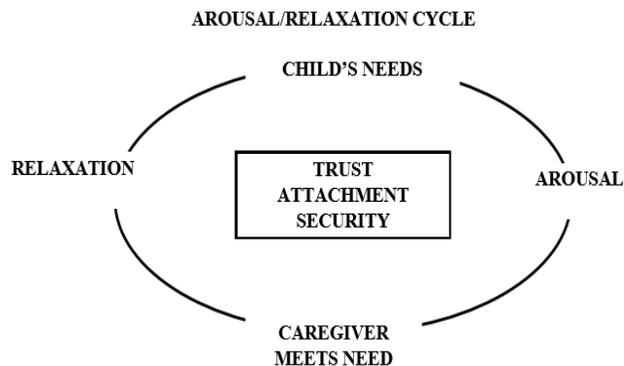


PRE-FINALIZATION SERVICES

Attachment Strategies

(Adapted from Dr. Vera Fahlberg)

The Arousal-Relaxation Cycle



- The Arousal-Relaxation Cycle is based on our understanding that trust, security, and attachment are built when a consistent caregiver repeatedly meets a child's needs.

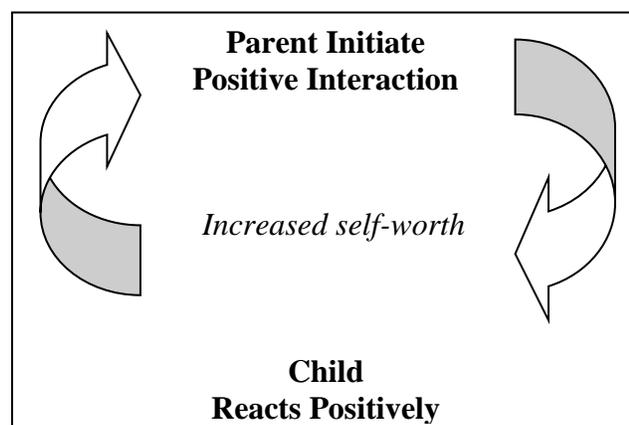
- For example, a child becomes hungry and cries, reflecting a state of tension and arousal. The child expresses his needs in behavioral and emotional ways. The caregiver responds by meeting the child's needs, feeding and

comforting him. The child receives comfort, which relieves tension, relaxes and experiences contentment. The parent feels secure, and happy that she has provided empathic care for the child. The good feelings are mutually reinforcing and reciprocal.

- Adoptive parents, guided by the assessor, must learn to identify and meet their child's needs, using consistent, nurturing responses.
- The challenge for new parents of children who have experienced trauma is that these children may express their emotional needs with unwanted behavior. The parents must learn ways to meet the children's emotional needs, while still being able to teach them to manage their behaviors.

Positive Interaction Cycle

- In the Positive-Interaction Cycle, the parent initiates affirming emotional and social exchanges with the child.
- The cycle begins when the parent engages the child in a positive interaction. The child enjoys the interaction and reacts in an affirming manner.
- Both the child and parents feel a sense of self-worth and are motivated to continue to interact. This type of interaction greatly augments the attachment process.



- Many adoptive parents mistakenly believe that the child should take the first step in forming attachments with them. A lack of trust and ambivalence about new attachments may make this impossible for many adopted children. Adoptive parents must be encouraged to regularly approach the child in a non-threatening, gentle manner to initiate social interactions. Parents must be prepared to continue to engage the child in meaningful and pleasurable interactions without expecting the child to reciprocate in kind.
- The assessor is the *Attachment Coach* and must assist adoptive parents in identifying Positive Interactions that they feel comfortable in initiating.

Claiming Behaviors

- Claiming helps assimilate the child into the family, and helps the child feel part of the family. Claiming behaviors also promote the development of entitlement by the parents - the firm belief that they have a right to parent the child as their own. Claiming activities communicate acceptance and integration of the child into family life.
- Examples of claiming behaviors are:
 - Sending announcements to family and friends when the child joins the family or making an announcement on social media.
 - Including the child's Lifebook with other family photo albums.
 - Involving the child in developing new family traditions or planning a family trip.
 - Using language that reinforces the child's position in the family. Examples are "my son," and "our family."