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Since incorporating TFTC and the weekly utilization of the Parent Coaching Forms, parents feel that the time spent during supervision is more structured and focused towards their growth as professional parents. The structured supervision provides consistent feedback on the implementation of TFTC interventions and how these positively impact youth behavior.

**John Heinzman**  
Omni Visions

*James B. Duke*

THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

## Together Facing the Challenge

Spring Newsletter, 2019

### Growing TFTC in the Carolinas

--Maureen Murray

As many of you already know, The Duke Endowment (TDE) has provided us with funding to continue the dissemination of TFTC in North Carolina and South Carolina. We are very grateful for their generosity and continued support of our program. We look forward to our ongoing collaboration with TDE that affords us the opportunity to provide training, consultation and coaching on our evidence-based model of foster care. In addition to our work with therapeutic foster care providers, we have begun broadening our reach by piloting TFTC within the Child Welfare system. We are very excited to offer our training model to agency staff and foster parents working in family foster care settings. We believe the tools and strategies imbedded in our model will be of benefit to this setting as well. We have recently begun working with Stokes County Department of Social Services, with plans to add more sites in the near future.



Stokes County DSS, Maureen Murray and Tom Holahan. Photo Credit: Shaneka Bynum

In addition, we will be piloting another initiative entitled, “Closing the Circle”, a curriculum for helping children and families navigate the transition between out-of-home care and the return to a permanent home. This new chapter of our TFTC program will focus on strengthening transitions for youth between settings, in order to make permanency for youth a more realistic and frequent outcome. We will do this by providing permanent caregivers with the parenting tools necessary to navigate this transition while providing a voice for youth throughout the process. We certainly have our work cut out for us as we move forward in our understanding of how to best meet the needs of our families while improving the long-term outcomes of our children and youth.

# Coaching Through the Mountain Peaks

Allen Murray

Coaching foster parents is hard. You may be coaching for the first time. You may be switching from old forms to the *Together Facing the Challenge Parent Coaching Form*. But we hope every meeting with foster parents includes time to do a few things: talk about what is going well, talk about being proactive, talk about the youth's struggles, and talk about how the foster parents are doing personally. The TFTC Coaching Form is simply a way to formalize the conversations.

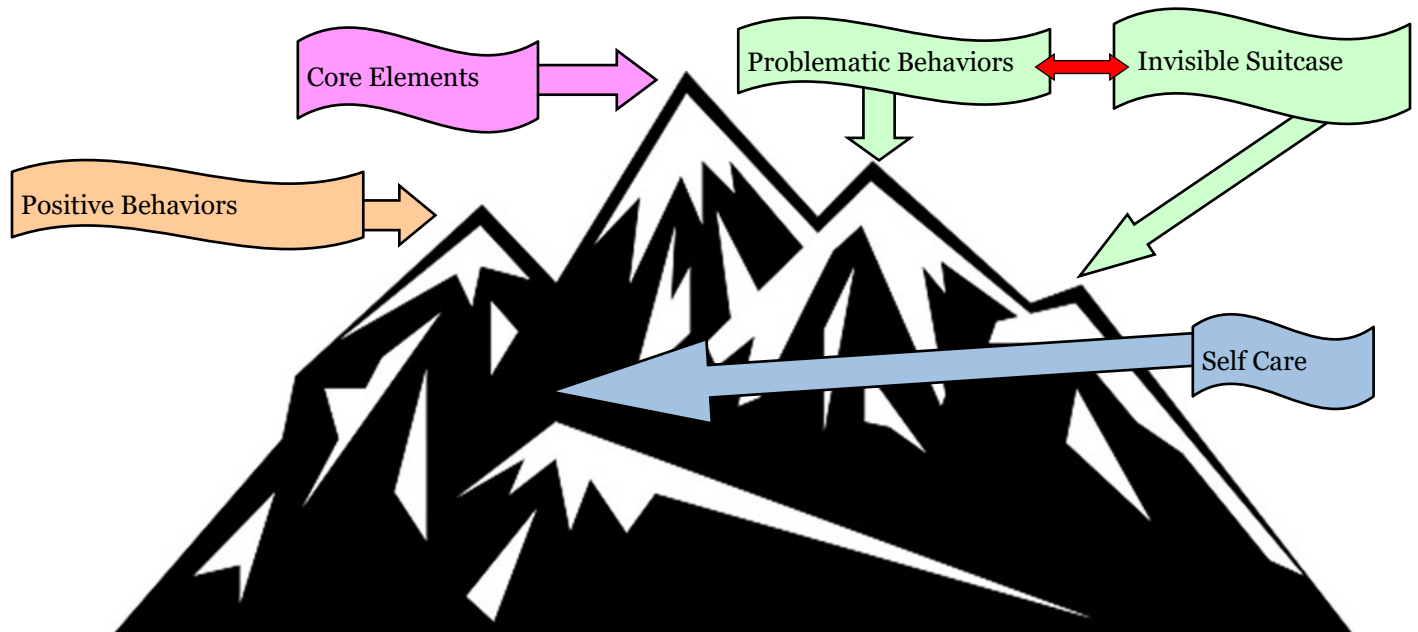
One way to visualize a coaching session is to imagine a hike across a mountain range. The range has a number of peaks, and you must scale all of them. First you hike to the top of *Mount Positive*, and spend some time talking about what is going well in the life of the child. Some hikes you spend a lot of time there, on others you move quickly, knowing you have other places to visit.

