

MODULE VII: TRANSCENDING DIFFERENCES IN PLACEMENT

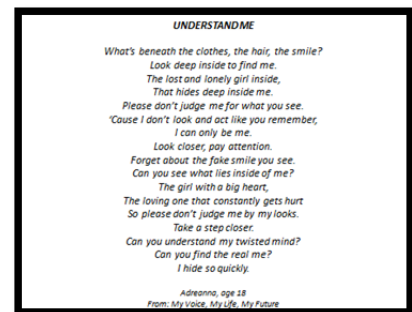
Note Taking Guide

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Explain how flexibility in caregiving and adoptive parenting contributes to respecting differences
- Identify ways a family can help a child feel welcomed and respected for who they are
- Identify ways a child who looks like the caregiving or adoptive family can still be different from that family
- Explain how a caregiver or adoptive parent can help prepare their community for a new child

Introduction to Differences

- People are unique individuals with their own identities and life experiences.
- Never make assumptions about people, always ask questions.



Rationale for Transcending Differences

- All children that come to your home are influenced by the groups they belong to, life experiences they have had, and attributes unique to whom they are.
- They will have their own values, beliefs, and attitudes that drive their identity and behavior.
- They will also be influenced by the values, beliefs, and attitudes of you and your family.
- As foster caregivers and adoptive parents, you will positively or negatively influence their sense of self and identity.



The Importance of Self-Awareness

- Each individual’s diversity includes culture, race, ethnicity, and other group memberships. Some of group memberships are permanent and some are likely to change during a lifetime.
- Understanding of our own uniqueness gives us a better understanding of another’s uniqueness.



Preparing Your Home

- All foster children have been affected by trauma and loss; they require acceptance and understanding.
- In order for the child to feel safe, he or she will need to understand what you will expect of him/her as a new family member. He will also need to know where you are willing to flex in order to be respectful of that child’s diversity.



- Ideals that promote a sense of well-being among family members, individually and collectively:
 - Everybody matters
 - People come first
 - Honesty
 - Integrity
 - Respecting diversity
 - Sticking together

Preparing Your Community

It is the caregivers and adoptive parents' role to help children maintain a positive sense of self as they experience life in the community.



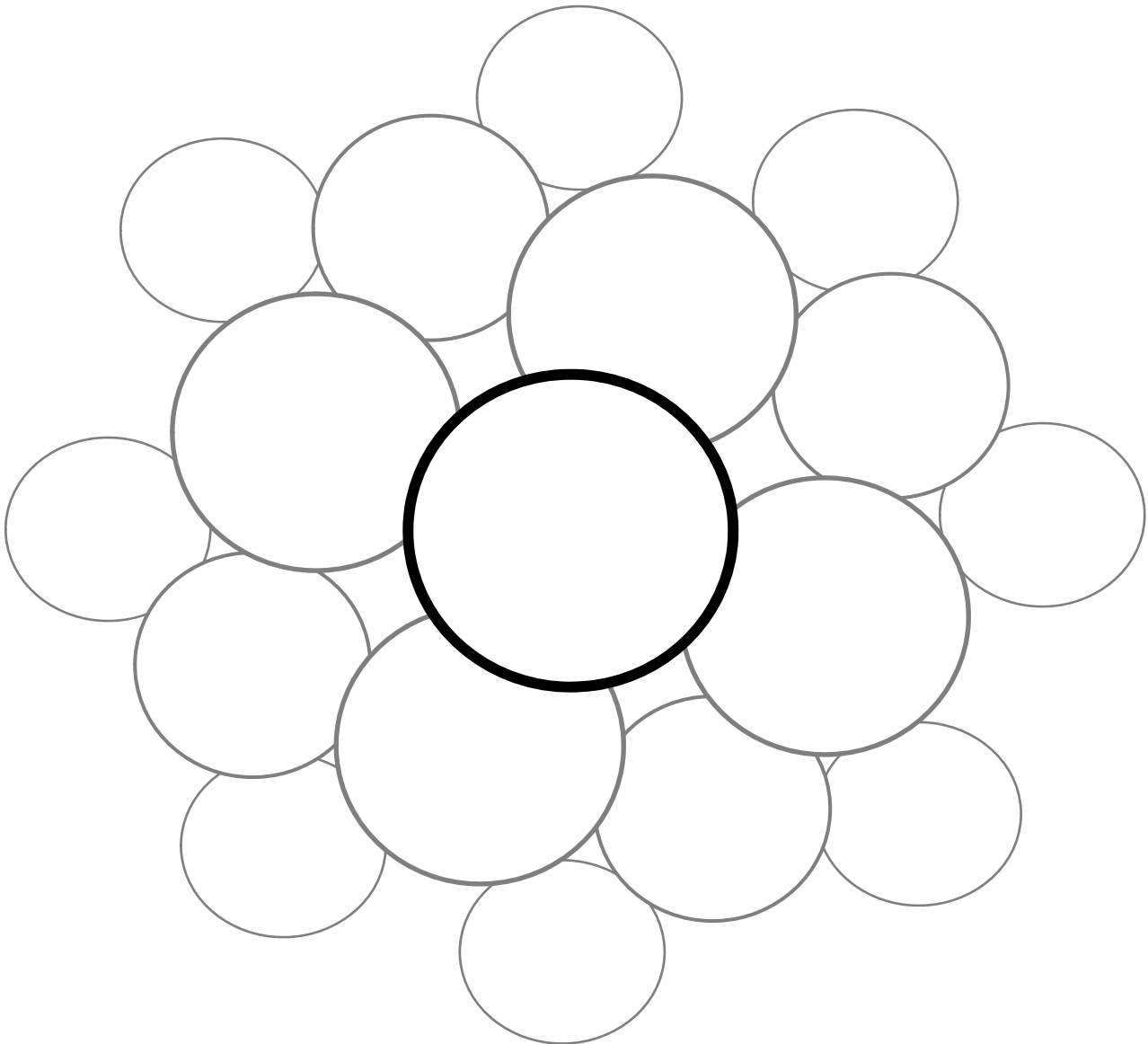
List three ways you will use the information from this training.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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I am...

