

Parenting. Adoption. And Adoptive Parenting.

You must jump OUT of the Trauma Tornado

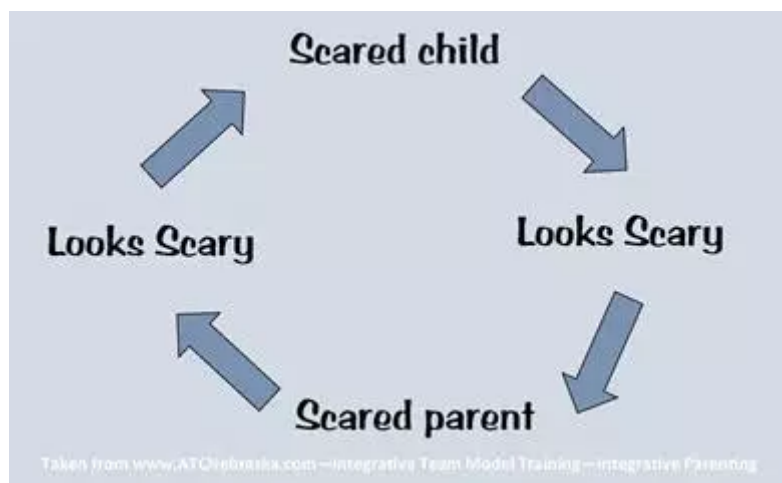
March 18, 2013



If you live with a child who has experienced trauma, you know exactly what I mean by the Trauma Tornado. The trauma tornado starts with the traumatized child- with a child who is overwhelmed, scared, confused, and fearful of death. And the child quickly sucks in everyone in his path. The trauma tornado might have started before your child was born. The trauma tornado may have started WHEN your child was born, if her birth was traumatic or overwhelming. The trauma tornado may have started before your child came to live with you. It may have been set on its course when your child lost her mother in

an infant adoption. Or when your child spent months in an orphanage in another country. Or when your child spent the first three years of her life with a mother or father who simply just could not take care of her- due to domestic violence, substance abuse, or any other myriad of reasons. Something set the trauma tornado on its path...and you were in the way!

It is impossible not to get sucked into the trauma tornado. When you live with a child whose entire inner world is chaos due to the impact of trauma, that child will create chaos on his outer world. You see, our inner and outer world's like to match. Some parents and children spend years and years in this horrific cycle of the trauma tornado. My mentors at the Attachment & Trauma Center of Nebraska (<http://www.ATCNebraska.com>) came up with a brilliant and succinct way to describe this cycle: scared child looks scary to the parents, who feel scared and act in a way that scares the child.



What on earth does that even mean? I said it was brilliant and succinct right?



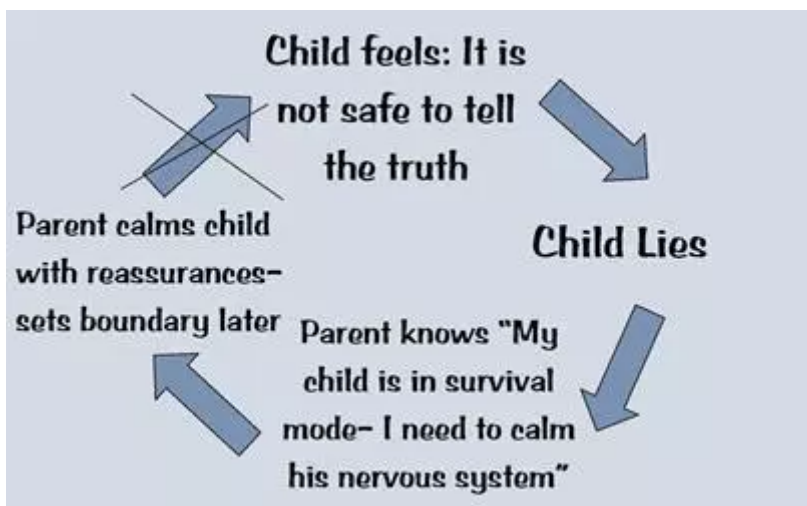
When children act-out, there is fear driving the behavior. Lying child? "It's not safe to tell the truth." Stealing child? "I cannot trust others to meet my needs." Physically Aggressive Child? "My life is in danger." These behaviors are scary to parents who start to feel their own scared. "I'm raising a pathological liar." "My child is a juvenile delinquent destined to a life of crime." "My child is going to hurt me."

Just like when scared children don't act very nicely, scared parents don't act very nicely, either.

Believe me, I've been there. And I don't even have a child who has experienced severe trauma. But I *have had* the "I am raising an ax-murderer!" feeling and I can promise you, my behavior that followed was not pretty.

This is the trauma tornado. And like all negative cycles, it **MUST** be broken in order for healing and change to begin. Unfortunately, it's simply impossible to ask the traumatized child to hop out of this tornado. As parents, we must jump out first.

What does jumping out look like? We have to identify our fears and replace them with true thoughts.



I wish I could tell you that you will only have to do this once and the cycle will magically be over! Unfortunately, the trauma tornado is strong and will need you to jump out over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and well.....you get it. You already know that this tornado is exhausting.