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- Adoption & Permanence Service, Southern Trust
- **Post Adoption Support:** children have experienced significant developmental trauma and loss prior to being placed.
- There are often enduring psychological & behavioural issues as a result of early trauma and separation from family of origin.
- Many families experience child to parent aggression.

Key benefits

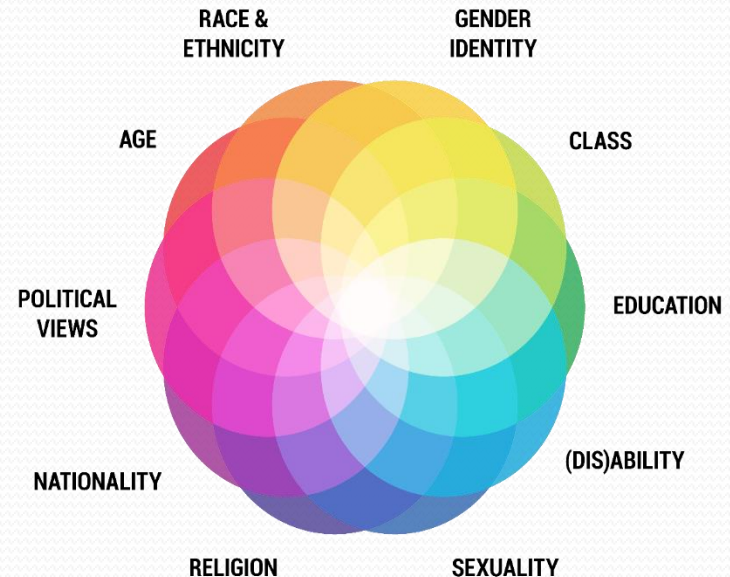
- **Working with complexity:** Working Systemically embraces **the complexity of relationships in adoption.**
- **Avoiding blame:** Holding multiple perspectives **reduces tendency to blame** parents or child/young person for whatever difficulties are going on. There is rarely a simple explanation!
- **Honouring diversity:** Embraces the multiple layers of cultural and community systems.

Adoptive family case example

- **Systemic questioning:** ‘What do you think your daughter’s behaviour is communicating?’ ‘What does it mean?’ ‘How does the behaviour affect you?’
- **Reframing the behaviour:** ‘What if anger gives your daughter power and control that she feels she doesn’t have in her life... it helps her feel safe at the moment?’
- **Reflections:** Highlighting parental strengths; the nurturing aspects of the parents.

Holding multiple perspectives

- **Complicating factors:** Child's pre-placement experiences, attachment style, constitutional factors such as FAS or ASD
- **Lived experience:** Parents' own experiences of being parented
- **Shame:** The family's isolation from extended family members
- **Community resources:** The family's interaction with community: neighbours, friends, schools, Church.
- **Cultural context:** the different cultural background of their daughter and recent move of birth family into their community.





Family feedback – introducing difference & understanding

‘ The conversations you have with us help us to think about all the different things that are potentially affecting our daughter and our family...we feel that you understand us and believe us’

Birth mother – hopes & dreams

- **Taking relational risks**
– asking questions about difficult times & experiences
- Reaching for her preferred view of self
- Reaching for hopes & dreams

‘I feel I can talk to you in a way that I don’t feel judged....you ask me about the hopes and dreams I have for myself and for my son...

No one seemed interested in this before.’

Final thoughts

- Very respectful way of working. It values service users experience, emphasis on strengths & resilience and connecting to a person's preferred view of self.
- Very therapeutic way of working. Circular questions help to open up the conversation and explore other people's views.

Final thoughts

‘ By refusing to apportion blame is to acknowledge there are more complicated and complex histories, more complicated and complex environments, more complicated and complex dynamics and relationships than might first seem to be the case’

(Bonnick, 2019)