Put your name in the center circle. Begin with the circles closest to your name and list groups, experiences, and characteristics that contribute most to your identity. Use the outer circles to list those groups, experiences, and characteristics which identify you but are not very influential in your life.



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Preparing Your Home

Entry Way – Welcoming of a New Child

This is the space of first impressions, that initial period when a child decides whether or not he is welcomed, safe, and totally accepted into the home.

Questions:

- 1) A sense of safety is very important for a child coming into a new home. What kinds of things can you do to help a new child feel safe?

- 2) How will a child know you respect him and his uniqueness?

Family Room/Family Life—Where Everyone is Included

This is the space where each household member contributes to the functioning of the family system and where the family works out the most important household rules. It is also where the family members figure out how to relate to each other and the outside world as a growing and evolving multicultural family.

Questions:

- 1) What are some areas of family life for which rules and expectations must be set?

- 2) What are some of your current family rules? Which one of these would you have the most difficulty changing in order to honor the diversity of a child?

Kitchen/Dining Room—It's All About Eating!

This is the space that represents expectations and practices around mealtimes and eating.

Questions:

- 1) What are some areas of mealtime and snacking for which you might want to set rules or expectations?

- 2) What things might you do to ensure that a child's food preferences or restrictions are considered in meal planning?

Bedroom – Bedtime Rules at your Home

This space represents expectations and rules around sleeping behaviors and appropriate use of the bedroom space.

Questions:

- 1) What are things to consider when setting rules and expectations around sleeping arrangements?

- 2) What are things to consider when setting rules or expectations about the appropriate use of bedroom space?

Bathroom – Hygiene and Personal Presentation

This space represents issues around hygiene, privacy, and personal presentation.

Questions:

- 1) What are some areas around hygiene and appearance for which you might want to set some rules or expectations?

- 2) What are some rules around personal privacy that are important to consider?

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Questions about Your Community

School Related Questions	Notes
What school(s) will your child attend?	
Have you communicated your plan to become a foster or kinship caregiver or adoptive parent with the school(s)?	
Does the school welcome newcomers?	
What kind of support can you expect from the school(s) your child will attend?	
How do they address special needs of children?	
How will you need to advocate for your child?	
What range of diversity is represented among students, teachers, administration, and staff?	
Which office or department is charged with advocating for or addressing diversity issues? Do their policies and programs reflect commitment to honoring diversity?	
In what ways is diversity (in general) visibly recognized and supported as positive?	
To what extent is a child's diversity recognized, supported, celebrated, and accommodated when requested.	
What is the school's policy toward bullying?	
What is the school's policy toward discrimination?	
Does the school demonstrate support and respect for foster, kinship, and adopted children and their right to privacy?	
Does the school accommodate special diets, holidays, and practices that children might come with?	

Questions to ask yourself:	Notes
How will I advocate for my child if he or she identifies as _____?	
What will I do if my child encounters barriers at school to getting his or her needs met?	
What will I do if I meet with resistance, or with a school that simply does not have the desired resources?	

