Exploring and Talking about Emotions

Even when you were a baby, you had your emotions. You cried when sad, you laughed when happy, you may have been frightened by sounds you didn’t understand.

You learned what emotions would get you food, or diaper change, or cuddling. And your parents gave you what you needed by learning the emotions you used.

Our emotions will always be important for our minds and bodies to be healthy. Can you name the emotions using the list below?

Happy  Worried
Surprised  Proud
Shy  Depressed
Silly  Frightened
Sad  Angry

Confused

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A NOTE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As CEO I am proud to share the results from our research “A Needs Assessment, Listening to the Voices of Allegheny County Parents Raising Children with Emotional and/or Mental Health Challenges.” As an organization AFN is always concerned about the needs of parents/caregivers of this population. Our county has made some significant strides in meeting previously identified needs, but there is always more work for all of us to do. Listening to the voices of families, providers who work with or in the child serving systems and with key stakeholders, is a way to gather and document the information for use in furthering system enhancements.

252 parents raising children with mental health issues; almost 60 providers, leaders from Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health, Office of Children, Youth and Families, Juvenile Probation and Community Care Behavioral Health Organization participated in the assessment. We thank them for their time and valuable input.

AFN contracted with the Youth and Family Training Institute (YFTI) of Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic of UPMC to conduct the assessment and present the findings which will be the platform for our organization’s strategic plan. YFTI team, staff and a board member designed the data collection strategies, provided outreach and recruitment assistance, and collaborated on the logistics of the project. The methods were designed to secure data that would ultimately provide input for the AFN Board of Directors and key staff as we plan for the next five to ten years of supporting and partnering with families.

We used three methods of data collection: Focus Groups, Online/Paper Surveys, and Key Informant Interviews. The focus groups were conducted during daytime, evening, and weekend hours in urban/suburban locations so that we could reach parents in settings that were comfortable and convenient to them. The survey was developed by YFTI consisted of 30 questions for those who are raising or helping to raise a child/children with mental health issues. If the respondent was a provider, they answered 15 questions designed to gather information from providers of services. The Key Informant interviews, conducted by telephone and recorded by a YFTI family member, answered a series of 9 questions about family voice in their system/organization and asked for ideas about planning and partnering with AFN over the next 5-10 years to increase family voice within their specific systems.

I invite you to access the full report on our website’s main page, www.alleghenyfamilynetwork.org or on our Facebook page, Allegheny Family Network. If you would like additional information, please contact us.

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Spirit the AFN Way!

Line Dancing, Cooking demonstrations, Healthy Bingo were just some of the activities that were presented at the first AFN Wellness Fair. Children and Adults alike took part in relay races, stretching, Zumba and line dancing. There were chair and hand massages, free flu shots, blood pressure and diabetes screening. Fun activities included balloon animals and caricatures.

A healthy lunch was provided with healthy snacks throughout the day. Bathroom scales and backpacks full of healthy snacks were won with a raffle. This fun event was made possible by a grant from the Penguins Foundation with additional financial support from Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Alda Walker, Parent Coordinator
Update on the Allegheny Family Network Employment Program

One group of AFN families who are greatly challenged are those with single parents who have had difficulty in finding or maintaining employment, or in enhancing their work position because of the demands on their time stemming from their children’s mental health or behavioral health issues.

Since March, 2016, with a grant AFN received from the Hillman Foundation, and as Family Employment Specialist, I have been meeting with AFN single parents to work on providing a range of training and supportive services through AFN’s Employment Program for single parents. The resources I have collected for the families include PA Careerlinks and the Mon Valley Initiative who provide free resources such as resume building, job clubs, and job searches. I have also partnered with current and potential employers, representatives of school districts, Allegheny County CYP Program, providers of behavioral health services, providers of tangible aid services and various other service providers who may be linked to the families being served through AFN. To date, 24 single parents have been receiving support through the AFN Employment Program and have met their goal of employment.

It is very gratifying to support some one from start to finish as they begin the process of a job search and (with determination) achieve their goal of full-time employment.

Kurt Radke, Family Employment Specialist

Emotional Health and Well-Being during Autumn/Winter Months

We have entered the last quarter of this year. A time when daylight is influenced by the season we are in. What we eat, wear, and do in our free time during these fall/winter months can affect how we feel and act.

Many things happen in life that can disrupt emotional health and lead to strong feelings of sadness, stress or anxiety. For example, an illness, money problems, a dreary day, getting through traffic to get home, or to school, or work. The grief with loss of a loved one, a job, or a home.

