



## Focus on Module 5:

### The Impact of Loss and Grief on Child Mental Health



Module 5 focuses on the central role of loss and grief in foster care, adoption or guardianship and how loss and grief impacts the mental health of children. Below are tips for using a few strategies from this module in your day to day practice.

#### Reflection on Loss

Children experience profound loss; from loss of family, pets, friends, and as in inter-country adoption, even the sights, sounds and smells that are familiar and comforting.

Module 5, Lesson 1 includes a “Loss Exercise”. Use the following exercise in a staff meeting.

Have each person answer these questions independently and then discuss as a group:

- How does it feel to have to choose?
  - How does it feel to have little choice?
  - Can you relate your feelings to those of children on your caseload?
  - Does this understanding inform your practice?
- Pass out handout [M2L2 guidance from ACF](#) on promoting safe, effective and appropriate use of medications to your staff and psychiatric professionals they refer children to.
  - Learn Best Treatment Practices: Using the handout M2L2 Program Directory, develop a program directory that lists programs/providers available in your area within each category. Assign staff to research options in your area or available to them nationally and compile a list to share. Remember to update periodically!



See page 2



## Helping Children Tell Their Story

- In a team meeting, watch the video in Module 3.2.4 about children’s experience being taken away.
- Ask your staff to try one new tool presented in lesson 3 to help a child on their caseload tell their story. For instance: Lifebooks, Storyboards, Digital Stories, Genograms, Ecomaps, Timelines, Bibliotherapy, Cinematography, and Memory Boxes. Ask them to report back on how it went.

## Assessing Foster and Adoptive Parents

- Review the questions listed in [handout 2.4.2](#) for assessing parents. Have a discussion with staff about home studies provided to your agency and/or by your agency. List areas where you are doing well with home studies and areas where you would like to see improvements.

## Helping Families Find a Therapist

- Encourage your staff to print and use the questions provided in [handout 2.5.1](#) to help families find an adoption competent therapist.
- Ask staff to proactively reach out to therapists to ask about their adoption and foster care specific training. Start a resource list of local therapists to refer families.
- Utilize the Child Welfare Information Gateway [Foster Care and Adoption Directory](#) or the [State Foster/Adoptive Coalitions](#) to search for local resources.
- Begin talking to therapists in your area about the opportunity to participate in NTI for Mental Health professionals. Refer them to your Implementation Specialist or the NTI website: [adoptionsupport.org/nti](http://adoptionsupport.org/nti).

### NTI Training Improved Competence

*“The training improved my knowledge and competence. I have a good working relationship with mental health providers, but now will be able to work with them on a different level with the info learned in the training.”*

**See More Tip Sheets from NTI**

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## NTI Pilot States - Contact Us for More Information:

California and Oklahoma • Emily Smith-Goering 202.798.3424 [Email Emily](#)

Illinois, South Carolina and Tennessee • Mary Wichansky 240.606.4846 [Email Mary](#)

Maine, Minnesota and Washington • Lisa Maynard 585.507.7588 [Email Lisa](#)