Your next stop is on *the Peak of Core Elements*. Here we take a broad view of how things like daily check-ins, family meetings, and avoidance of power struggles set a solid foundation for the difficult climb ahead.

Now we are approaching the most difficult climb – the *Cliff of Problematic Behaviors*. Often foster parents want to start the journey here; we know we need *positive behaviors* and *core elements* to take this on. We talk about shaping problematic behaviors and rewarding positive ones. We talk about keeping interventions specific. We always visit the small peak of *Mt. Invisible Suitcase* (where we often make discoveries about what is driving those Problematic Behaviors).

As we finish up our hike we take a final restful stop on Self-Care Bluff. Here we make sure we are doing the things we need to do to keep our strength up for this difficult journey. How are we exercising our mind, body, and spirit? What is getting in our way? Who can help us, and how?

Looking at the coaching process in this way can demystify it. We don't have to be perfect every time. We don't have to divide our time equally between all sections. We don't have to sweat every detail. We simply need to make sure that in the process of our journey we stop at every peak, some weeks we divide our time differently than others, but we always complete the journey.



Credit for the Mountain Peaks illustration goes to Mindy Kiser of the Bair Foundation



The Together Facing the Challenge team would like to celebrate the following agencies who have earned full TFTC certification.

**The Bair Foundation**

*KidsPeace*

**Alpha Management Services**

**Families First Support Services, LLC**

**Children's Home Society of NC**

**Alberta Professional Services Inc**

**Life Opportunities Therapeutic Home Services**

**CROSSNORE School & Children's Home**

**Easterseals UCP**

*Touchstone Residential Services*

**Precious Haven Inc.**

**Youth Focus**

**Omni Visions, Inc.**

**South Carolina Youth Advocate Program**

**Coastal Behavior Health Services, Inc**

**Stan B Treatment Services**

**Access Family Services**

**Family Services of America**

**Unity Home Care**

*ACI Support Specialists*

**Support, Inc**

Our success story is one in which a foster parent, Nichole Alley, went above and beyond to not only assist the youth with transitioning to adulthood, but also considered her interests and things she wanted to do. The youth is a 17 year-old female who was not interested in the typical "after school programs." Ms. Alley called around to her "contacts" in the city as well as researched several volunteer opportunities for the youth last summer. She confirmed/secured about 10 volunteer opportunities for the youth to participate in which included Boys and Girls Club (group leader), Old Navy, day care centers, and vet centers. Ms. Alley also created a check sheet that included all of the positive behaviors that a young adult should display while in a work setting. At the end of each day Ms. Alley made contact with the adult at each establishment and inquired about the youth's behaviors/attitudes while there. In turn, Ms. Alley paid the youth for "working" based on the reports given. Ms. Alley came up with this plan completely on her own and the youth was able to respond very well.