“Good” changes can be just as stressful as “bad” changes, for example, the birth of a baby. Disruptive sleep, change in routine, finding childcare are examples. This is a time to be aware of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors for your emotional well-being.

How can Emotions affect Physical Health?

Your body is your guide to your emotional health and wellness. It responds to the way you think, feel, and act. Some examples of your body showing physical signs that your emotional wellness is out of balance can include: back pain, change in eating, extreme tiredness, headaches, trouble sleeping. Poor emotional health can weaken your body’s immune system, making you more likely to get colds and other infections.

Does your doctor know about your Emotional Well-Being?

Just as no one can know what you are thinking, your doctor can’t always tell what you are feeling by looking at you. It is important to be honest with your doctor if you are struggling with negative feelings. If your symptoms are not caused by other health problems, you and your doctor can address the emotional causes.

Your doctor may be able to suggest ways to treat your physical health while you work together to improve your emotional health.

Be Kind to Yourself

Keeping your feelings inside can make you feel worse. It is okay to let your loved ones know when something is bothering you. In addition, if they are not able to deal with their feelings appropriately, ask someone outside the situation for advice and support to help you improve your emotional health.

This doesn’t mean you have to pretend to be happy when you feel stressed or anxious. It is important to deal with negative feelings, but try to focus on positive things in your life and throughout your day. Developing an attitude of gratitude can go a long way to helping emotional well-being.

Calm your mind and body with relaxation. You may take the form of meditation, listening to soft music, exercising, stretching or breathing deeply. Talk to your family doctor for advice about relaxation methods.

Taking care of emotional health includes taking care of your body, such as, eating healthy, getting enough sleep, relieving pent-up tension with activities you enjoy.

Be Kind to Yourself in these coming months. Accepting change and keeping things in perspective can help you to cope with stress in a healthy way.

Sharon Shaw
Taken from familydoctor.org

AFN PROGRAM NEWS

INTRODUCING NEW AFN STAFF MEMBERS

With more growth comes new staff. We welcome the following Family Support Partners to AFN-

AFN Joint Planning Team Program
Family Support Partners

AFN Fathers Involved Now Program
Family Support Partners

AFN Expansion includes New Family Room

AFN’s growth in staff, programs, events for families and the public, and support groups enables us to provide more resources for families across Allegheny County and necessitates the need for more space. AFN now occupies the third floor, where we first started, and the fifth floor at 425 North Craig Street in Oakland. Along with staff offices on the third floor, we have a beautiful welcoming Family Room where families and staff can meet, children can play and childcare can be provided.

Worthing families, in person or on the phone, directing visitors and assisting staff are just a couple of the duties our two Third Floor Receptionists, (below) take care of during an AFN day.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH AFN CONTINUE

We are looking for team members to work as Family Support Partners using your personal experience as a parent/caregiver who has raised a child with mental health challenges to help other parents.

We offer full-time, good pay and great benefits.

You must have a valid PA driver’s license and a car, and pass the PA Act 33/34 and FBI clearances.

To be considered join our staff, please send your resume and cover letter explaining your experience as a parent/caregiver having raised a child with mental health challenges to: Winsome Ho, Allegheny Family Network, 425 North Craig Street, Suite 500, Pittsburgh, PA 15213
AFN said good-bye to summer this year on August 18th at our annual cookout at the Vietnam Veterans Pavilion in Schenley Park. Families and staff alike look forward every year to our Annual Back to School Cookout with promises of a fun-filled day of activities, food, music, sports, and crafts. This year’s cookout fulfilled all promises!

Hot and steamy didn’t keep children of all ages from visiting the various craft and activity tables set-up by seventeen Allegheny County providers. Airbrush tattoos, painted faces, and balloon creatures could be seen everywhere around the Pavilion as the kids kept the artists busy with their design requests.

The Youth Support Partners kept rousing games of football and soccer going throughout the day in our “Sports Center.” The shouts of “BINGO!” by parents and caregivers winning a prize along with line dancing on the grounds drew folks in and got them moving. Of course a cookout isn’t complete without the “burgers”, hotdogs, kielbaski, and beans. Ice cream was served by local Wish givers winning a prize along with line dancing the day in our Wellness Fair photos continued:

What can you do when your toddler begins to want to make decisions? It is a good idea to let them decide between safe, toddler-friendly options (such as what hat to wear). As they learn, they realize they have the power to make things happen, which adds to their developing self-esteem.

