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A Parent's Note to Therapists

What We Really Want You to Know

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Sarah walked into the therapist's office, hopeful that she was on the path that would lead to some healing in her family. Sarah and her husband, Abe, had taken a new child into their home a few weeks ago and could not believe how much despair they felt in such a short time. This child, Stefan, was seven years old, and unfortunately the child had been living in an orphanage for most of his life. He seemed so happy and sweet for a few days after he arrived, and then he started to change. He began to pinch and squeeze the family dog. He always stopped when directed, but then he would begin the behavior again once his parents weren't looking. He was really rough with their other children. He would hit or kick, and when Sarah or Abe spoke to him about hurting his new siblings, he seemed almost happy as he said he was sorry. He frequently had episodes of rage and refused to look his parents in the eyes when they talked to him about their concerns. Stefan did not like to be hugged by these new parents, but they were understanding and tried to be patient. This week, Sarah caught him taking money from her wallet. He did not seem to have any boundaries and often took things that did not belong to him. Sarah once saw him hide them under his bed.

As Sarah and Stefan opened the door to the counseling office, they entered a waiting room with hard plastic chairs, a table with a few tattered books for children, and a sign-in sheet. Sarah didn't feel welcome there, nor did she think Stefan would look forward to repeated trips to the counselor. Although this did not give Sarah a warm feeling, she remained hopeful that therapy would help her new child find his way and become a happy member of their family. Something needed to change!

Prior to this appointment, Sarah had filled out a questionnaire by e-mail with some of Stefan's history and a checklist of behaviors. She was glad that the therapist had that information already, thinking that it would be easier to get started with that background information out of the way.

As Sarah was thinking about these things, Stefan was fidgeting in his chair, looking at one of the books, and glancing around almost constantly. He looked like he wanted to jump out of his own skin. Poor kid. Sarah felt sorry for him at moments like this, moments when she had the time to observe him without the need to jump in to protect the dog or stop Stefan from hurting the other kids. Just then, the therapist opened the door to his office and stepped out. He introduced himself to Sarah, and then asked Stefan to follow him into the office. "Should I come, too?" Sarah thought that the therapist would want to get her input about what was happening at home, and maybe even include her in the therapy. "No," the therapist answered, "I have all the information I need on the questionnaire you filled out for me. I like to work alone with my client." Stefan looked at Sarah, smiled his strange smile, and turned away. With that, the therapist and Stefan walked into the office, leaving Sarah feeling bewildered and a bit disenfranchised. This did not feel like a good start.

As Sarah related this story to me, I reflected on similar events I had experienced with my own adopted children. I had requested that, whenever possible, I would be part of any therapy that involved my children. After all, my goal was for me and my family to establish a strong attachment with each adopted child. I asked Sarah how things worked out with Stefan and his therapist. She shared with me that things did not improve. When Stefan came out of the counseling sessions, Sarah anxiously quizzed the therapist for feedback. The therapist described some of the session, stating that he used the session to observe Stefan and get to know him. He stated that many such sessions would be needed to begin to change behaviors. Unfortunately, he never included Sarah, and after several months and no change, they decided to find a new therapist. Similarly, things did not work out with the second therapist. Or the third. The work done in therapy didn't seem to impact life at home. Stefan's attachment disorder left him largely uninterested in working on his relationships or behaviors. Sarah would leave each session with hope but would be unequipped to deal with the challenges her family faced upon returning home.

Many families with children like Stefan suffer as they continue the search for help, and it costs them dearly. It strains marriages, children, and finances. Then they show up in your office and hope you are the one who can finally help them. You are taking the time to read this book, so I can conclude that you probably are a therapist who *can* team with these families and give them hope. Many of you will intuitively know the things that are shared in this chapter. Others will have worked with families who are struggling, and will have learned these lessons along the way. Even so, my hope is that the thoughts shared here on behalf of these families will reinforce and validate these important lessons. These are some things that many adoptive families have in common, experiences they share, and things they would like you to know. This chapter invites you, their therapist, to consider some of the parents' thoughts on the therapeutic process.

