

# **AGENDA**

- I. Words Are Important
- II. The Story
- III. Seven Transcultural Parenting Techniques
- IV. What To Do???
- V. Make It Memorable

## The Traveler



A traveler was on a long journey. One morning, she noticed her chosen path was becoming increasingly narrow and difficult to navigate. Sensing she may have taken a wrong turn, she decided to ask the next person she saw if this was the case. She soon entered a clearing and saw a very old man sitting in the center of it. The traveler hurried over to him and said, "Excuse me, but I was traveling along the path this morning, and it became very narrow. Can you tell me if I'm going the right way?"

The old man answered very softly, "You're on the right path. Keep going. But gather all that you find before crossing the river." The traveler was confused – what did the old gentleman mean by this? But no more of an explanation came from him, so she continued on.

Late in the afternoon, the weary traveler rounded a bend and found herself in front of a river. As she started to wade to the other side, the old man's words echoed in her mind. She paused and looked around, but noticed only trees, shrubs, and pebbles by the river's edge --- nothing of any value. Shrugging, she picked up a few rocks, put them in her pocket, and continued across the river.

After reaching the other side of the river, the traveler trudged aimlessly on through dense forest for hours before discovering a new path. She was too tired to go any further and began to prepare a fire. As she knelt down, something hard dug into her thigh and she remembered the pebbles in her pocket. "That old man was crazy," the traveler thought to herself. "I don't know why I've carried these stones around." However, as she cocked her arm to throw them away, a glint of color caught her eye. She looked closer.

"It can't be!" she declared. With the moonlight now shining on the pebbles, the traveler could see that the objects she held were not mere rocks. They were diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds! The dirt on the stones, she thought, must have rubbed off when she crossed the river. Astonished and dismayed all at the same time, the traveler realized that had she gathered more stones before crossing the river, she would never have to worry about money again. But there was no going back now. The traveler knew that she would never find her way. At that very moment, she made a vow to herself: From now on, I will always try to see the true nature of something before judging it.

## Seven Transcultural Parenting Techniques

■ Become intensely **INVEST**ed in parenting. Understand that transracial parenting is not laid-back, catch-as-catch-can parenting. The demands are great, but so are the rewards. You and your family must become intensely invested in the parenting experience.

■ **TOLERATE** no racially or ethnically biased remarks. Refuse to tolerate any kind of racially or ethnically biased remark. This should include remarks about your child's race or ethnic group, other races and ethnic groups, or any other characteristic such as gender, religion, age and physical or other disability.

■ **SUPPORT** is absolutely needed. Surround yourselves with supportive family and friends. You need a supportive community comprised of many races -- those who will be role models and provide inspiration, those who will stimulate your thinking, those who fill your desire for cultural diversity, and those who will challenge you in constructive and respectful ways.

■ **CELEBRATE** all culture. While it is important to teach your child about differences among people, it is also important to point out similarities. As much as you want to celebrate your child's distinctive features, he or she also needs to feel a sense of belonging in the family.

■ **TALK** about race and culture. Parents should talk about racial issues, even if your child does not bring up the subject. Use natural opportunities, such as a television program or newspaper article that talks about race in some way. Let your child know that you feel comfortable discussing the positive aspects of race and culture as well as the difficult ones.

■ **EXPOSE** your child to a variety of experiences so that he or she develops physical and intellectual skills that build self-esteem. Be alert to negative messages (stereotypes) that are associated with any race or culture. Point them out as stereotypes. Emphasize that each person is unique and that we all bring our own individual strengths and weaknesses into the world. Frequently compliment your child on his or her strengths.

■ **TAKE** your child to places where most of the people present are from his or her race or ethnic group. Your child will benefit from the experience of being in a group in which the people present are from his/her ethnic group. Children usually enjoy these events very much. Many families who take in events like this find it to be a wonderful learning experience.

## **WHAT TO DO??????**

An African-American girl age 6 is looking at dolls at the local Wal-Mart. She selects a white doll, refusing the black doll. She says that the black doll is ugly and she wants a pretty doll. Shopping nearby, a mother and her daughter, both white, hear the little girls remarks. They begin to laugh, loud enough for the African-American little girl to hear them. The white mother says loudly to her daughter, as they are walking away, "Can you believe it, that little girl doesn't even like her own kind." The child hears this and is bewildered by their disdain; she runs to her adoptive mom and begins to cry.

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A teenager, 15, lives in a majority white neighborhood with her foster/adopt family. She is Hispanic and has periodic contact with relatives in her birth family. She tells her foster mom that she wants to dye her hair blonde, have her tongue pierced and get a small tattoo. She states that all the def kids at school do this. She states that she feels as though she doesn't belong anywhere. She feels that the kids at the high school think she is a dork and her Hispanic relatives think she is too uppity for them. "I just want to fit in," she sobs, hoping her foster mom will approve her requests.

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By the time he was 12, he weighed more than 200 pounds. Now at 13, he weighs 325 pounds. He cannot run anymore. His doctor has him on a very strict diet and he is trying, with the help of his foster parents, to lose weight. He tells his foster dad that several of the older boys that ride his school bus have made his life "a living hell." They tease him mercilessly. He hates to ride the bus. He states that yesterday, these boys said that if he is on the bus the next school day, they will "roll him" like a rubber ball.

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## **WHAT TO DO??????**

At 15, it would be the most wonderful thing in the world if he could talk without stuttering. He thinks that if he could do this, then he would tell everyone that he is gay. It would be great if people looked at his eyes instead of the awful pimples on his face. If he could talk without stuttering, he would have the confidence to say something smart right back to his basketball coach when he calls him a “retard.” If he could just talk without stammering the words, breaking out in a sweat, only to have people walk away from him before he can say what he is thinking. He reluctantly shares these feelings and thoughts with his foster mom.

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“How come you don’t know Chinese?” She is forever asked this question and she is forever saying that it is “because I am not Chinese, I am Japanese.” Then she is forever asked “how come you are so dumb if you’re Japanese?” She wants to scream “its because I am bi-racial, okay!” She is only 11 years old and she knows that screaming and yelling at people will not change that she is and what she is not. Secretly, she wishes that she had blond hair and blue eyes. She is determined never to speak any language but American just like the family that she is currently living with. She wants to be white just like they are.

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He appears sullen all the time. He keeps his hand balled up in fists, jammed in his pockets. He is an African-American boy, age 12, who is taller and more mature looking than his age. This is not a good thing. He lives in a majority white neighborhood with his foster parents. When he walks through this neighborhood he senses that the neighbors are afraid of him. He was stopped once by the police and had to call his parents. Since then, the police leave him alone because they know that he is one of the McKenzie’s boys.

## Can I Parent Transculturally ?

*Please discuss these issues with your family. Also, remember that there is not always a clear right or wrong answer. These questions are meant to encourage discussion, openness and an honest self-assessment.*

- ❑ When and how did you first become aware of your race and ethnicity?
- ❑ What is your earliest memory of a person of another race?
- ❑ What do you know about the race and culture of a child you might consider fostering or adopting?
- ❑ How personally involved are you with other races and cultures?
- ❑ Have you had experiences with people from other cultures? If so, what were your feelings?
- ❑ Could you identify positive role models in other cultures?
- ❑ Have you discussed transcultural placement with the significant people in your life?
- ❑ Are you prepared to comfortably and knowledgeably deal with other's prejudices, biases and concerns as needed?
- ❑ What do you already know about the dietary, skin, hair and health care needs of other cultures?
- ❑ How culturally diverse is your neighborhood, place of worship, social gathering spots and shopping areas?
- ❑ What additional support or assistance would you require to successfully parent cross-culturally?