

# THE MEGAPHONE!

## [why **ATTACHMENT** matters]

Promoting the voices of Manitoba's children & youth

2013

**i am ... the general public**

Issue 03

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### What is *Attachment*?

Some Manitoba children are struggling to become healthy adults. During the critical years when it is important to develop their abilities, values, priorities, and circles of influence and support, some children encounter obstacles and are not given the tools they need to climb them. One of the most significant challenges a child can face is not knowing the experience of a warm and loving adult who is consistently available to them, and who is able to provide them with a *healthy balance of warmth and supervision*.

Ample research exists on the positive impact of early, ongoing exposure to healthy adults in the life of a child. Additionally, research is also clear that children who do not experience consistent and healthy attachment to healthy caretakers in early life commonly demonstrate myriad challenges as they grow and develop towards adulthood. Healthy attachment provides the foundation for a robust self-identity.

Attachment theory centres on the idea that **in order for an individual to develop normally in the areas of social and emotional health, the individual must form a healthy relationship with at least one primary caregiver**. Children who are denied the conditions in which they can attach in a healthy way to at least one healthy caregiver, are at elevated risk for significant problems as they move into their adolescence.

One of the most significant **CHALLENGES** a child can face is **not knowing** the experience of a warm and *loving* adult who is **CONSISTENTLY** available to them

### Have you considered being a **FOSTER PARENT?**

The primary responsibility for children's safety and healthy development rests squarely with their parents. When that security fails, the secondary line of defense might be the child's extended family or community. But for some Manitoban children, neither of these two options offer sufficient opportunity for the child to be protected and this is when child welfare agencies are required to intervene. It is at this critical juncture that you can get involved. If you are able to provide a stable, consistent and loving home environment for a child or youth, perhaps fostering is for you. For more information on the process of becoming a foster parent contact the **Manitoba Foster Family Network** by visiting their website [www.mffn.ca](http://www.mffn.ca)

<sup>1</sup> Image Source: [http://langcom.nu.ca/sites/langcom.nu.ca/files/mother\\_child%20sm.jpg](http://langcom.nu.ca/sites/langcom.nu.ca/files/mother_child%20sm.jpg)



**OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE**

100- 346 Portage Avenue. Winnipeg, MB. R3C 0C3. (204) 988-7440. Toll Free: 1-800-263-7146

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# Fostering RESILIENCE

Researchers agree that youth who have experienced abuse or neglect as kids “are generally **resilient** and can lead productive and fulfilling lives, provided they are surrounded by supportive leaders who supply intrinsically meaningful ways to develop personal strength and positive values”<sup>2</sup>

## RE-SIL-IENCE:

1. achieving positive life outcomes in spite of risk
2. the ability to rebound from adversity with greater strength to meet future challenges<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes we cry, but  
we still have to try  
Sometimes we have to  
believe and hope for  
the better

*Excerpt from a poem by a youth in care*

## TRAUMA

Emerging research continues to draw close links between the significance of childhood trauma and levels of risk to the children experiencing or witnessing that trauma. One large-scale study examined social health outcomes and adverse childhood experiences and found that **trauma has the ability to alter the physiological development of the child’s brain**.<sup>4</sup> The researchers noted that there were also cumulative effects of the trauma and that brain development

can be negatively impacted because of the repeated release of stress hormones associated with traumatic experiences. The authors warned that “...abuse and neglect in childhood were shown to be associated with poor self-esteem, conflicted relationships, and severe life events in adulthood, in turn, acting as risk factors for depression and other adverse health consequences.”<sup>4</sup>

If a child’s experience of trauma and abuse are not validated the older child may be blamed for his or her extreme behaviours, which are predictable outcomes of such trauma and abuse. However, when it is obvious the younger child is not choosing their environments, it seems easier to see the wounded, traumatized child beneath the extreme behaviours. It’s important to recognize that the **challenges observed in some children in their adolescence are rooted deeply in their earliest experiences.**

*Brain development* can be negatively impacted because of the repeated release of stress hormones associated with **TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES.**

“There are two lasting bequests we can give our children:  
one is roots, the other is wings.” - Hodding Carter

<sup>2</sup> Preston, J. P., Car-Stewart, S., & Northwest, C. (2009). Aboriginal youth gangs: Preventative approaches. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 4(2), pp. 152-160.

<sup>3</sup> Dube, S. R., Felitti, V. J., Dong, M., Giles, W. H., & Anda, R. F. (2003). The impact of adverse childhood experiences on health problems: Evidence from four birth cohorts dating back to 1900. *Preventative Medicine*, 37, 268-277.



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