

Building Connections

A Newsletter for Resource Families

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Self-Love, Self-Acceptance, and How to Emotionally Prepare Your Foster Youth

By
Shining Goose

What does it mean to love yourself? If you asked a group of people, everyone would give different answers. I have a very simple definition: self-love is self-acceptance. Knowing this, and sharing this idea with your foster youth, will be something that can help shape their future in a positive way.

What is Self-Love?

Something amazing happens to us humans during the ages of 13 to about 19. This phase, officially called “adolescence” by developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, describes a stage in the 8 psychosocial stages of human development where we socialize less with our parents, and more with people our age, in an effort to understand ourselves and discover/develop our identity. Identity is strongly correlated with self-esteem, so it makes sense then that adolescents, who are without an identity, are insecure and are more vulnerable to influence by peer pressure.

When you begin to connect adolescence with a lack of identity and insecurity, a lot of behaviors begin to make sense: It's why young men are likely to get into physical fights or are vulnerable to being called unmanly (they are insecure about their masculinity, so they feel compelled to prove their masculinity to other men). It's also why young women desire to wear makeup (they are insecure about themselves, so they want to look prettier to boost their acceptance socially and makeup is also a way to hide/protect their true self).

Self-love means to understand yourself and your identity and to be satisfied with it. A lack of positive regard from ourselves leads to a need to find approval from outside sources. Trouble arises when those sources turn out to be malignant, abusive, selfish, narcissistic people.

The main issue with most foster youth is that we have not experienced love in healthy relationships, or have had a very dysfunctional and shattered understanding of love due to relationships with our parents and caregivers. I think the conflict is obvious: our expectations of our caregivers are for them to love and take care of us. When they do not, that creates emotional issues which can manifest themselves as personality disorders, dysfunction in life, emotional barriers, and deep insecurities. This is the inner hurdle that foster youth face: how to develop self-love without a foundation of loving relationships to learn from, build on, and lean on.

I do not think we can focus on thriving and having solid relationships because of deep-rooted insecurities, and because the inner void (what I call feelings of emptiness) that sometimes propels us to self-destructive behavior. That is why for you, as a foster parent, helping foster youth develop an acceptance of themselves, their situations, and their faults is so important – sharing your love and compassion is NOT ENOUGH, I'm afraid. You need to have a more conscientious approach towards teaching and modeling how to build self-love and self-acceptance.

The Connection Between Identity and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is developed in many ways, but one proven method is by developing a healthy self-identity and knowing yourself—knowing who you are.

In a couple of studies of self-esteem of adolescents, school children were asked to fill in a survey to rate how much they liked themselves. In a surprising twist, it turned out that the black students had higher self-esteem on average than white students, despite being generally poorer and being part of a marginalized group. One theory for this result was that the black students had a strong identity and viewed their identity in a positive way. Subsequent related studies showed that having cultural and ethnic pride was related to higher self-esteem levels.

My recommendation for developing your foster child's identity is to help them attain a positive regard for their background which can include culture, religion, and ethnicity. When a youth does not have personal achievements (yet) or a solid relationship with their parents, having pride in their background will help boost their self-esteem, likely improving all aspects of their life.

Continued on next page

HUI HO'OMALU STATEWIDE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Hui Ho'omalua Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) provides support to the resource family community through identifying ongoing needs, facilitating communication and by sharing resources.

The Building Connections Newsletter is published quarterly by Partners in Development Foundation, 2040 Bachelot St., Honolulu HI 96817-2433, to provide information regarding foster and adoptive care to resource families, service providers, and to the public.

This newsletter may be viewed on the following websites:

www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social_services/child_welfare/foster

www.pidfoundation.org

If you would like to receive this newsletter, please call:

441-1127 (O'ahu),

888-879-8970 (Toll Free) or

E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

GO GREEN!

Want to help our environment? Contact us today and request an electronic copy!



Accepting Ourselves, Including the Unfavorable Parts

Finding positive things about your background is important. The more difficult step is to also accept the parts that are not so flattering. Fact: we are imperfect beings. Our insecurities are a reminder of that fact. The way to love yourself is by accepting yourself as imperfect.

