



**CARING HOMES
FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN**

HOMeward BOUND

The Caring Homes for Orphan Children

Newsletter



Vol. 1, Issue 1. February 2004. Page 1 of 3

Watch, Wait, & Wonder: Enhancing Attachment and Resolving Adjustment Difficulties with Your Young Adoptive Child

by Denise Vallance, Ph.D., Registered Psychologist.

Adoptive parents often seek professional help in an effort to enhance their attachment relationship with their young child or to resolve adjustment difficulties. Behavioral difficulties such as temper tantrums, social withdrawal, risk-taking and oppositional defiant behaviours, negative attention seeking, separation anxiety, and aggression can be seen as behaviours associated with feelings of attachment insecurity.¹

Attachment is an emotional bond between 'stronger wiser others', caregivers, usually parents, and their children, for the purpose of protecting children from danger and providing them with a sense of safety and security. The attachment relationship is arguably the most influential of the various types of relationships in which parents engage with their children such as playmate, teacher, caretaker or disciplinarian.

Secure attachment predicts positive emotional adjustment throughout life. Being consistently available (i.e., most of the time!) to accurately read and respond promptly and sensitively to your child's developmental and emotional cues, especially when the child is distressed (i.e., emotionally distressed, physically hurt, or ill) develops a secure attachment.

Watch, Wait, & Wonder (WW&W) is a proven effective intervention for enhancing the parent-child attachment relationship, as well as resolving behavioural difficulties, which may be related to feelings of insecurity.²

Watch, Wait, and Wonder is an intervention that involves a series of parent-child play sessions.³ Usually, the primary caregiver is involved, but both parents and other members of the family can participate depending on the needs of the family.

Initially the parent and child are asked to play on the floor with toys, 'as they would play at home'. Then they are told that they will receive different instructions later in the play session. The initial part of the play session provides an example for the clinician of the typical interactions that may occur between parent and child, allowing for the fact that they are being observed in an unfamiliar setting. About 15 to 20 minutes later the parent is given a second set of instructions. They are told simply to 'observe, follow the child's lead and not direct or initiate any activity, but only respond to the child's invitations to play'. The parent is encouraged to wonder about the thoughts and feelings underlying their child's behaviour and to 'put themselves in their child's shoes'. During the final segment of the session, the parent is invited to discuss what they observed about their child's interactions and to share their thoughts and feelings about the child's interactions, as well as their responses to these interactions.



All parents, including adoptive parents, begin caring for their child with perceptions based on their own past childhood caregiving experiences. Furthermore, an adoptive child comes to parents often with an unknown history that has possibly left the child emotionally and developmentally traumatized. As well, the child will have unfamiliar temperamental and constitutional qualities.

During the *WW&W* experience, when the parent is asked to observe and not intrude with one's own agenda, the parent has the opportunity to begin to see their child's: behaviours and read their child's signals in a more objective manner in order to understand the child's individual personality. Through this process, the parent can become aware of their child's inner thoughts and feelings.

"Caring Homes for Orphan Children" is a trade name of Tzivos Hashem Canada, Inc., an intercountry adoption agency 3727 Chesswood Drive, Toronto ON M3J 2P6 Canada. Tel (416) 630-2472 e-mail: caringhomes@hotmail.com



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WW&W allows for a safe environment that encourages the expression of thoughts and feelings by both the parents and child. Furthermore, it is often easier for children to explain how they feel and what they are thinking through their play. It is the job of the parents and clinician to 'wonder' what the child might be trying to express. Possible 'ghosts' in the parent's or child's caregiving past, that are 'haunting' the current parent-child relationship may be uncovered and resolved.⁴



For adoptive children, core issues such as loss, abandonment and rejection, grief, guilt and shame; identity, intimacy, and control can begin to be resolved. Often children want to be re-parented by their adoptive parents. They pretend to be an infant during play, wanting to be held, fed with a bottle, and rocked to sleep in the parent's arms. Adoptive parents often have to withstand their child's expressions of rage during sessions, typically associated with early neglect and trauma. The 'good enough mother' can survive her child's anger without feeling rejected or fighting back.⁵ Trust is deepened when a child has a firm but loving parent who can witness and control their child's rage.

