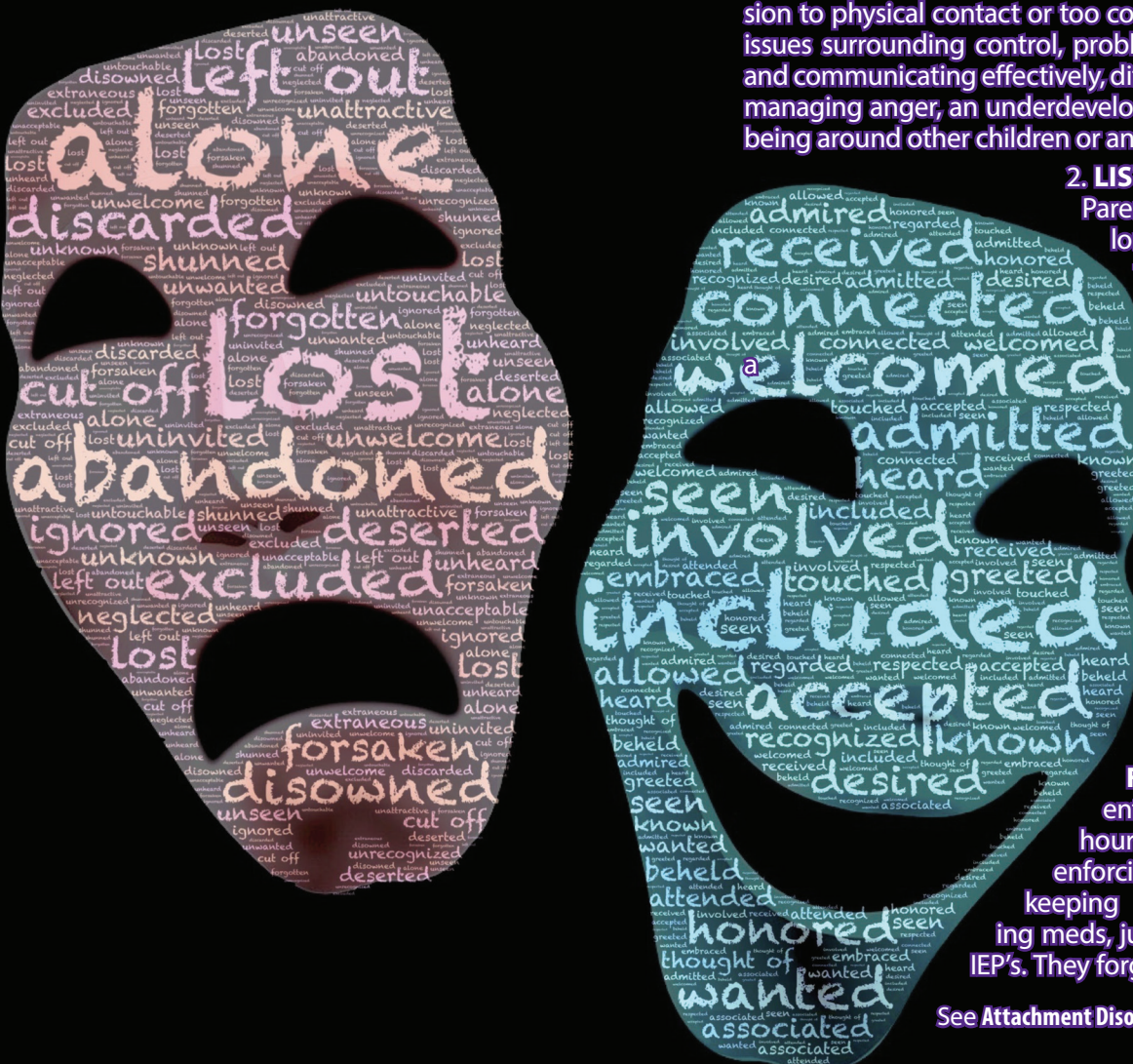
## 2. LISTEN. INTENTLY LISTEN.

Parents' battles are hard and long, and sometimes all they need is a little vent time. They know you're busy, but please do this a little at every contact. Know and understand they often feel hopeless, helpless and in many ways, like a failure. Sometimes when you listen, solutions may come to mind right as the parents spill the beans about their day!

## 3. GIVE PARENTS PERMISSION TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES!

Parents spend every waking hour following agency rules, enforcing rules, making and keeping appointments, managing meds, juggling school issues and IEP's. They forget to shower sometimes!

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# Send MARE your events



## MICHIGAN ADOPTION DAY

Giving thanks for families

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2016



Shown here are 2015 happy Michigan Adoption Day wishes from, clockwise from top left, the U.P., Oakland County, the Michigan Supreme Court and Macomb County.



**Send your Adoption Day events to [mare@judsoncenter.org](mailto:mare@judsoncenter.org) for inclusion in our calendar. Follow us on Facebook for coverage before, during and after 2016 Adoption Day.**

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The better they care for themselves, the more energy and patience they have to give to their children.

**4. Define push back behaviors such as spitting, arguing, damaging property, etc.** It really helps hearing why parents shouldn't take it personally. Because children struggle to trust, it makes sense parents sometimes become the enemy. Understanding this can help shape parents' response.

**5. Provide your families with a great resource list of attachment related material.** Post adoption programs and MARE have these! Utilize us!

**6. Give parents permission to use bedroom or motion alarms.** Children need to feel safe, and this can help accomplish this needed sense of security. Nighttime can be a scary time for children and parents alike. If other disabilities are thrown into the attachment disorder mix, this can become dangerous. And because adoptive parents need sleep like nobody's business! (Most home improvement stores carry them, and they are generally inexpensive.)