There is a great quote about self-acceptance from *Game of Thrones*, a television show that I love. Tyrion Lannister, a dwarf son of a mighty lord, explains to a bastard son the importance of self-acceptance:

"Never forget what you are, the rest of the world will not. Wear it like armor and it can never be used to hurt you."

Race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, the jobs of your parents, nerdy hobbies, having non-ideal bodies, being in the system—all of those are sensitive areas and can be weaknesses... but do you see a way for your youth to become an emotionally healthy adult without broaching those topics? I highly recommend finding these "sensitive" spots of your foster youth and doing your best to have conversations with them to help them start to accept all parts of themselves and their lives. I doubt any youth can come to terms with all of their issues overnight, but starting the path to doing so is a great way to develop "mindfulness" -- a term used to describe self-awareness and understanding ourselves and our behaviors and why we do the things we do. Without that, we are just beasts with bigger brains, reacting to our emotions and primal instincts rather than understanding ourselves and having greater control of our actions.

Self-Acceptance and Being Able to Tell Others Who You Are

One of the trickiest things to admit for me was the fact that I was in foster care. Although self-acceptance means accepting yourself and your perceived "faults and weaknesses", I still do not advocate for all foster youth announcing to the world that they are/were in foster care. The average person in the wider community is not aware of what foster children really go through,

Till now, I have only told people very close to me about my time in foster care. This is why I use the pseudonym "Shining Goose" here. Now that I have earned my college degrees and found my professional calling, I will be mostly among people who come from middle-upper socioeconomic classes. I will not start my new job by revealing my foster background to everyone, again, because of how it could negatively impact perceptions of me and how it might affect my opportunities as a "newbie" in a well-respected, high profile program. This comes from awareness and wisdom of the world out there and from my own personal growth and awareness of self.

I will continue to work towards true self-acceptance. As I continue to build on success at work and in my relationships, I will be able to further "flip" my past life as a poor child in the welfare system--so it can become something like a "badge of honor", earned for clearing more obstacles and challenges through life than my peers. It will continue to take grit, determination, and soul searching from myself-and from all of you foster parents (and your foster children)-to keep reaching for that point of true self-acceptance and self-love.

Shining Goose

'OHANA REWARDS

Want to know how you could receive a \$200.00 gift card?

Would you like your name to appear in a future RAC newsletter?

All you need to do is help us find more homes for Hawai'i's keiki in foster care!

If you can refer, help, cheer, and see your referral to the finish line to become licensed, you could earn a **\$200 gift card** of your choice and be listed here as an 'Ohana Rewards recipient!

Congratulations

Joseph O'Connell
Sheila & Alfred Ringor
Adele & Walton Auyong
Karen
Kina Pule

Call Hui Ho'omalua today at 441-1117 or 1-888-879-8970 (toll free) for more information!



Graduation Celebration

By Jennifer O'Donnell, Case Manager with Family Programs Hawaii



Photo: Facebook "The Tonga Sisters"

A graduation celebration was held on June 14th to honor more than 30 Hawaii graduates who completed high school while in foster care. The graduates included those from the neighbor islands as well as Oahu. They were treated to a luncheon at the historical Washington Place in Honolulu. The Tonga Sisters entertained the group with beautiful singing. Lieutenant Governor, Josh Green, addressed the graduates and encouraged them to pursue their dreams. Many graduates plan to pursue college and several hope to work with children in the future to give back to the community. The graduates also expressed thanks to their supporters, relatives, and resource caregivers for helping them achieve this milestone. The Department of Human Services Director, Pankaj Bhanot, greeted the students and Elladine Olevao, Branch Administrator, offered congratulations on behalf of Child Welfare Services. All the graduates departed with a commendation from the Governor's office and a gift card.

The event was put on by a collaboration between the Department of Human Services and local non-profits including: the CASA program, Court Improvement Program, EPIC Ohana, Family Programs Hawaii, Friends of CASA, the Geist Foundation, HI H.O.P.E.S., William S Richardson School of Law, and YES Hawaii.



