

Experiences From Care Leavers

We Must Educate Children About Trauma Earlier

Memories. Crazy little things, aren't they?

It's so easy to hold on to the bad ones, but the good ones seem to disintegrate in our mind as easily as sandcastles on the beach. The bad ones, on the other hand, refuse to leave our mind like squatters who aren't paying rent and no matter how many eviction letters you give them they refuse to leave. Then, when you finally think you may have got rid of them, you find they have crept back in.

I don't know who I would be without my memories now. If anything, they have been the one constant throughout my whole life. Traumatic memories are the ones that really cause pain for me. Each time one of these memories jumps into the forefront of my head it's like reliving it all over again, only worse because you know what's coming next. It's like Chinese water torture for the heart.

The trauma and trauma bonds I carry comes from my childhood. Even as an adult, pain makes more sense to me then love and I can't help but think that if I had understood more about trauma as a child then maybe I wouldn't have had such dysfunctional relationships as an adult. But, how can children recognise something that they don't even understand? Sometimes these trauma bonds start from such a young age that it's normal to them, like it was normal to me. We have all had moments in life that change us, an

experience or event that we look back on and think was a defining point in life, whether that was a death of a loved one, a relationship breakup etc. We usually only expect to come face to face with these kind of traumas as we grow older, so we go through life picking up knowledge and tools that help us when the defining moments hit. Of course, they still hurt but imagine being a child and all you know is hurt. Hurt becomes normal for you to the point you don't even recognise it as hurt and as you're so young you haven't had the life experience to gather the tools to help you understand it and process it.

This is why we need more education and more resources to educate children on trauma and trauma bonds, so they recognise it, and it doesn't become a normality to them. This doesn't mean that this trauma is suddenly not going to disappear from your mind, and you will stop carrying it around with you. Absolutely not, trauma is always going to be something that stays with us, but we can learn to live with it.

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stain and people come to your house, they would never even know you have this bloody awful stain on this beautiful carpet, but you will always know it's there. This might sound like a really stupid analogy and as I've said so many times before I'm no professional, but it's an analogy that makes sense to me.

My point is this: we can do all the counselling and all the therapy to face our trauma, but it's never going to erase what's happened. It does, however, help us to learn to live with it and accept it as part of who we are now. But, learning to live with things sooner rather than later can only be a good

thing and that's why educating children at a young age about these things is so important. Trauma left to fester without confronting it can lead to a very confusing life.

We, as a society, need to bring light to this subject to prevent kids from living these traumas as their normal.

If you would like to connect with Beth you can reach out to her through her Facebook group Fostering and Beyond, which is a place for foster carers and professionals to hear firsthand information and advice from children who have been through the system.

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