**Kenyada Maye**  
**Integrated Family Services**

TFTC training assisted me as a case manager to help a foster parent recognize "invisible suitcase" issues by not watching the obvious of what the youth was doing, but what the youth was saying. For thirty days this youth would not do Daily Check-Ins, but now the youth looks forward to the Daily Check-Ins as well as family time. Another foster parent called me about a youth that was having issues accepting his own culture. Through using the tools and examples from the TFTC curriculum about "Welcoming Diversity," the foster parent and the youth spend time each month learning about different cultures. Both are very happy.

**Jessie Britt**  
**Case Manager**  
**Youth Focus**



We have some foster parents, Rikki and Jack Terrell & Gina and Mike Thibodaux, who have turned Family Meetings into a game that takes place at the dinner table each night. This game is called “Rose, Bud, & Thorn.” Everyone shares the Rose, Bud & Thorn parts of their day, with ROSE being the best part of the day, BUD being the medium (good or not so good) part and the THORN being the worst part of the day. Having multiple ROSES or BUDS or THORNS is allowed. If a child has a THORN that he/she would rather talk about privately, then that is certainly allowed, but he/she is asked to come up with another THORN that can be shared. Everyone has to respect and listen to what each person says, and is encouraged to join in with positive comments or suggestions. A child in another foster family developed her own name for the game, “RAINBOW, CLOUD & STORM,” and that family began using it for their Family Meetings. The foster parents report that this game has offered them much more insight into the invisible suitcases and internal thoughts of their foster children, has enhanced the effectiveness of their parenting, and has served to improve the relationships of everyone in the household.

**Pat Barnett,  
Families First**

Together Facing the Challenge has been an imperative part of our success as a foster family. Having continued support and training through the program has helped our family better support our foster children. We connect with other families who are able to provide us best practices that have worked in their homes, and we can share struggles and successes together. The training material is relevant and applicable to our daily lives. We're so thankful for the support provided by our agency through Together Facing the Challenge.

**The Wingates,  
Foster Parents,  
The Bair Foundation**

## Self-Care Corner: A Breath of Fresh Air

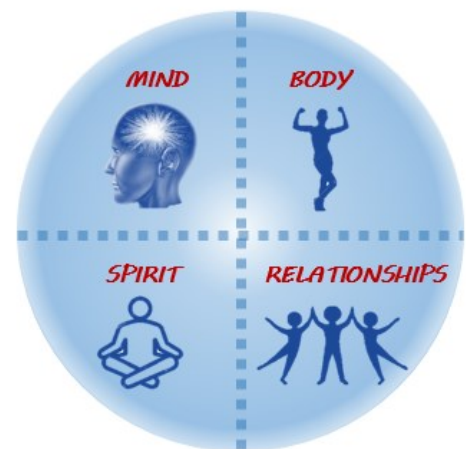
**Don Bartosik**

***“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.” – Jack Kornfield***

One of the core values of Together Facing the Challenge is the intentional promotion of physical and emotional health. We believe successful agencies must be intentional in nurturing all aspects of health among youth, foster parents, and staff. For most of us in a “helping” profession, however, it is quite common that we devote the majority of our caretaking energy to others. And while many people talk about “self-care” and “managing stress”, we’ve found that the focus is more often on infrequent or hard-to-achieve strategies for taking care of self. This section of our newsletter is devoted to simple, manageable strategies for reducing stress and being more mindful about taking care of ourselves.

The average person takes around 23,000 breaths per day, yet how often do we slow down and focus on our breathing? Paying attention to our breathing is one of the simplest ways to make an immediate impact on overall wellness. A quick internet search can provide a myriad of techniques for mindful breathing, yet each person has to find a method that fits. The benefits of intentionally concentrating on and slowing down our rate of breathing are numerous: reduced stress, improved awareness, renewed patience, and increased calmness. One very simple approach is the 5-5-5 breathing practice, where you breathe in through your nose for a slow count to five, hold your breath in for another slow count to five, then breathe out through your mouth for another slow count to five. This can be done in any setting. You can choose to do one or two rounds or to repeat the sequence for several minutes at a time. Whether you opt to try the 5-5-5 method or something else, we hope you consider how focusing on your breathing for even a small part of each day can improve your wellness and provide a platform for role modeling an accessible self-care skill for youth.

### Self-Care Wheel



***“There are 86,400 seconds in a day. It’s up to you to decide what to do with them.” – Jim Valvano***