JULY 31, 2019, 6:00PM

"Surrogate Parenting and Educational Advocacy: How to advocate for your child's educational success"

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019, 6:00PM

"Navigating Special Education Services in Schools: Understanding the Individualized Educational Program (IEP)"

Online Training Options for Resource Families

Trainings for resource families will now be more accessible than ever! Family Programs Hawaii (FPH) understands that resource families are busy so FPH will be offering online webinar trainings in addition to regular quarterly in-person trainings. Webinars are live, web-based video conferences that are accessed by computer, tablet, or smartphone. Resource families statewide will be able to participate in and listen to webinar trainings from the comfort of their own home or office. One-hour webinar trainings, followed by a Question & Answer time, will be offered every other month starting July 2019. Licensed resource caregivers will be able to earn 1 DHS-approved training hour for each webinar they attend.

The first webinar, entitled "Surrogate Parenting and Educational Advocacy: How to advocate for your child's educational success," will be held on July 31st at 6:00pm. The following webinar training, "Navigating Special Education Services in Schools: Understanding the Individualized Education Program (IEP)," will be on September 25th, 6:00-7:30pm.

Please be on the lookout for upcoming training webinar flyers in the mail for registration information. Training flyers will also be sent via email if you are on the FPH email list. Webinar trainings, as well as some in-person trainings, will be available to view online at a later time if families are not able to participate in the live webinars.

Other online training options include Foster Parent College and fosterparent.com. Please call the Warm Line at (808) 545-1130 or toll free at 1-866-545-0882 to register for these free online trainings and/or to be placed on the email distribution list for upcoming trainings.

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH



East Hawaii celebrated and recognized National Foster

Care month on May 11, 2019 with a movie on the lawn at the Hawaii Island YMCA that featured the movie *Instant Family*. This collaborative effort was put on by Partners in Development Foundation, Hui Ho'omalulu in collaboration with E. Hawaii DHS Child Welfare Services, Catholic Charities-SRF, High Hopes Initiative, The Salvation Army-Family Intervention Services and Imua Kakou. The movie, *Instant Family*, gave a portrayal of a family that takes in a sibling group and showed how foster care transforms lives. Local vendors also helped with the event through many donations: Starbucks, Traceylyn Photography, HPM, Allstate, The Food Basket that made the event a memorial event for everyone.

The event also highlighted the need for more resource caregivers. Dozens of resource caregivers are needed every year to care for children, with the greatest need being for families to care for older children and sibling groups, two areas the movie *Instant Family* touched upon.



Resource Families Appreciated During National Foster Care Month On Oahu

In proclaiming May 2019 as "Foster Care Month" in the State of Hawai'i, Governor David Ige underscored the significance of the annual national month of recognition, emphasizing the "selfless contributions of Hawai'i's resource caregivers and the various organizations and institutions that support our keiki in the foster care system."

On Oahu, the 8th Annual Resource Family Appreciation Day was celebrated on May 18, 2019, at the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Ewa Beach. More than 200 resource caregivers and children dove into a day of fun in the sun with pool activities for swimmers of all ages, skill, and energy levels. The poolside cabanas offered cool relaxation and the opportunity to catch up with old friends or to reach out and connect with new ones.

It is always an honor an privilege to walk alongside the children and families that are the heart and soul of this one month of recognition for it reminds us of the selfless commitment they make during the remaining 364 days.

The Foster Care Training Committee, who coordinated the event, would like to acknowledge and thank the Glue Committee, Hawai'i USA Federal Credit Union, and many other individual supporters for their donations and support.

The Foster Care Training Committee includes representatives from Catholic Charities, Epic Foundation, Family Programs Hawaii, Hale Kipa, and Partners in Development Foundation.