Religious Institutions Questions	Notes
What are the religious institutions in your community?	
What is the openness of your community to different beliefs and faith traditions?	
If your child is of a faith tradition different from yours, are there nearby religious institutions in your community that practice your child's (or his or her birth family's) faith tradition? What if there are institutions, but <i>not</i> nearby?	
Questions to ask yourself if your child is of a faith tradition different from yours:	Notes
If you attend a place of worship, how will you decide whether or not to introduce your child to your place of worship?	
If your child attends your place of worship, how will you respond if others try to change his or her religious base?	
What if your child does not want to go to your place of worship?	
What if your child does not want to go to the place of worship that his or her birth parents have requested?	
What if your child wants to go to a place of worship of his/her own beliefs (and not of his or her birth parents)?	
What if your child is religious and your family is not?	
What if your child says that he or she is atheist and your family is not?	

Community and Social Group Questions	Notes
What community and social groups will your child participate in?	
Have you communicated your plan to become a foster or kinship caregiver or adoptive parent with the community and social groups you engage with?	
Do the community and social groups welcome newcomers?	
What range of diversity is represented among your community and social groups?	
In what ways is diversity (in general) visibly recognized and supported as positive?	
Questions to ask yourself:	Notes
How will you address each other in public settings?	
Do the groups your family belongs to welcome diversity?	
What new groups do you need to become involved in to foster healthy identity for the child?	
How will you educate your child about safety issues related to their identities (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity)?	
How will your family manage situations where you will be treated differently because of the children who are now part of your family?	
How will you address situations where your child is discriminated against or victimized because of the color of his skin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs?	



10 Ways to Help School-Agers Handle Racism

1	Admit that race will be a factor in the way a child of color is treated , and point out examples in history and daily life. Racism exists and it cannot be denied.
2	Agree that racism is unfair, and promise that you will not tolerate such behavior within your sphere of influence. Practice different responses and let him practice his responses too, so that he is prepared to handle racism when it comes up. This is a safety issue; without practice, your child becomes more vulnerable.
3	Kids develop new problem-solving skills in middle childhood. When your child says she has been teased or excluded because of race, encourage her to use these skills. Help her to express her feelings and explore short-term and long-term consequences of her possible response. Calmly ask her to say what happened, how she feels, what she did, what else she might have done, and if she has any plans for continued responses. Ask what she would do if it happened again.
4	Ask whether you should do anything. It's important for kids to feel capable of handling their own problems—especially as they are learning about being treated unfairly because of race. If possible, help her feel able to handle it without adult protection (particularly from a white adult). That said, it is also critical that children know that their parents are absolutely prepared to take their side and be their ally—if they have something in mind for you to do, be responsive and helpful.
5	Elementary school kids are information gatherers. This is an ideal time to provide her with opportunities to gather realistic images and history of her racial heritage. Otherwise, she might be defenseless against stereotyped images of her race and feel bad about herself.
6	Your child's growing ability to categorize and understand increasingly abstract concepts can help her to integrate seemingly contradictory ideas. Help her to learn that all racial groups have both good and bad historical figures, and have made both positive and negative contributions to the world. She will arrive at a deeper understanding of how she can be both Mexican and American or both black and white.
7	Make sure that she is able to talk to other people of color who have had similar experiences and can provide new ideas on how to react. Without this exposure the only role models for children adopted transracially will be the narrow, generally negative stereotypical characters on television shows and the movies.
8	Notice the messages you send in real-life situations: when you walk past a homeless person, when a fundraiser rings your doorbell, or when a person with physical differences serves you. Since none of us is bias-free, it's useful to discuss with our kids the responses that may have been inappropriate or confusing. Soon your child will let you know when your bias is showing.
9	If your child resists getting to know other people of color because she has not had enough experience outside of an all-white group to feel comfortable, insist that she participate anyway. She needs to break her isolation to develop skills to cope with racism as much as she needs food and water.
10	Demonstrate your acceptance of diversity of all kinds —religious, economic, political, and social—and make fighting racism and other injustice a personal matter for you, not just for your child.

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Individual Reflection

Please take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned in the Preservice training and how it applies to you. Give this sheet to the agency worker who is completing your homestudy.

	Diversity Readiness Checklist to Become a Foster or Kinship Caregiver or Adoptive Parent	Working on it	Ready to do it
1	I embrace the value that diversity brings to my life and the life of my family.		
2	I have spent time exploring my identity (collective memberships) and the impact they have in how I see the world and how I make decisions.		
3	I acknowledge that children that come to live in my home will come with their own identities and worldview.		
4	I am prepared to embrace and respect the diversity of my child.		
5	I have prepared my children and extended family to embrace and respect the diversity of the children that come to our home.		
6	My home environment and family life will reflect our multicultural family.		
7	I am prepared to help my foster, kinship, or adopted child develop a healthy self-identity.		
8	I am prepared to discuss issues of racism and discrimination with my family and with my child.		
9	I am prepared to speak out against racial, ethnic, and cultural intolerance within my family, friends, and community.		
10	I am prepared to advocate for my child as needed.		