

**Supporting the Development of a Coherent Narrative of
Loss and Trauma in Young Children:
A Strategy for Working with Foster and Adoptive Families**

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A coherent narrative is critical to giving one a sense of history, rootedness and continuity, even when life has been kind to us. We need a story—an internal working model—about why we are here, what it meant to others when we came, who took care of us, what people did and what they thought, and what happened to us. But pre-nates, infants, and young children who experience prenatal, perinatal or early-childhood loss or trauma often have, at best, a garbled self-narrative, leaving much room for fantasy, for the development of conflicted internal working models, and for acting-out. This presentation will propose a clinical model for helping foster, adoptive and birth parents develop a series of stories that will fill in some of the blanks, and clarify some of the perceptions, allowing their children to work out more coherent stories of their early experiences.

Objectives

1. Participants will be able to describe one recently observed dyadic interaction during a family session and muse about what incoherent narrative in the parent or the child might be hinted at, or revealed, in that interaction.
2. Participants will be able to describe one experience in supervision, or self-reflection, in which clarity was gained about the intersection of their own narratives, and their work with a particular family.
3. Participants will be able to describe the life course of a particular child or parent, and write a note imagining what sort of narrative that child or parent might have put together about his/her life.
4. Based on objective #3, each participant will be able to describe how the intervention with the family might now be affected by his/her awareness of this imagined narrative.

5. Each participant will be able to describe a plan for supporting a particular family in his/her practice in the discovery of their own narratives.

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