Resource Family Basics ~ Transition & Youth Services

Talk to your child's social worker regarding referrals to the following programs for youth or call the Warm Line for more information:

1. Independent Living Program (ILP) Services: helps youth (from age 12) develop knowledge, skills, and connections to make a successful transition to living on their own.
2. Na'u E Koho (The Choice is Mine): Works with Hawaiian, non-Hawaiian youth in foster care, and at-risk youth on Oahu and East Hawaii who are high school seniors or involved with a GED or alternative learning program. Youth who have a desire to attend college, vocational, or employment training will benefit from one-on-one and group assistance concentrating on career and interest exploration to establish educational and career goals.
3. E Makua Ana Youth Circle: provides a group process for teenagers to celebrate their emancipation from foster care and to assist them in planning for their independence/interdependence.
4. Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition: assists youth in two major areas of focus. One is an annual trip to Kaho'olawe to connect with a culturally grounded healing process. The other area of activity is a work development project called HI Rising.
5. Hawai'i Youth Opportunities Initiative and HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board: helps youth (14-26 years old) by working with public and private partners to improve policies and practices, promote youth engagement, apply evaluation and research, and create community partnerships.
6. Imua Kakou: a voluntary program to help young adults between the ages of 18-21 who age out of foster care, successfully transition into adulthood. Foster board payment of \$776, reimbursement for bus passes, & \$1,026 clothing allowance (which includes clothing & diapers for any children of former foster youth) is available. Youth must participate in eligible activities such as higher education, employment or job training, etc.
7. Project Visitation: brings siblings, who are living in separate foster homes, together for monthly visits. On Oahu only.
8. Youth Empowerment & Success (Y.E.S. Hawaii): Youth driven statewide program providing support and activities for youth 14-26.
9. Foster Hope Hawaii app: A tool to connect and support foster youth in the Hawaiian Islands with community support services and resources for healthy living, housing, education, finance and employment. Available on iPhone and Android phones.

Prudent Parenting ~ Dating & Attending Prom

The following is an excerpt from the *Don't Say "NO" Until You "Know" guide*, which was developed by the State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services and our community partners. The guide presents common questions and answers for Resource Caregivers on providing normalcy for children/young people in foster care so they can participate equally in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, social, and cultural activities, just as their classmates and peers do. These Q & A's can be found within the Normalcy Guidelines provided by your DHS licensing worker.

Question: Can young people who are in foster care date or attend the prom?

Answer: Yes.

Resource Caregivers can help the young person understand healthy dating practices by assisting with recognizing healthy and unhealthy behavior, developing coping skills for addressing jealousy and anger, recognizing when a relationship may no longer be working, and knowing how to end a relationship.

Prom can feel like a rite of passage for young people and the high school prom is usually the first formal event in the lives of young people. Attending prom can be both exciting and stress producing, it can provide an opportunity for the young person, Resource Caregiver, and peers, to collaborate in the development of planning for the event and engaging in communication about logistics, behavior and contingencies.

Some additional Guidelines for Resource Caregivers and Child Caring Institution staff on young people dating

Meet the date. Confirm transportation arrangements (who is driving, etc.). Confirm pick up and drop off times. What are the plans for the evening? If date is driving, verify driver's license. If plans change, ensure they know to call before they make the changes. Make a plan with the young person if they become uncomfortable. Give the young person YOUR phone number. Get the date's phone number.

If funding is needed to help pay the cost of prom, the CWS worker will look at availability of funds through the Department's payment system as well as through the *Enhancement funds and *Ho'ola Na Mana'o (Friends of Children's Justice Center) funds. *limited funding amount available each year





Welcome to FPH's Resource Family Support Services Corner

By Karen Kaneshiro-Soon, RFSS Warm Line Family Resource Specialist
Resource Family Support Services (RFSS) is funded by the Department of Human Services

Ask the Warm Line

Resources for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care



What resources are available for my foster youth as a young adult?

Life after high school graduation can be exciting and full of possibilities, however, it can also be confusing, scary, and challenging for youth exiting foster care. Resource caregivers and their youth may feel overwhelmed by the prospect of transitioning out of the foster care system towards independent living and young adulthood. The good news is that there are resources available to provide support during this critical transition. Here are valuable resources to explore:

Aloha United Way's 2-1-1 is "a confidential, toll-free help hotline for anyone in Hawaii in need of help." Find statewide resources, information, and referrals through its extensive database. Information is available through online search, chat, text messaging, or email. Call 2-1-1 or (877) 275-6569 or visit www.auw211.org for more information.