Help us as we attempt to help our child. We entered this parent-child relationship with high hopes. We were going to pour a lot of love into our child and were certain

he would become a happy member of our family. We planned to live happily ever after. Those hopes were quickly dashed. Our child has behaviors that scare us, and that drive away our neighbors and friends. When one child tried to burn the dog, or his brother, or the house, that scared us. When another child began to masturbate in front of his sibling's friends, our house was put on the "I'm sorry, but our children cannot come to your home to play" list. That is understandable, but hard on the siblings. This child kicks us, hits us, spits at us, and does not make eye contact. He seems to reject everything about us, and all we want is to help. We have been told that our child has ADHD by one doctor, and Reactive Attachment Disorder by one of his past therapists. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder was discussed as a possibility, and one therapist said we need to be on the lookout for a personality disorder. We understand that it is important to have a diagnosis, but this is our child, and we want you to see him as such—not as a set of symptoms or a diagnosis but as a child who needs your help. We know something is really wrong. We have done some reading about these conditions. We understand that his past is showing up in the present through his behaviors. Our child was beaten by his first parents. Our son was abandoned in an alley. Our daughter was abused physically, emotionally, or sexually. Is there any hope for these children? For their families? For their relationships? We all need to figure out what comes next. How can we help our children begin to trust us? The parenting skills we use effectively with our other children are not working. Who can help us get to the place where we can parent these children differently and have success?

Each child has a story. Emily, a six-year-old girl adopted from foster care, had been in her family for two months. She wanted a pet, and the family decided that a kitten would be a comforting companion for their new daughter. This family helped Emily set up a little bed for the kitty, a litter box in the bathroom, and then went shopping at the animal shelter. They found a sweet little eight-week-old kitten, and Emily named her Boots. Boots came home, and Emily's parents taught Emily how to care for such a little one. Emily was super excited and, after showing that she could be sweet and gentle with the kitten, convinced her parents that Boots should sleep in her room. Mom tucked Emily into bed, checked on little Boots curled up on her blanket, and went to bed herself. In the middle of the night, Emily began screaming, and ran into her parent's bedroom with a lifeless kitten, Emily was crying hysterically, shaking the kitten and yelling, "Wake up, wake up," over and over. Mom intervened, took the poor kitten from Emily, and sat down with her to find out what had happened. Emily shared that Boots had awakened in the night, and Emily woke up and decided to play with her. Emily said that she was holding Boots like a baby, singing to her, when Boots scratched at her face and jumped out of her arms. Emily ran after Boots and snatched her up. Apparently, Emily then shook the kitten forcefully and told her that she was not allowed to run away like that. Emily told her mom that she was mad at Boots and that Boots was a bad kitten because she ran away and didn't want to play. Then Emily began to cry. "Why didn't Boots like me? Why wouldn't she play with me? I thought she would love me forever and never, ever leave me!"

Emily's mom, Ruth, is in our parent support group. She shared this story with me one evening, tears running down her face. She realized, she said, that she should not have allowed Emily to have so much responsibility with a pet. The loss felt by this family over the death of this little kitten was clear. However, Ruth shared a wonderful side to this tragedy. The day after the death of the kitten, Emily and Ruth went for their weekly therapy. Their therapist was well versed in attachment disorders. As Emily shared the sad story, the therapist listened carefully, and then began to explore the feelings of loss and abandonment that Emily had experienced in her first few years. This therapist helped Ruth see that Emily was responding to the feelings of rejection when Boots clawed at her and ran away. Emily was not an evil kitten killer, but rather a child who had a complex background and who needed her behaviors to be heard as cries for help.

Sometimes similar situations call for different responses. Another family was fostering a thirteen-year old boy. He was playing with the family dog in the garage and came into the house earlier than expected. After calling for the dog to no avail, Betty went looking. She found the dog's body in the garage, under a table. This felt like a completely different level of behavior, a greater disruption to the family, and needed a careful response. With the help of their therapist, some respite, and Jimmy's social worker, the family worked to understand what had happened and why. The family had questions. Was the child a psychopath? Was he purely impulsive and caused the death accidentally? Did he care? Those are questions that they had to work through.

Each of our children have unique histories, with a complex combination of experiences and memories. My child might have an attachment disorder that, on paper, looks a lot like the next kid's. However, I know some of my child's triggers, and am learning more about him every day. Together, maybe we can help my child make sense of his story.

