

Greetings from John Hays of Adoption Support Network

Teaching Note #2 "I Hate Little Red Sports Cars"

This is the second in a series of Teaching Notes. They will have to do with adoption issues, FASD (fetal alcohol), attachment issues (RAD), and other subjects, that parents raising children into adulthood face.

Some of the teachings will be short and some are quite long. There will be teaching notes written for the individual, parents, and professionals. There will be links to our website, www.hayskids.org, which house the teaching notes.

I will gladly answer questions about teaching notes anonymously and will of course, always be available over the phone for individual questions. Call me @ 218-969-2116 or e-mail me hayskids@hayskids.org.

If I have put your name on this list by accident or if anyone would like to be removed from this email list please contact me. My desire is to help, not badger anyone.

"I Hate Little Red Sports Cars"

Once upon a time there was a very mild manner man, who had a loving wife, three children, a regular job, owned his home, had friends, and was easy-going. His life was good. Except when he saw an a little red sports car. He would become upset. Sometimes he would say things that he would have to apologize for later. If he was driving and saw a little red sports car he would have thoughts of crashing into it; and on one occasion he even purposely tried to hit one in a parking lot, but, fortunately, could not bring himself to do it.

Yes, he and his wife had talked about this problem many times. His children had brought it up to him, but he would only say, "leave me alone". It was after the parking lot incident that he decided to seek help. So he went to a therapist. After several sessions with the therapist and not getting anywhere, the therapist suggested that he ask his parents about it.

So he called his father explaining to him his problem with little red sports cars and told his dad that the therapist had suggested he ask his parents. His father sort of nervously laughed and said you'll have to ask your mother. So he asked to talk to his mother. He explained to his mother his problems with little red sports cars, told her what the therapist had said, and added his father's response.

His mother hesitated, because she did not want to answer him. She had a secret, one of which she was very embarrassed by. She would've told him years ago had she known he had a problem. She repeatedly apologized and then conveyed to him a story.

Years earlier when he was a baby she was rushing off to work one morning, she was late and was suppose to be at a very important meeting. Every morning she would carry him in his car seat out to the car, set his seat on the trunk, open the door and buckle him in. Well, that morning she sat him on the trunk as usual, was getting ready to open the door when she heard the phone ringing. She ran back inside to find out her meeting was rescheduled for earlier, in fact, as soon as she got to work. Her mind started racing about the presentation she was supposed to give. She ran out got in the car and sped away.

It wasn't until she arrived at the day care center and went to get him out of the car that she realized he wasn't there. She then remembered putting him on the trunk like she did every day, getting the phone call, running out, getting into her car and speeding away. She panicked; she just knew he was dead. She only lived a few blocks from the daycare center. She jumped in her car and retraced her route, frantically looking for him. As she pulled into her driveway she saw his car seat lying upside down in the grass. She ran over to him and she was so relieved to find him crying.

His little car seat had protected him, he was not hurt. After a while he stopped crying and his mother took him to the daycare center and proceeded to work. She always felt very guilty and never told anyone except her husband whom she swore to secrecy about what had happened.

She was so embarrassed and always thought that since he was okay that it did not matter. She had no idea about her son's unexplainable problems with little red sports cars. Of course, her vehicle had been a little red sports car.

End of story.

What if the man had not been able to find out what had happened to him as a baby? Did it help him to know? Was he able to forgive his mother? Was he able to overcome his feelings towards little red sports cars?

We all have things that have happened to us. Unfortunately some children have had extreme traumatic experiences, some of these experiences they are not even aware of. Just as in the story the man reacted to little red sports cars in a way which was not reasonable and which was unexplainable. Often children who have had traumatic experiences have responses or behaviors, which are unreasonable and unexplainable.

When I see behaviors that are not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate I try to look for either an organic or emotional reason. I try to not judge their heart; sometimes I blow it. A friend of mine once said, "If I had understood the depth of her disability I would not have taken her attacks so personally."

Organic reasons might be fetal alcohol or a chemical imbalance. Emotional reasons may be attachment disorder, some mental health problems, childhood trauma, adoption, foster care issues, or a whole host of other things. So let us try to go forth calmly, dealing with the issue or behaviors, “Just the Facts,” not judging their heart but being full of mercy and love.

The next teaching note will be on “Just the Facts.” Which will be followed by a different approach to raising kids with an attachment disorder.