However, toddlers still see themselves through our eyes. We have a very important role to play in building our toddlers’ self-esteem. Let your child know that you see them as clever, special and valued. For instance: “You are the most special Susie in the world.” Let them make reasonable decisions—an example can be whether to have yogurt or blueberries for snack. Give your toddler the chance to say ‘no’. They need to assert themselves. If your child says “no” to putting on shoes in the house, that is okay. Her feet might get cold, but it will not hurt her. Your child is practicing make decisions, even if she actually wants what you are offering.

My eighteen-month old granddaughter can do so many things herself—two-word sentences, and climb up onto the sofa. She feeds herself, plays ball with her dog, “reads” books, knows some of the alphabet, hugs trees, makes funny faces and definitely has an opinion on whether Grandma will get one kiss or two. She already sees herself being powerful, strong, and independent. Her self-esteem is soaring.

Although it may look haphazard to adults in performance, a toddler is doing a lot of hard work building self-esteem. The day is just around the corner when I will be assisting my grandbaby with something and will hear, “I do it!” As her grandma, it is my job, along with her parents, to make sure she will always know that she can.

Sharon Shaw

AFN’s newly formed support group, Sheldon Park/Natrona Heights (so called until the members vote on a name,) began their commitment to address issues in the community that affect children’s mental health development and exploring solutions for parents/guardians.

The group hosted a Register to Vote in their community with the League of Women Voters. Fourteen parents/caregivers and community residents registered to vote September 30th while the children played games.

Since the first meeting held September 14, 2016, the support group members have plans for a basketball game for 5-18 year olds playing against the dads of AFN’s Fathers Involved Now support groups. Looking to the future, the group has discussed a spaghetti dinner and other community involved events to raise funds for neighborhood holiday celebrations and a Spring Gala.

Truey support group on the move!
**WHAT’S COMING UP IN THE NEAR FUTURE**

Watch for information in the mail for classes in the [Agents of Transformation, and the ACT Parenting Class. Both classes are a six-week commitment.**

If you would like to receive this calendar electronically, please call our CHAT Line at 1-888-273-2361, and we will email it to you as a PDF file.

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**AFN SUPPORT GROUP CALENDAR 2016**

**October**

10 Moms United — Men and Women—Unlocking the mystery of meeting each other’s needs: George Fleming, AFN FIN Supervisor will lead a discussion on the male/female relationship & highlight the ways to strengthen that bond.

12 Dual Diagnosis — Holiday Arts & Crafts: The Group will start Arts & Crafts for the Holidays.

17 Sheldon Park/Natrona Heights Support Group—Mentoring of youth: Discussion and playing basketball games between the AFN FIN fathers and children in the community.

14 Fathers Involved Now, Braddock — Men’s open discussion on Wellness/Health: Discussing sleep, proper nutrition and the issue of men not living as long as women.

19 Tri-Boro Networking Support Group — Round table discussion on Women’s Health/Healthy Relationships: Presented by YWCA on Women’s health and wellness.

20 Turning It Up Network Support Group—Glass Painting with Duprene Johnson, AFN Parent Advisory Board member, will lead activity on hand painted wine glasses and using art as a way to release stress.

21 Diva Discussions—Women and their relationships with grandchildren/ great grandchildren: Members will discuss these important relationships.

26 Fathers Involved Now, AFN—Men’s open discussion on Wellness/ Health: Discussing sleep, proper nutrition and the issue of men not living as long as women.

24 Fathers Involved Now, North Side — Men’s open discussion on Wellness/ Health: Discussing sleep, proper nutrition and the issue of men not living as long as women.

26 Foster Parents Support Group—Thanksgiving Celebration: The group will look back over the year of things that have gone well for them. We will have a craft to complete for the family.

26 Fathers Involved Now, AFN—Holiday celebration for Thanksgiving: We will recognize our group members and discuss any celebrations they may have.

28 Fathers Involved Now, North Side — Holiday celebration for Thanksgiving: We will recognize our group members and discuss any celebrations they may have.

* Foster Parent Support Group — No meeting in October.

**November**

9 Sheldon Park/Natrona Heights — Holiday party planning: Planning: Thanksgiving and Holiday party for the community.

11 Fathers Involved Now, Braddock — Holiday celebration for Thanksgiving: We will recognize our group members and discuss any celebrations they may have.

14 Moms United — An Attitude of Gratitude: Thinking of others, the group will make cards for service men and women stationed overseas.

