



Focus on Module 7: IDENTITY MATTERS

Module 7 examines identity formation, the impact of trauma on identify development, and explores identity through the lens of adoption and guardianship.



WHO AM I?

Imagine what it would be like to look in the mirror and have no idea who you look like, where you come from or who you resemble.

Use this activity to look at identity formation from a personal perspective:

In a team meeting, have each member pair with a partner. Hand out 10 index cards to each person.

Ask each person to think about their values and important aspects of their identity. Instruct them to write one value/aspect on each index card, 10 in total. Some examples of categories include, race, religion, occupation, family, traits, activities, health, socio-economic group. Take about 5 minutes for partners to share what they wrote on their cards.

As a team, discuss:

Is race/ethnicity a big factor in your identity? Gender? Why or why not? How about sexual orientation? Age? Family upbringing? What were the important factors in your identity formation? Do you share common traits with your family? What might have been different if you had been raised outside your family of origin?

Transfer of learning:

Now that you've thought about identity formation from your own perspective, consider the children and families with whom you work. How might the children answer these questions? How about their parents? How might this understanding shift the way in which you work with them?

RACE, CULTURE, ETHNICITY & IDENTITY

Identity formation is a significant consideration in transracial adoptions, especially through adolescence. The video “Adoption and Identity Intertwined” features several youth sharing their experiences of being adopted transracially or transculturally.

Plan a “movie night” for adoptive/ guardianship parents and invite transracially/transculturally adopted youth, too.

After the movie, facilitate an open discussion, solicit reactions to the film, and invite suggestions by the young people about what has been most supportive to them as they face struggles with identity. Have someone capture significant points on a white board or easel, then use as a “tips” handout for future parent trainings.

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT TOUGH HISTORIES

Help Parents with Difficult Discussions

Child welfare workers are in a unique position to provide guidance to parents on how to address the hard stories of a child’s past. The avoidance of difficult histories does not change the facts and often makes children feel they did something bad or wrong. Children who are left with “filling in the holes” often exhibit anxiety or depression. Parents and guardians should be made aware that avoidance and secrets will likely foster mistrust.

Practice Your Role!

Ask a staff member to bring a case example to your next team meeting. After sharing the example, pair up staff to role play: one person takes the role of worker, the other the role of parent. The “worker” might explore how and why sharing would be hard for the parent. How does the “parent” feel about the child’s history? What suggestions might the worker offer the “parent” to help the child feel valued, supported and build trust?



NTI Training Improved Competence

“(NTI) gave more tools to support common challenges with adoption related grief and loss, identity and behavioral challenges and resources to help educate/support parents with understanding complex developmental trauma.”

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