Each parent has a story. Each of us had different childhood experiences. Some of us entered adulthood with secure attachments, while others had adverse childhoods, with abuse, neglect, or medical conditions that affected our own attachments with our parents or other caregivers. These early attachments affect our parenting. I know that now, but I did not consider it prior to adopting. Parenting this child sometimes brings out the worst in me. I knew that I had some issues, but I discussed all of that with a counselor years ago. My problems with my temper resolved and did not reappear until this child began to push my buttons. You will pick up on that in the therapy office, I am sure. If you feel the need to talk about my past, to help me understand myself and my triggers, please explain the process to me. If you want to complete the Adult Attachment Interview with me, let me know that this is not because I am not good enough, or because you think I can't parent my child, but that you are teaming with me to help me process my past and understand why I am being triggered. I tell my child that I am on his team, working with him. Please do the same for me. Making sense of the past is part of the ability to deal in a healthy way with the present. Help me to see that in a way that affirms me and gives me hope.

Sometimes we need some prompting to realize what is behind our reactions. Marilee, a local mom, shared her concerns. Raised by emotionally present parents, she was sure that she had no trauma in her history. Even so, she thought that her reactions to her new son were a bit extreme. She wondered what it was in her history that could possibly be part of such a reaction. Maybe she just was not a very good mom, she asserted. She had no excuse, no trauma history, no reason to have strong reactions to this new teenaged son who was showing some sexualized behavior. We began to talk, exploring a bit of her story after childhood. She had a first marriage, she told me, and within that marriage, she suffered some pretty bad treatment. That included a husband who was aggressive emotionally and sexually at times, and then physically and emotionally absent at others. That marriage produced a daughter, and she loves that daughter, so she cannot regret the marriage. However, after a few years, the marriage ended. As we spoke of the abusive nature of the marriage, it reminded this precious woman of some other things that had occurred in her teen years. There were some traumas, things that none of us want to happen to our teen daughters, that affected her. However, they did not amount to abuse to the extent that she felt she needed to report the incidents or receive counseling to heal. This early marriage, and the events of her teen years, still affected Marilee. As she spoke of them, she looked at me and whispered, "I guess I have suffered trauma! I never thought of it before, but maybe there are some things that happened to me that might be part of my reactions to my son." Therapists, sometimes we forget, or we don't see the connection between the past and what is happening now. Ask the probing questions so that we can see that these things do matter, now, to our own parenting. It is easy to understand that my child's behavior is, at least in part, due to his trauma history. Help us understand that our own history affects our responses. Help us work out our stories, to make sense of them. Only then will we be free to make decisions to honor our histories, yet not have them rule our reactions.

We are his family, and would like to be part of the healing process. The work you do with our children is vital to their healing, and we are so thankful that you chose this occupation and are there to help. My child, with his history of trauma and issues with attachment, may be different from many of your other clients. He sure is different from our other children! If you have not worked with a child like him before, please consult with others who have. If you don't know much about attachment disorders, please take the time to learn or refer us to someone with this knowledge. We have already figured out that our child must be parented differently from our other children. He might need a different type of therapy, too. As you consider his treatment plan, please keep us in mind. We want to be part of this process, so that his healing can continue at home. You are with us and our child for a few hours each week. We leave your office full of hope and high expectations, which are often dashed within minutes. Please help us to learn how to take your wisdom home with us, how to apply the therapeutic stance with our child, to become parents that can build healthy attachments with our children and help them to heal. Give us homework. Tell us to read good books, like *Building the Bonds of Attachment* by Daniel

Hughes, so that we can see examples of therapeutic parenting. Give us a list of movies to watch with our child that might enhance dialogue around tough subjects, or that might create warm, healing moments. Once I went to watch a movie with my children. I don't even remember what movie it was, but I know it evoked warm feelings for my son. This child had a difficult time with eye contact and resisted touch. After the movie that day, we walked outside to a beautiful crisp sky and a gentle wind. Walking along the sidewalk, my son suddenly took my hand, looked up into my eyes, and said, "I love you, Mom." The way he held my hand, with a little squeeze and a twinkle in his eye, made my heart skip a beat. Something in that movie stirred an emotional reaction in my child, and he was responding! I was able to tell him that I loved him too. If I had not been at a place, due to guidance and hard work, where I could respond to his unexpected overture, the attachment that subsequently built up between us would likely never have happened. Help us as parents to be ready to recognize and respond when that moment comes.

Believe us when we tell you what we see at home, even if our children do not exhibit those behaviors in your office. Please don't minimize the behaviors I describe or try to tell me that they are "normal" childhood tantrums. Listen to our stories about our child, his behaviors, and his interactions with others. He works really hard to triangulate his parents. Some days, he gets the other children so frustrated that they complain that they can't stand to be around him. In the office with you, he might work really hard to be on his "best behavior." I suppose, in a way, we want you to affirm us, to hear us as we tell you what we observe. Most of all, we want to make it work.

