

Parenting a Child Who Was Substance Exposed

FosterParentCollege.com® Syllabus

Introduction

Expert – Dr. Audra Langley, Clinical Child Psychologist and Executive Director of the UCLA TIES for Families Program.

This course explores factors in children’s history that can contribute to their behavior, and the effects of substance exposure on foster and adoptive families.

Introduction: Risk and Protective Factors

A risk factor is something that is a part of a child’s history that may put him or her at risk for problems in the future.

An environmental risk factor would be something like being abused or neglected, witnessing family violence, or being removed from loved ones.

A biological risk factor would include being exposed to drugs and alcohol in the womb, being born prematurely, or genetic factors like a family history of mental health, medical, or substance abuse problems.

Protective factors help prevent children with risk factors from developing problems.

Prenatal Substance Exposure and Drug Endangerment

Substance exposure includes both the prenatal exposure of children whose mothers used illegal drugs, alcohol, or prescription pain pills during pregnancy and the drug endangerment of children whose parents are using, manufacturing, or distributing substances and thus may be unable to provide a safe and nurturing environment.

An interactive exercise helps viewers understand the impact of substance abuse on families.

Exploring a Successful Family Support Program

The UCLA TIES for Families prevention and intervention programs build resilience and help children develop skills for emotion regulation and positive coping strategies, including building social and problem-solving skills, as well as identifying and learning to express emotions appropriately.

Attachment Patterns

Attachment is the emotional bond that connects one person to another. Securely attached people generally feel positively about themselves and feel worthy of love and affection from others. Children who have been substance exposed may have been neglected or abused, and therefore may fail to develop a secure attachment.

Secure Attachments

Alison, the mother of two adopted sibling boys, Vincent and Shawn, is interviewed about building a secure attachment with her sons.

Four patterns of attachment in children:

1. Secure
2. Avoidant
3. Preoccupied
4. Disorganized

Parenting Strategies to Build Attachment: Respond Appropriately

Alison describes her son Shawn's behavior when her boys first entered her family.

Dr. Vera Fahlberg's three types of parental behavior that can encourage attachment:

1. Respond appropriately to a child's emotions
2. Initiate positive interactions
3. Claim the child

Jeffrey and Diane, the parents of two adopted sibling girls, Sarah and Espi, are interviewed about building secure attachment with their daughters.

Lenore, the mother of an adopted boy, Derek, is interviewed about how she responded to her son's emotions when he first entered her family.

Parenting Strategies to Build Attachment: Initiate Positive Interactions

Hope and Jesse, the parents of an adopted boy and girl, Louis and Rose, are interviewed about their experiences when their son and daughter joined their family.

Margo, the mother of two adopted girls, Casey and Serenity, is interviewed about her interactions with her daughter, Serenity.

Parenting Strategies to Build Attachment: Claim the Child

Jeffrey and Diane talk about creating family experiences.

Alison talks about claiming behaviors.

Encouraging Attachment Exercise

An interactive exercise helps viewers identify Dr. Fahlberg's three parenting strategies that encourage attachment.

Child Temperament

Temperament is the traits a child is born with that give him or her "personality." It is the child's preferred approach to responding to the world, and is generally consistent over time, although sometimes severe trauma can change this.

Three important temperament traits:

- Adaptability – adaptable children are generally content, and they adapt to change easily and with little protest.
- Intensity – intense children are often easily frustrated and respond with big reactions to change or limits.
- Reaction to new situations – children who are slow to warm up withdraw or adjust slowly to new situations.

Lenore describes how her temperament blends with her son's temperament.

Jeffrey describes his girls' temperaments, while Diane describes Jeffrey's temperament.

Hope and Jesse talk about using parenting strategies to support their children's temperaments.

Preventing Substance Abuse: Introduction

To prevent substance abuse, children need a strong attachment and an environment that supports their temperament.

Alison talks about her experience with her son Shawn.

Lenore talks about supporting her child's resilience.

Monitoring and Supervision

Derek, Lenore's son, talks about monitoring and supervision.

A balanced parenting style blends warmth with structure and consistent limit-setting. Parents who use a balanced style will be flexible but firm; clearly communicate expectations; and offer guidance, direction, and discipline.

Lenore talks about her balanced parenting style.

Balanced Parenting Approach

A multiple choice exercise helps viewers understand the balanced parenting approach.

Talk about Birth Parents' Substance Use

An interactive exercise helps viewers understand the main assumptions about addiction.

When parents talk with their child about substance use, the discussion needs to: be honest, fit the child's developmental level, be age appropriate and use words the child will understand, happen in a calm and matter-of-fact tone, and satisfy the child's questions without going into too much detail.

Lenore describes how she talked to Derek about his mother's substance use.

Course Conclusion

Course concludes.