E Makua Ana Youth Circle Program of EPIC 'Ohana provides current and former foster youth in Hawai'i with a group process as they transition out of the foster care system towards adulthood. Contact Mitchell Odo, Youth Circle Supervisor, at (808) 748-7055 or visit their website at www.epicohana.net.

The Hawaii State Higher Education Board Allowance and the Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV) programs are available to eligible youth through a federally-funded initiative to assist former foster youth to complete their educational/training goals by providing financial support beyond the age of 18 years old. For more information, talk to your DHS social worker or visit their website at www.shakatown.com.

HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative helps young people, primarily between ages 14 and 26, make successful transitions from foster care to adulthood by working with public/private partners to improve policies and practices, promote youth engagement, apply evaluation and research, and create community partnerships. Contact HYOI at (808) 748-7052 or visit www.epicohana.org/hyoi.aspx.

HI H.O.P.E.S. Match of EPIC 'Ohana provides an Individual Development Account (IDA) match savings account after youth complete financial literacy training to be applied towards their life goals, purchase of a car, education, laptop, and more. Visit their website at www.epicohana.net or call Marissa Ing at (808) 748-7914 for detailed information.

Imua Kakou, a DHS voluntary program, allows youth who turned 18 under foster custody, or youth who were adopted or placed in legal guardianship after age 16 from foster care, to receive case management, monthly living assistance payments, and health insurance coverage. To learn more about eligibility, benefits, and how to sign up, visit www.imua21.org or call 1-844-588-IMUA (4682). Online applications are available through www.shakatown.com.

The Independent Living Collaboration's Foster Hope Hawai'i app is a helpful tool that provides statewide information on resources to "support and promote the successful transition of young people from foster care to adulthood." Download the Foster Hope Hawai'i app to your smartphone.

Independent Living Program (ILP) offers statewide case management services through the State Child Welfare Services (CWS) branch to support successful transition of young people in foster care, ages 12-18, to "become informed, develop skills, and build connections to strengthen their transition to life on their own." Young people, age 18-21, who were previously in care with CWS may also receive case management services. Visit their website at www.ilpconnections.org.

Job Corps Hawaii is located in Waimanalo, Oahu, and offers voluntary tuition-free training, educational programs, and case management support to provide eligible young adults, 16-24 years old, with skills and educational opportunities towards career pathways. Youth can earn their high school diploma while learning a trade and are provided with housing, clothing/allowance, meals, basic medical care, living allowance and free transportation to/from the center. To learn more, call (800) 733-JOBS or visit <https://hawaii.jobcorps.gov>.

Kupu Hawaii offers various programs for youth transitioning to adulthood, including hands-on training and work experience in conservation, sustainability, and environmental education. For more information, call (808) 735-1221 or visit www.kupuhawaii.org.

The Victoria S. and Bradley L. Geist Foundation Scholarships are available through the Hawaii Community Foundation for youth who aged out of foster care in Hawai'i to attend college. For more information, call (808) 566-5570 and apply online at www.hawaiicomunityfoundation.org.

Yes! Hawai'i (Youth Empowerment & Success) provides youth outreach activities, events, and information for current or former foster youth, age 12-26. For information, visit their website at www.yeshawaii.org or follow them on their Facebook page.

Calendar of Events

STATEWIDE

- July 31 (Wed)** **Surrogate Parenting and Educational Advocacy: How to advocate for your child's educational success** (Webinar Training): 6:00pm-7:30pm. RSVP online at <https://tinyurl.com/FPH719> or call 540-2538 by 7/24/19.
- Sept 11 (Wed)** **Online Resource Families Support Group:** 6:00pm-8:00pm. Zoom Web-Conference. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 9/4.
- Sept 25 (Wed)** **Navigating Special Education Services in Schools: Understanding the Individualized Education Program (IEP)** (Webinar Training): 6:00pm-7:30pm. RSVP online at <https://tinyurl.com/FPH925> or call 540-2538 by 9/18/19.