Please take time to listen to us, and to really hear us. We often feel very alone in this parenting process. Not many people understand us, and this very different parenting that we are doing. When we arrive at your office, we want to know that you are listening, that you hear us, that you care enough to really tune in. When we go to a therapist who doesn't appear to have read all the paperwork they asked us to complete, asks us to repeat the same information each week, and does not seem to remember much about our child from visit to visit, we are dismayed. We have placed a lot of our hopes, along with our time and money, in our visits with you. We need to know that you care, that you hear, and that you are paying attention to us and our precious child.

Talk to us when our child tells you incredible stories that seem out of character or context. I know that our son just told you that we forced him to kill a wild rabbit and cook it for dinner. You might be required to report that to social workers, but please also talk to us and get our perspective. You might learn that he actually did kill animals and eat them in his birth home. He has shared that story with us, too. The truth is we tend to buy our meat from the great selection at the local grocery store. Did our daughter tell you that dinosaurs come to her window each night and that she has to feed them cookies to keep them from harming her? We wonder if you can help us sort out the true, sometimes dimly remembered, events from those that are purely fanciful. We wonder if you can help us dig out the implication of each to our child, and to us.

We seemed pretty happy and normal until this child entered our lives. We were nice, and the neighbors liked us. We had friends who invited us to dinner. When it was time for holiday get-togethers, we were included by our extended family. Now all of that has disappeared. Back then, we were not maniacs. We did not yell, and it was rare for anyone to yell at us. Boy, has that changed!

Just yesterday, while watering the flowers, an enraged neighbor stomped across my yard. "Keep your child away from my property! If you let him pee on my roses again, I might have to call the police and report it."

Another family had their own story to share. At a gathering of a group of friends, ten-year-old Dan started acting out, disturbing everyone there, it seemed to Jennifer. Her husband Jack quietly told the family to get their coats on, that they were going home. When the host saw them preparing to leave, he said, "Please wait," and asked Jack and Jennifer to come upstairs, where he gathered all the adults. He told all there that he thanked God that Jack and Jennifer were willing to do the hard work with little Dan and led the group in a prayer for the whole family. That event not only encouraged Jack and Jennifer but also involved all there in seeing the adoption as a blessed event and resulted in support over the coming years.

Please encourage those with whom you come into contact to be part of the extended support structure needed by all those dealing with these challenges.

We wanted this child. We really did. In fact, we gave up a lot in order to bring him into our family. We made a decision to add to our family through adoption. We spent months, and thousands of dollars, completing a home study. We waited for a referral. We got excited when this child's file was offered to us. We traveled to meet him. Time and money kept flowing away from us. We were happy to make the sacrifices in order to adopt him. Know that *we are doing our best*. Sometimes we respond to our child in ways that are not intended, or that are not healthy for the child or for us. We know that we could be handling things better, but we don't yet know how. In fact, sometimes we feel like we are on the right track, only to get caught in a terrible cycle. Our child does not trust us, so we work really hard to gain his trust. Then, when we see him calm down a bit and respond, we become afraid. You see, whenever there has been a calm period with our son, it isn't long before he explodes into a rage. So we see this calming down period, and rather than enjoy it and experience it in a positive way with our child, we tense up out of fear. We know that chaos is coming. Then our child senses our tension and responds to that. Is his inevitable explosion due to our tension, or was it truly coming anyway? Help us to expect the difficult behaviors, and to see them for what they are, with compassion and even with a sense of humor.

Please don't become his hero. Instead, help us to fill that role. We want him to learn to trust us, to see us as important in his life, and to want us! It would be easy for our child to get confused about all of that, especially if he finds someone else to fit his perceived needs. As you build a trust relationship with our child (and with us!), we can sense good things happening in our home. We are so happy for your influence. We just want to become the most important people to our child, to be the one that

is trusted. We all know that he needs us. Help him to know that, too, and work with us as parents.

This child is ripping our family apart. Our other children feel abandoned by us, as we spend so much of our time and energy helping this one very needy child. Before our newest child entered our home, we sat down with the other kids and explained that there was a child who needed a family. We even asked for their input as we came to the decision to adopt. We did not ask them, however, if they wanted to have to hide their toys or risk getting them destroyed. We did not ask them if they would be okay spending lots of time at Grandma's house, while Mom drove long hours to therapy with their new sibling. We did not ask them if they understood that this new child would be so needy that they would feel that they were suffocating in her presence. We did not ask, because we did not know. Arleta James wrote an excellent book on this topic; *Brothers and Sisters in Adoption* is a great resource to help families prepare for a new adopted child, or to navigate some of the pitfalls that can occur once the child is placed.

