



Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland & Macomb County

5 Sensory-Based Paths to Resilience

Trauma is not just an experience stored in our memories. It is a story our bodies remember on a much deeper level.

If you've ever found yourself flinching at a sudden sound, feeling your heart race in an uncomfortable situation, or struggling to find words when emotions overwhelm you, you've experienced the way trauma and toxic stress can live in the body. Trauma is not just an event—it's a body experience. It is stored in our muscles, in our breath, in the way our nervous system learns to anticipate danger. And just as trauma is experienced through the body, healing must also happen at a sensory level.

As we all navigate our own healing journeys and support others along their pathway to resilience, we must recognize that resilience is not just about *enduring hardship*, it's about the capacity to recover, to grow, and to reconnect. Healing environments are not built solely through logic and language; they are built through experiences that restore safety, belonging, and hope. The Circle of Courage philosophy reminds us that true resilience comes when we foster Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity—protective factors that help children and adults alike rewire their nervous systems for healing and connection.

So how do we move toward healing today, in small but meaningful ways? Here are five simple, sensory-based practices that anyone... yes, even you and me, can start using right now to begin healing from trauma and toxic stress:

1. Grounding through the Senses

When we feel overwhelmed, our nervous system needs an anchor. Try this:

- Name **five things** you can see.
- Touch **four objects** around you.
- Listen for **three different sounds** in your environment.
- Identify **two smells** nearby.
- Take **one deep breath** and notice how it feels in your body.

This simple exercise signals safety to the brain, helping shift us from fight-or-flight into a regulated state where healing can happen.

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Children's
Services

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313-530-9746

Or visit our website at
PARC-orchards.org



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2. Rhythmic Movement for Nervous System Regulation

Our bodies crave rhythm—walking, rocking, drumming, or even gentle swaying can help regulate our nervous system. This is why activities like dancing, playing music, or simply tapping our feet to a steady beat can be so soothing. Movement is the language of the body, and when we engage in rhythmic activities, we tell our nervous system: *You are safe. You are here.*

3. The Power of Deep Pressure and Proprioception

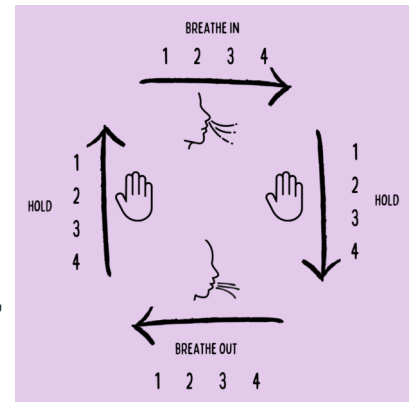
Ever noticed how a firm hug, a weighted blanket, or squeezing a stress ball can help you feel more grounded? Deep pressure input activates our parasympathetic nervous system, creating a calming effect. Try wrapping yourself in a blanket, pressing your hands together, or gently squeezing your arms. These small actions remind the body that it is held, safe, and supported.

4. Breathwork to Reset the Nervous System

Breathing is a built-in tool for healing, yet stress often shortens and shallows our breath. A simple way to shift out of survival mode is *box breathing*:

- Inhale for **four seconds**
- Hold for **four seconds**
- Exhale for **four seconds**
- Hold for **four seconds**

Repeating this for even a minute can slow the heart rate, relax the muscles, and restore a sense of balance.



5. Engaging in Safe, Nurturing Connection

The vagus nerve, which plays a key role in our ability to feel calm and connected, is activated through social engagement. Simple, joyful interactions—laughter, eye contact, kind words, or even petting an animal—can rewire the brain to associate connection with safety. When we reach out to others, we build a bridge between trauma and healing.

Healing as a Journey, Not a Destination

Healing does not happen overnight, and it does not happen alone. It happens in moments of **intentional connection, safety, and regulation**. By engaging in these simple sensory practices, we create new experiences for our nervous system, ones that tell us: *You are safe. You are strong. You are capable of healing.*

For those working with youth who have experienced trauma, remember that **healing environments begin with us**. When we care for our own nervous system, we create a ripple effect of calm, safety, and resilience for the children in our lives. The work we do today lays the foundation for a future where all can thrive.

