



CLINICAL CORNER

A PUBLICATION OF THE CLINICAL DEPARTMENT
AT MERCYFIRST'S FAMILY FOSTER CARE PROGRAMS

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6301 Twelfth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11219
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Tips, Guides, and Information to
Help You with Your Foster Child

In This Issue: *What Our Kids Bring to US
*Ask Clinical: What is ADHD? * Shout-Outs to
Our Foster Parents *Orienting to the Future
*Tips and Pointers *Games * AND MORE!

WIN A FREE GIFT CARD!!

Find out how inside!

SHOUT-OUTS

People We Can Count On--

★ **Elsa and Sergio Olivo** go above and beyond for the children and the agency. Twice a week they drive roughly 2 hours each way from their home in Eastern Long Island to the 12th Avenue office to bring foster children to a visit with their family. They also are a visiting resource for a currently hospitalized foster child who was in their home for only one day. Their dedication, hard work, patience, and acceptance are admirable.

★ **Lucy Gill** understands the trauma the children have been through and is willing to accept some of our most challenging children. When the agency is in a bind, she is always willing to help. Her input and personality at Cluster Meetings are a real asset.



To Make a Future

(Believe It Can Happen!)

Fifteen-year-old Jessica says she wants to be a doctor. She has good intelligence, but she skips school more days than she attends, and cuts classes even when she is in the building. She spends her time hanging out with friends and says that things will just work out.

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- **Twenty-year-old Kevin** is just months away from aging out of care. He says he'll get his GED, but no one knows if he's really studying for it. He stays up late playing videogames and texting, and he sleeps until early afternoon; by the time he gets out of the house, he says it's too late in the day to look for a job. When people ask him how he plans to support himself, he gets irritated and leaves.
- **Six-year-old Autumn** won't talk about what she remembers from when she lived with her birth parents. She can't say a whole lot about what she thinks her life might be like when she grows up—not unusual for her age—but she is sure she will never get married and doesn't want to.

When your whole world has been turned upside down early in life, and things you thought you could count on turned out not to be true, it's often hard to believe that the future can be better.

- **Twelve-year-old Pablo** came from a rough neighborhood and witnessed killings before he was seven. Sometimes he seems to be fitting in with his new family. Other times, he remarks that he'll be either dead or in jail before he is twenty, so why bother?

All four of these kids have trouble believing that they have a future. This is a problem for many kids who have suffered trauma, and for many kids in foster care. People learn from their experience. When your life has been stable and positive, you'll expect the same going forward. But when your whole world has been turned upside down early in life, and things you thought you could count on turned out not to be true, it's often hard to believe that the future can be better.

Kids can seem unmotivated for many reasons. They might be depressed. They might be afraid they'll just fail again—and how would *that* feel? They might not even know where to start. A kid without apparent motivation can be frustrating and exhausting. But no matter how frustrated you feel, know that the kid probably feels it even more, though he may make sure not to show it.

So what can you do?

- Start early. If you have a young child, let her see from the start that things can be positive.
- Give her stability. Kids in care act up for many reasons. Stick with her. Too many kids go from home to home, repeating their cycle. If things start getting tough, get help from your team to make your home the one that will last.
- Always praise and give reinforcement for *working* at something, not for innate abilities. Kids continue to do better at a task if they are told something like, "Wow! You really worked at that!" rather than, "Wow! You're really good at math!"
- Help your child break tasks up into smaller steps. Whether it's a homework assignment or getting ready for independent living, it can seem overwhelming. But small, do-able steps are less intimidating.
- Get outside help—Youth Development, tutors, whatever it takes. Let her have experiences of success.
- Kids with troubled backgrounds may be quick to give up on themselves. Don't you give up on them.

Your kids come to you from a rough past. But with help, they can still learn to have faith in, and work toward, a better future.

To be eligible to earn a \$25 free gift card, read the article above and find three ways to help a child build a sense of future. Call us at 718-232-1500 x310 or x337 with your answer. THE FIRST TWO CORRECT ANSWERS WIN!

We bring a lot to the kids we take care of. And they also bring a lot to us. Here are some of the surprising things that children can bring into our homes.



Wisdom

- Creativity – originality, ingenuity
- Curiosity – openness
- Open-mindedness
- Judgment, critical thinking
- Love of learning
- Perspective



Courage

- Bravery – valor
- Persistence – perseverance, industriousness
- Integrity – authenticity, honesty
- Vitality – zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy



Humanity

- Love
- Kindness
- Social Intelligence

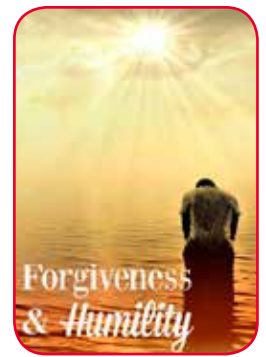


Justice

- Fairness
- Leadership
- Citizenship – loyalty, teamwork

Temperance

- Forgiveness and mercy
- Humility and modesty
- Prudence
- Self-control

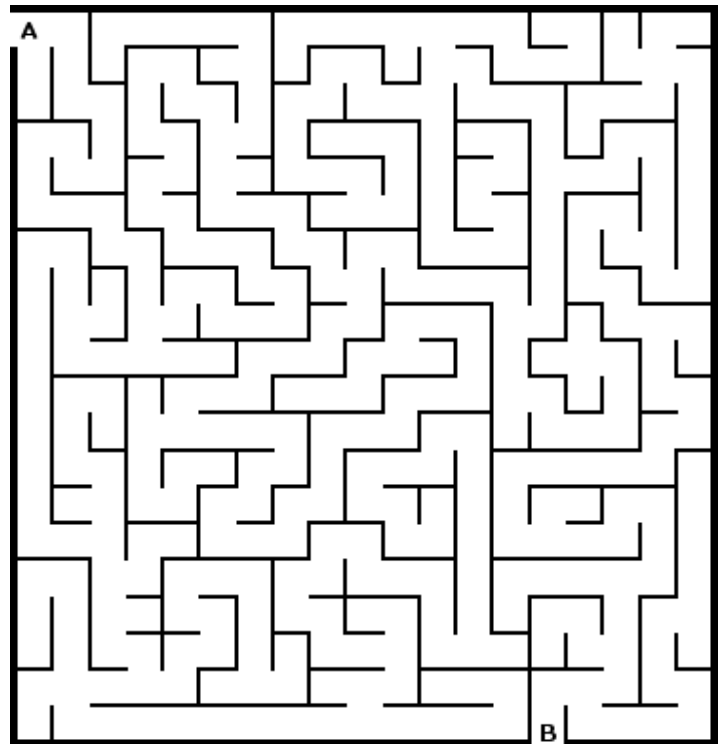


Transcendence

- Gratitude
- Humor
- Hope – optimism
- Love of beauty – awe, wonder
- Spirituality – faith, purpose



MAZE (Solution on p. 4)



Ask Clinical!

“My child never sits still, never listens, and never behaves. His teacher sends a note home almost every day, and nothing I do with him seems to help. The psychiatrist says he has ADHD, but what does that really mean?”

Children with ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) look normal; they even behave in a normal manner a lot of the time. Many parents say, “When she really wants something, then she’s able to behave.” People with ADHD are often accused of lying, being lazy, and being manipulative. Be aware that the condition does exist. ADHD does not typically respond as well to treatment as people think. Medications help, but they don’t cure. They compensate for the brain’s inattention and lack of focus by amping up to override the child’s brain’s sluggishness. That sounds odd, but the truth is that the brain is sleeping on the job and not directing the child to pay attention to the right things. The child will pay attention, but it may be to everything he shouldn’t. All that glitters may not be gold, but it is pretty and exciting, and kids will reach and grab. Medication helps. Alternative treatments, such as food restrictions or vitamins or other remedies, don’t really work, according to the research. Long term, the best treatment is for the child and family to agree to work each day as if the ADHD is there and can take you down. That means therapy, support groups and educational programs. The children who do best are in some type of ADHD meeting, whether a therapy session or lecture, at least once a month for three years.

With this illness some days are golden; others, disastrous. The ADHD child can wake some mornings and everything is perfect. It has been said that the worst thing a kid with ADHD can do is do it right once, because everyone then expects him to do it right again and again. ADHD affects the brain in a random fashion; it affects the child differently depending on health, sleep, nutrition, exercise, the weather, the environment, adult tones and words, friends, subjects in school (math and science and written assignments are typically the worst!), self-esteem, television, internet, and more. For most of these children, school is the most exquisite torture. They sit six hours every day and have no idea why they’re there. The day is often a blur in their memory, as if they’re in a world six feet under water. ADHD kids often can’t connect past events with what’s happening now. Things that just happened could have been five minutes ago or five days ago; it doesn’t matter to their brains. That is why the parent’s natural response to misbehavior is met with the child’s disbelief and cry, “I didn’t do anything!” They haven’t forgotten; they just can’t figure out how what happened has anything to do with what’s happening now. The wise parent in dealing with this condition responds not by being angry over the child’s state of mind but by teaching him, saying, “You chose to hit Danny. You know hitting is not how we do things. Let me help you apologize to him and let’s continue to work on not hitting, and in order to fix things you have to do something nice for him.” Don’t be confused; if a child willfully misbehaves, he should be disciplined and given the chance to apologize and fix what’s happened. In ADHD you alter that response by letting the misbehavior slide when you know it’s their condition that brought it on. However, you still get the kid to repair the damage by making sure he knows that even though he might not have meant to do what he did, he is still responsible.

Have a problem or a question? Write us at “Ask Clinical,” MercyFirst, 6301 12th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11219, or call us at 718-232-1500 x337. We’ll try to help!



WIN A \$25 GIFT CARD IF YOUR QUESTION IS SELECTED.



Jonathan B. Lauter, MD, joins the team as our new full-time Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. He conducts Psychiatric Evaluations and sees the children who are on medication once a month for Medication Management.

We Have a Winner!

Tatyanna T. won the prize for the contest in our Spring/Summer 2016 issue by identifying three ways that foster parents can help children deal with loss.

CONGRATULATIONS!



Solution to Maze

(from p. 3)