**7. Help us keep our children's world "small."** This means no four-hour birthday parties, 20 ice cream flavors to choose from, or long shopping trips. This tactic is especially helpful when they're struggling and truly can't handle all the sensory input.

**8. Connection will be hard. It will take work.** Let parents know this is OK. A great therapist once told me "when you feel like backing away and running the other direction, that's when your child needs you the most." Wow. That was

an eye opener. In those moments, parents need to know that support is still an issue for children who struggle with attachment issues. As renowned family therapist Virginia Satir says, "Four hugs a day for survival, eight hugs for maintenance, and 12 hugs for growth." For parents of a child with attachment issues, it might mean building scheduled hugs into a daily routine. Although this approach can be awkward and uncomfortable, experts still recommend getting in the daily moments of affection.

**9. Diet, sleep and exercise are extremely important.** These three will tremendously help parents and kids reduce and manage stress. There is also growing research on the importance of fatty acids on children's behavior, especially when ADHD is in the mix.

**10. Help parents with food issues.** This isn't a one-size-fits-all concept. Some kids benefit most from open access to food, others need something small in their pocket for comfort, and many children need constant guidance with limits such as eating healthy snacks. Parents may need the guidance to keep the other stuff out of reach or out of the house. Give them workable ideas so food doesn't become a control issue for parents because the more they try to control it, the more the child will try to do the same. And because hoarding peanut butter with both hands isn't a good option for either the parent or the child!

*Lightheartedly written by Kelli Ostrosky, proud mama to the "O trio," including a son fostered at age 1, adopted at age 2, and diagnosed with attachment disorder at age 9.*



Photo Courtesy WXYZ

# How to get youth featured on TV

Make sure you consider this valuable recruitment tool

STORY BY JENNIFER BROOKS, MARE YOUTH SPECIALIST

There aren't any red carpets, sneak previews or airings on the big screen, but the films shot to highlight youth waiting for forever families draw legions of fans anyway.

After a "Grant Me Hope" segment airs on television, adoptive parents and those interested in learning more about the process often flood the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange's phone lines inquiring about the youth featured that day. That's why it's important for workers to consider this valuable yet often overlooked recruitment tool.

By participating, workers help give waiting youth a voice and a chance to feel as though their message will be heard. It gives them hope that they might get what they need, a forever family. The video days are usually held at a fun and interactive place within the community in order to help capture the true picture of these youth and allow their personalities to shine.

Attending the video days is not

mandatory for workers, but it is strongly encouraged. Depending on the youth's cognitive level, we may want to interview the worker for additional information about the youth. In addition, if the worker is present, it may help ease any anxieties the youth may be experiencing and allow him or her to be more comfortable throughout the video shoot.

Once the segment is completed and gets edited, it's then scheduled to air on different news stations. "Grant Me Hope" now features a video of a waiting foster child weekly on WZZM in Grand Rapids, WXYZ in Detroit and WWMT, which covers the Cadillac, Traverse City and Sault Ste. Marie viewing audience. These segments then re-air and will be shared on social media.

By participating in this one video day, the youth will get widespread recruitment throughout Michigan. At the end of the segment, the TV stations encourage those interested to call MARE at 800-589-6273. When we field the phone calls, we record the caller's in-

formation. We will then send all inquiries we receive via spreadsheet to the child's worker for potential matches from those aired segments.

Between the partnership with MARE and "Grant Me Hope," we have completed more than 52 waiting youth video segments all over Michigan. Although we recognize that not every inquiry that comes in from these segments ends in adoption, spreading the word about adoption and the need for adoptive parents is one of the many benefits of registering your youth to participate in a "Grant Me Hope" segment.

Please take a moment to talk to the youth on your caseload about possibly participating in a "Grant Me Hope" video day that may be coming to a town near you!

*For more information and a registration form, please contact Jennifer Brooks, MARE Youth Specialist, 734-528-2061 or email [Jennifer\\_brooks@judsoncenter.org](mailto:Jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org).*

# Meet Michelle Parra, New MARE Program Manager, and Laura Rutkowski, New MARE Supervisor

## Michelle Parra

Michelle has been with the MARE program as a supervisor for the past seven years and has recently taken on the role as Program Manager. Michelle is very excited about this new opportunity. She has been working in child welfare for more than 20 years, in residential, foster care, and family preservation. Her work is guided by an unwavering belief that no child is unadoptable. An avid gardener, Michelle lives in Ypsilanti, with her husband, a clinical social worker, their two daughters, and a black lab named Rosie.

## Laura Rutkowski

Many adoption professionals know Laura Rutkowski, or at least have received an email or two from her over the past four years. Laura began as MARE's Adoption Worker Liaison in 2012, then spent this past year as MARE's Data Analyst. She is now bringing her knowledge and the relationships she has built into her new role as MARE Supervisor. Laura has eight years of child welfare experience, four of those with MARE, and she is looking forward to continuing her service to Michigan's waiting youth, prospective adoptive families and outstanding adoption professionals. Laura is excited about this opportunity and hopes her work continues to demonstrate her belief that there are no unwanted children, just unfound families.



Michelle Parra



Laura Rutkowski

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**October 15, 2016**

**MARE Meet & Greet**, Brighton  
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

**October 29, 2016**

**Troy Waiting Youth & Adoptive Family Fun Day**  
Troy, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

**November 22, 2016**

**Michigan Adoption Day**, Courthouses across the state

**January 18, 2017**

**MARE Meet & Greet**,  
Holland  
11 a.m.-2 p.m.

*For more information regarding these events, please contact Jessica Thompson, MARE Recruitment Specialist: [jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org)*



## Fun 'n game

It was such a hit the last time that MARE and the Detroit Pistons are planning another Adoption Day at the Palace of Auburn Hills.



The event likely will take place in January or February of 2017, so stay tuned to [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org) and follow us on Facebook to get the details.