

Parenting Kids From Hard Places

Who are kids from hard places? They have a history of:

- ◇ Adoption
- ◇ Foster Care
- ◇ Prenatal substance exposure or stress
- ◇ NICU stay
- ◇ Early Hospitalizations
- ◇ Abuse
- ◇ Neglect
- ◇ Significant Household Difficulties
(Parent Mental Health Disorder/
Substance Use, Domestic Violence,
Caregiver Loss, etc.)
- ◇ Lack of Safety in their Environment
(Homelessness, Refugees, War, etc.)

How is parenting a child with a difficult early life different?

They may be more likely to:

- ◇ Have a sensitive fight or flight response
- ◇ Freeze up or slow down under pressure
- ◇ Have sensory differences
- ◇ Seem particular, controlling, or anxious
- ◇ Have difficulty transitioning or doing new things
- ◇ Do impulsive things
- ◇ Have trouble planning or thinking about consequences
- ◇ Be hypervigilant, which can look like inattention or hyperactivity

Resources

1. Talk to your Medical Provider or Therapist about what type of behavioral therapy may be most helpful. These should usually involve the parent and not be with the child alone, although there may be exceptions.
2. Occupational Therapy can sometimes help children learn to self-regulate and help parents to work with their sensory differences. Sensory issues tend to get easier as they get older, but they can cause significant behavior difficulties. The goal of therapy would not be to “heal” the differences, but to help parents and kids learn to work with them.
3. empoweredtoconnect.org—check out their podcast and resource page
4. YouTube—search “Children From Hard Places” and you’ll find some great short videos with parenting advice and educational information. Other good search terms are “Karyn Purvis” “Lisa Qualls” and “Tina Payne Bryson”
5. The Halo Project— haloprojectokc.com—This is a therapy center in Edmond, OK who has done some great work with kids from hard places. They have a free 10 week program to work with both kids and teens. They have also had some groups meeting via Zoom and other opportunities come up regularly, so they are worth checking out, even if you don’t live near.

Resources for Common Co-occurring Diagnoses

- ◇ Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder - CHADD.org
- ◇ Autism Spectrum Disorder - autismspeaks.org, autismcenterok.org, okautism.org, autismoklahoma.org, okddc.ok.gov, autismfoundationok.org
- ◇ Intellectual Disability - TheArc.org, okddc.ok.gov
- ◇ Learning Disability - LDAAmerica.org, oklahomaparentscenter.org
- ◇ Anxiety/Depression - <https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Mental-Health-Education/NAMI-Basics>

Family Supports in OK - Sooner SUCCESS - soonersuccess.ouhsc.edu
- Oklahoma Family Network - oklahomafamilynetwork.org
- Oklahoma Parents Center - oklahomaparentscenter.org