Our spouses feel neglected, too. How can we take the time to calm this new child when he is scared each night, after spending the day running all over the place for all of our kids, and still have energy for a romantic relationship? In fact, sometimes the evening is a time when the primary caregiver gets out to do the grocery shopping, and might just stay out a bit longer than necessary in order to get a break. Finding time for the spouse, or maybe time for a date, seems like a stretch. We must find the time and energy, of course, but it is not easy.

One mom told me that the stress of dealing with their son has resulted in her husband, Stan, developing sexual dysfunction. She said she was at her wits' end. What had been an important part of their life was now a train wreck. Was it only the stress, or did he blame her for pushing for the adoption? Didn't he love her anymore? Now a whole series of new issues have risen.

Therapists, help us to know that as parents we need to form a united front at all costs—our relationship must be top priority. Our extended family does not always understand what we are doing. Some of them are swayed by the superficial charm that our son exhibits. Others have cautioned us that we are in over our heads, that this child is destroying us, and that we must give her back. We once picked up a grandparent from the airport after she arrived to visit and get to know the newest grandchild. By the time we arrived at our house, fifteen minutes into the visit, we were told that this adoption was a grave mistake. However, the next day we had therapy and invited Grandma to join us. This gave her a glimpse of the inner pain our child experienced, of the traumatic past that haunted him, and it forever changed her view of him and of our adoption. As tears flowed down her cheeks, she stated that she could not believe a child could have been treated so badly, and of course we should continue with the adoption and help this precious child. She became his greatest advocate. Thank you for understanding the needs of the extended family, and for including them in the therapeutic process when appropriate.

I share this information with you, our therapists, so that you can know the outside pressures that we feel. If you help us navigate these different relationship struggles, it will benefit the child who is your client but who is also part of this extended family that needs support.

This child is very important to us, but we also have other responsibilities, other family members, and other things that we hold dear. Remember those other children who need some of our time and attention? Do you know that our other sons and daughters have really big feelings about this new child? They get angry at the amount of time and attention we spend trying to help one child, and feel that we are doing this at their expense. They lost the family that they loved, and are now sharing us with someone who is still a bit of a stranger to them. We need to find a way to balance everything. We also have jobs. We belong to the PTAs at school, and are expected to volunteer with some of the events at church. We would like to see our friends (the ones who still talk to us) from time to time.

We asked you to give us homework, to help us figure out how to make life work with this new child. Sometimes you give us that homework, only to find out that we did not get much of it accomplished last week. Our intentions are good, and we will keep trying. It might just be that this week, all we could handle is trying to survive from day to day. Hopefully, next week will be better.

Can we be honest about this? Really, truly honest? Sometimes we have regrets. Regrets about parenting. We mourn the independence we had before taking on the responsibility of children. We might have regrets about adoption. This does not feel like the life we signed up for! We have regrets as we mourn the life we had, and are challenged by the life we now have. Then we feel guilty about those regrets. Tim and Anne told me they would not have made it, separately. That is, one day Anne would be ready to give up on the whole adoption thing, and the next Tim would be at the end of his rope. Help us to remember to lift each other up when we are down.

We are exhausted, physically and emotionally. Really, truly exhausted. Some days, we don't even want to wake up. However, we do. We get up because we know that we must, and things will really get bad if the parents stay in bed! So we get up, and begin each day hoping to survive. When we share these feelings with others, we often get great advice: "Get away for a break with your spouse." "Take time for yourself." "Get a hobby." We know that this advice is good, as far as it goes. However, sometimes it just does not seem possible. Today, for example. Get up at six to get two children fed, dressed, and off to the school bus by seven. Then spend time with another child, who needs to be at the therapist's office by ten. Unfortunately, the therapist's office is two hours away. Be prepared for the drive, to try to avoid a meltdown in the car. Healthy snacks, headphones, good books, soft stuffed animals, a change of clothes—these and many other things need to be packed into the car for the drive. It is a challenge to gather enough items to keep this child occupied and calm for the drive but also choose things that are soft enough that they won't knock me out if she throws them at my head in a rage. Get to therapy in the nick of time, and after therapy, grab lunch together and head home to be back before the other children get off the school bus.