So today, take a deep breath. Feel your feet on the ground. And know that healing, yours, mine, ours, begins right here, in the body, one moment at a time.

**Information expanded from: Starr Commonwealth - Erica Ilcyn*

PARC in the Community

PARC continues to hold the Macomb and Southfield parent supports group on a monthly basis.



Hayley Cason Grobbel joined us in January for a training to help us improve parent advocacy skills. Hayley is a parent mentor that works for Michigan Alliance for Families. While parents were learning their rights, responsibilities, how to resolve disputes, and ways to use clear communication, the children were having a great time learning a new group game.

In February, the Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Office staff joined us for a medical subsidy training. Parents found the training so informative they didn't want it to end and asked to stay a little later! The children had

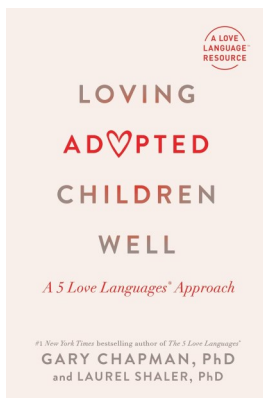
a great time learning another new group game and a few children even brought their own games and ideas to share.

In March, families attended a cookie decorating class, where they learned some new decorating techniques and bonded over delicious cookies!

PARC has several things in the works for the upcoming months, be sure to keep an eye out. As always, if you have any ideas or suggestions, please feel free to reach out!



Suggested Read



Loving Adopted Children Well: A 5 Love Languages Approach

Author: Gary Chapman, Laurel Shaler

Adoption brings unique challenges. Love and bonding don't always come naturally. There can be emotional distress, frustration, and disappointment. In *Loving Adopted Children Well*, Dr. Gary Chapman along with professor and mom of adopted kids Dr. Laurel Shaler share how The 5 Love Languages® provide concrete steps to infusing love, hope, and attachment in your family.

In addition to the beauty and healing you'll discover in the chapters on the love languages—Service, Gifts, Physical Touch, Quality Time, and Words of Affirmation—the authors provide essential chapters on subjects such as:

- When You Don't "Feel the Love"
- Getting Spouses on the Same Page
- Help for Single Parents
- Stopping Sibling Rivalry
- Support, Why it's Needed and Where to Find It . . . and more.

With empathy for adoptive parents, Chapman and Shaler provide an honest and invaluable resource of wisdom, joy, and healing. Apply the lessons from *Loving Adopted Children Well*, and you will see love grow and flourish in your home.

Valuable Resources

Help is 3 Numbers Away



211 maintains a comprehensive database of community resources and provides information and referrals for essential needs like:

- Food
- Housing and Shelter
- Utility Assistance
- Healthcare Services
- Government Services

211 also can connect people with information and referrals for:

- Transportation
- Legal Services
- Counseling and Support Groups
- Disaster Aftercare
- Everything Else

988 provides crisis support for:

- Thoughts of Suicide
- Mental Health Crisis
- Substance Use Crisis
- Emotional Distress

911 provides first responder dispatch for:

- Medical Emergency
- Fire
- Reporting a Crime
- Disaster Response
- Life Threatening Situation



Upcoming Meetings, Trainings & Events

ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 500, Southfield, MI 48075

Facilitator: Betsy Thomas



MACOMB COUNTY PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

When: Last Wednesday of the month (no meeting in January) **Time:** 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Where: New Life Presbyterian Church -11300 19 Mile Rd., Sterling Heights, MI 48314



PARENT CONFERENCE: ROOTS & WINGS

When: Saturday, May 3, 2025 **Time:** 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 601, Southfield, MI 48075

Facilitator: Rebecca Rozema

Topic: Roots & Wings - Supporting Identity and Birth Family Connections



★ Please keep an eye out for updates via email and social media! Connect with PARC at:

Website: parc-orchards.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OCSPostAdoptionResourceCenter

Email: parcocs@orchards.org