These types of sessions can be very emotionally moving and healing for both parent and child. Over time, the parent becomes an increasingly confident 'expert' on their child, understanding the way their child communicates their needs, which ultimately facilitates the parent's capacity to respond sensitively and promptly to their child's cues, enhancing the attachment relationship and increasing their child's sense of security.

References

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 28, 2004, Toronto -- "How to Adopt / Getting Started in Adoption", seminar for Ontarians adopting locally or internationally. 10 am. Held twice monthly, Church of Saint Timothy, 100 Old Orchard Grove at Ridley Blvd. Pat Fenton, Adoption Council of Ontario, Adoption Resource Centre, 416-482-0021, aco@adoption.ca, www.adoption.on.ca

March 14, 2004, Saskatoon -- ASCS annual Winter Event for adoptive families and waiting couples. 4:30-8:30 p.m., Saskatoon Lawson Civic Centre, 225 Primrose Dr. \$20/family; \$10/couples. Potluck supper, 5 p.m. Swimming, 6:30 p.m. Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan, 203 - 510 Cynthia St. Saskatoon SK S7L 7K7, 306-665-7272, 1-866-869-2727, adoption.support@sasktel.net, www3.sk.sympatico.ca/adoption

Mar. 20, 2004, Calgary -- IAFA support group meeting. 5 p.m. An Alberta-wide organization supporting families in international adoption and lobbying the government on international adoption issues. International Adoption Families Assn., 403-270-2474 (24-hour voice mail), jhalinda@shaw.ca, www.nucleus.com/~iafa

Mar. 23, 2004, Edmonton -- IAFA support group meeting. 7 p.m. An Alberta-wide organization supporting families in international adoption and lobbying the government on international adoption issues. International Adoption Families Assn., 403-270-2474 (24-hour voice mail), jhalinda@shaw.ca, www.nucleus.com/~iafa

April 3-4, 2004, Toronto -- Ontario Adoption Resource Exchange (A.R.E.) weekend. Conference on Saturday; waiting children presentations on Sunday. Metro Toronto

Convention Centre, North Building (Front St), www.mtccc.com.

On Saturday, April 3: Adoption Council of Ontario's "Voices of Adoption" conference for adoptive and pre-adoptive parents. 8:30 am - 5:30 pm. Workshops (including ACO's "How to Adopt/Getting Started in Adoption" seminar) and displays. Pat Fenton, ACO, 416-482-0021, aco@adoption.ca, www.adoption.on.ca

On Sunday, April 4: A.R.E. is hosted by the Ontario Ministry of Children's Services, www.children.gov.on.ca, and Children's Aid Societies. 10 am - 5 pm. Free. CASs provide agency displays and video presentations of waiting children, to help find adoptive homes for children in their care. Prospective parents can talk to CAS workers about Ontario children waiting to be adopted. To be eligible to apply to adopt one of the children presented, you'll need a completed homestudy

February Birthdays



Happy Birthday to:

Alexander G. on your 9th birthday on February 1st
James J. on your 7th birthday on February 1st
Scott B. on your 1st birthday on February 6th
Rachel G. on your 8th birthday on February 7th
Anna D. on your 16th birthday on February 8th
Natasha B. on your 5th birthday on February 11th
Darya S. on your 2nd birthday on February 13th
Kassandra A. on your 8th birthday on February 14th
Eric L. on your 4th birthday on February 14th
Paul Y. on your 7th birthday on February 19th
Alexandra O. on your 17th birthday on February 20th
Matan S. on your 8th birthday on February 20th
Alexander H. on your 7th birthday on February 20th
Kira P. on your 6th birthday on February 20th
Benjamin C. on your 9th birthday on February 21st
James S. on your 7th birthday on February 21st
Erika H. on your 4th birthday on February 27th
Peter W. on your 2nd birthday on February 25th

Sorry if
we
missed
yours!
☺

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Moshiach is on his way. Make the world a beautiful place with acts of goodness and kindness.