Try to keep all the children regulated, to some extent, after school. Make dinner. You get the idea. Some days, it does not seem like there is a minute to breathe. We just want you to know that, so if we arrive at your office seeming a bit frazzled, we probably have a good reason. Please bear with us.

We are here. In spite of our fears, our exhaustion, our occasional regret, and our failure rate with other therapists, we are here. We wake up each day, hopeful for a bit of progress, and take a deep breath. We get out of bed. Take another deep breath. Then we say a prayer, take another deep breath, and head in to check on our child. We tell him we are happy to see him. We try to convince ourselves that this is true. We tell him that we love him. We do, you know. We try to begin each day with a fresh start, a bit of optimism, and still hold our expectations in check. Some days, we remember to take this journey, to be present and available to this child, one hour at a time. We are here, even if just for this hour. Then we are here for the next hour. There are times when that is all we can promise. To be here, right now, in this moment.

We don't plan to give up. We love him. We really do. We adopted him because we knew he needed us. Boy, it is clear that he needs us now! When he looks at us, when we have the rare opportunity to see into his soul, we see that he is crying out for security. He needs to be loved, in spite of the truth that he does not currently know how to accept that love or to love us in return. We feel a sense of mission, we know why we are doing this, and we plan to continue. This is not easy, so we don't make this commitment lightly. However, we won't give up.

Sally told me about a therapist who worked with her daughter for six weeks, then told her that all her issues were resolved. "Are you kidding me?" Either he wasn't trying or he was done dealing with her daughter, who would say whatever she thought the therapist wanted to hear. It seemed, to Sally, like the therapist was just giving up.

Please don't give up on us. This child could use some consistency in his life. After five families, six therapists, and countless schools, it would be nice if a few things in his life could be predictable. Our child would benefit from a team of people who will stick with him, and with us. He isn't the only one who needs you. We do, too. We really could use some support, encouragement, and consistency, too.

Affirm us. When we do things right, please point that out to us. We might be feeling pretty darned drained from the daily grind of parenting this child, and a bit of encouragement goes a long way. When we could do better, please let us know, but do it gently. We want to get this right, we really do, and we will do our best to learn better strategies as you show them to us. We will affirm you, too, and are truly thankful for your efforts!

Acknowledge us as part of the team. We spend more time with our children than anyone else. We know our children as well as they can be known. More than that, show us you value our input. Jennifer told me her therapist asked her to repeat the same background information. She said, "It seemed as if he had never met my child." That makes us believe we are an afterthought, and it certainly doesn't reflect a growing and valued relationship.

Give us tools to work with. Train us. Help us take the strategies you teach us into our homes. In addition to teaching us strategies for helping our child, could you please help us to understand and take ownership of our responses?

Sometimes we wait too long to seek professional help. We start out talking with family. Then, when things don't improve, perhaps we move to support groups. Those help a lot but do not substitute for intensive therapy, both individual and family. We seek a therapist who is both nearby and affordable. That is a tough one! There are so many potential pitfalls involved in working with and transforming our family and at the same time, responding to the needs of an often very troubled child.

Our high hopes can become a catastrophe, caused, in part, by unmanaged expectations. Even when we are warned of the challenges ahead, we fall into denial—we are certain love will be enough. When we arrive at your door, we often feel abused and uncertain, and are searching for eight main things:

1. Help us as we attempt to help our child. We are your client as much as our child is your client!
2. Our child is a distinct individual, and needs an individualized approach, within the parameters of your therapeutic approach. Please learn and understand our child's story.
3. Both the parents and the family are unique, and we truly desire that our child's therapist understand the context of each relationship. Understand our many pressures, and be encouraging.
4. These connections need to be part of the big picture, so please include the whole family in the healing process.
5. If you give us, as parents the benefit of the doubt, giving us both respect and a key role in therapy, outcomes will improve.
6. If we are at the place where our family is in the process of breaking, give us guidance and referrals to therapeutic help that is needed to stabilize the situation.
7. Help us get through second thoughts, even when we are too exhausted to continue.
8. We know our child can get there. As you equip our child and our family to succeed, believe in us. We are thankful for your efforts.

Thank you for taking the time to hear us, to listen to our thoughts, and to learn more about attachment disorders in general and our child specifically. Thank you for including us, for working with us as a family. Thank you for your presence, your patience, and your professionalism. Thank you for sharing our hope, and for joining us on the healing path. We are happy to have you on our team.