16 Dual Diagnosis—A Time to Be Thankful, How to Journal: The group will record a journal about the season of Thanksgiving.

19 Tri-Boro Networking Support Group — Who and Where to Turn: The group will have an open discussion on who to call and where to turn for mental health support and assistance. Help will be focused on education and medical services.

21 Diva Discussions—Women and Their Careers: The group members will discuss why women choose certain careers and how that choice affects society.

23 Foster Parents Support Group—Glass Painting: Glass painting with Duprene Johnson, AFN Parent Advisory Board member, will present the activity of hand painted wine glasses.

23 Tribal Networking Support Group—Holiday Celebration: Pot-luck style dinner and gift exchange.

27 Turning it Up Network—Mary Kay Pampering: Mary Kay consultant, Ethel Mills, will share tips on how to take care of yourself and open a home business.

28 Fathers Involved Now, North Side —No meeting this month due to the holiday.

* Foster Parent Support Group — No meeting in October.

**December**

9 Fathers Involved Now, Braddock — Men’s open discussion on the impact that fathers have on their children: Discussion will involve the importance of being in their children’s lives whether in a home, incarcerated, or are living outside the home.

12 Moms United—Home for the Holidays: While creating holiday ornaments, the group will discuss ways to enjoy the season while minimizing their stress.

14 Dual Diagnosis—Holiday Lunch: Holiday celebration of fun and games.

17 Sheldon Park/Natrona Heights — Holiday Party: Celebrating the holiday in the community.

15 Diva Discussions—Holiday Gathering: The group members will have a gathering to celebrate the holiday season.

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**AFN Family Support Groups and AFN Events Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Facilitator Contact</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIVA DISCUSSIONS</strong> The Hill House Conference Room 1835 Centre Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15219</td>
<td>October 20, November 17, December 15</td>
<td>6:00pm - 8:00pm</td>
<td>Cheryl Johnson at 412-438-6103</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DUAL DIAGNOSIS SUPPORT GROUP</strong> Center for Family Excellence 409 Dinwiddie Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219</td>
<td>No Oct., November 16, December 14</td>
<td>Noon-2:00pm</td>
<td>Cheryl Johnson at 412-438-6103</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FATHERS INVOLVED NOW (AFN)</strong> Allegheny Family Network 425 North Craig Street Suite 500 Pittsburgh, PA 15213</td>
<td>Oct. 20, November 17, December 15</td>
<td>6:00pm - 8:00pm</td>
<td>George Fleming at 412-438-6106</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FATHERS INVOLVED NOW (AFN)</strong> 485 Park Avenue Natrona Heights, PA 15065</td>
<td>Second Monday of the month</td>
<td>12:00 noon - 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Chris Rather at 412-438-6120</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THE TRIBO-BORO NETWORKING SUPPORT GROUP</strong> Family Care Connection c/o Braddock Training Center 849 Braddock Avenue Braddock, PA 15104</td>
<td>Oct., November 9, December 14</td>
<td>noon - 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Chris Rather at 412-438-6120</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FATHERS INVOLVED NOW (AFN)</strong> 485 Park Avenue Natrona Heights, PA 15065</td>
<td>Second Monday of the month</td>
<td>12:00 noon - 2:00 pm</td>
<td>Chris Rather at 412-438-6120</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FATHERS INVOLVED NOW (North Side)</strong> Providence Family Support Center 3113 Brighton Road Pittsburgh, PA 15212</td>
<td>October 24, November 28, No December</td>
<td>11:00 am to 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Myron Webb at 412-438-6135</td>
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**Turning It Up Network Support Group**

Kingpins Association 6435 Franksblaw Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Third Wednesday of the month 5:15 pm - 7:30 pm

Oct. 19, November 16, December 21

Facilitator Contact: Rose Hammonds at 412-438-6114

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**Natrana Heights Support Group**

AFN introduced the Natrana Heights Support Group on September 14, 2016, with ten parents in attendance at the Lloyd Hayden Center in Natrana Heights, PA.

As with all AFN groups supporting parents with children/young adults with mental health or behavioral health issues, the Natrana Heights members have chosen to address issues in the community that affect children’s mental health development and exploring solutions for parents/guardians.

The group plans on choosing a name for the group at the October 12, 2016 meeting from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm.

For information and to RSVP please call Christa Jones at 724-759-9313.

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Child Care

AFN provides child care for parents to be able to attend our support groups.

Your RSVP is very important and very much appreciated when attending a support group so CHILDCARE can be provided, and refreshments available for all attendees. Thank you!