O'AHU

- July 19 (Fri)** **Waianae Coast Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Maili Learning Center. RSVP to FPH at (808) 540-2538 by 7/12/19.
- August 2 (Fri)** **Windward Resource Families Support Group:** 6:00pm-8:30pm. New location: Parker United Methodist Church, Kaneohe. RSVP to FPH at (808) 540-2538 by 7/26.
- Aug 28 (Wed)** **Caregiver and Child Connection** (In-person Training): 5:30pm-8:00pm. Location TBD. RSVP to FPH at (808) 540-2538 by 8/21.
- Aug 29 (Thurs)** **Central Oahu Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Aiea United Methodist Church. RSVP to FPH at (808) 540-2538 by 8/22.
- Sept 20 (Fri)** **Waianae Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Maili Learning Center. RSVP to FPH at (808) 540-2538 by 9/13/19.

EAST HAWAII

- Aug 10 (Sat)** **Hilo Resource Families Support Group:** 12:00pm-2:30pm. Christ Lutheran Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 8/2.

WEST HAWAII

- July 22 (Mon)** **Kona Resources Families Support Group:** 5:00pm-7:30pm. Kealahou High School. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 7/15.

KAUAI

- July 11 (Thurs)** **Kauai Resource Families Talk Story Time:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Lihue United Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 7/4.

MAUI

- Aug 22 (Thurs)** **Maui Resource Families Support Group:** 5:30pm-8:00pm. Kahului Union Church. RSVP to the Warm Line at 1-866-545-0882 by 8/15.

Please check the Resource Families Support Services webpage at www.FamilyProgramsHawaii.org for updated information on future events.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Resource Caregivers are needed to assist with Co-Training Hanai sessions and recruitment activities!

Part-time Co-trainers Needed. **Resource Caregivers/Former Foster Youth on O'ahu, Kaua'i** are needed to co-train new Resource Caregivers in the HANAI curriculum. Your experience is invaluable to a new family just learning about providing foster care. Come and share what you've learned/experienced over the years with others!!! Trainings are generally held intermittently on some weekday evenings and some Saturdays. Training and compensation provided. Pay rate: \$15.00/hour.

Part-time Assessors Needed on Maui, Kauai, East Hawaii, West Hawaii to conduct interviews and complete home assessments for perspective resource families. Training and compensation provided.

Part-time Child Care Providers needed in West Hawai'i, East Hawai'i, Kaua'i, O'ahu and Maui to provide child care (i.e., during trainings), in the evenings and weekends on an occasional basis. Training and compensation provided. Pay rate: \$15.00/hour.

Part-time Recruitment Assistants needed in Kaua'i and Maui to staff various recruitment booths and share information with potential applicants about the need for additional Resource Caregivers. Training and compensation provided. Pay rate: \$15.00/hour.

HUI HO'OMALU ~ A Program of Partners in Development Foundation

See www.pidfoundation.org/about/careers for more details and job descriptions. Email resume & application w/cover letter to: HR@pidfoundation.org or fax to 440-6619

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The concept for the Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was created by the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a means to support the resource family community. Hui Ho'omalua facilitates this committee comprised of adoptive parents, resource caregivers and various community agencies, all dedicated to providing services and support to Hawai'i's keiki and the resource families who care for them. The purpose of the RAC is to identify ongoing needs, facilitate communication, share resources, provide information through a statewide calendar of events and a quarterly newsletter and report on local projects and other topics of interest to benefit Hawai'i's resource families.

This committee, the newsletter and many of the represented agencies are supported and funded by Department of Human Services contracts.

RAC Committee Members:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalua

Department of Human Services

EPIC, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing

Family Court

Family Programs Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalua & It Takes An 'Ohana

Resource Caregivers

Adoptive Parents

Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition

Partners in Development Foundation—Hui Ho'omalua