



# TAProot

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Together as Adoptive Parents Inc. is a non-profit adoption support group composed of adoptive families, fost-adopt, adoptees, adoption professionals and other interested in adoption.

TAPROOT is a quarterly publication of Together as Adoptive Parents Inc.  
 478 Moyers Road  
 Harleysville, PA 19438-2302  
 (215) 256-0669

We urge you to send us any information that you feel may be of interest to our readers.

## OUR MISSION

To provide a support network among parents in the greater Philadelphia area, to disseminate available services and information to members and to implement programs and activities which promote the well being of adoptive families.

Have any comments, suggestions or gripes?  
 E-mail us at  
**taplink@hotmail.com**  
 or call us at  
**(215) 256-0669**

## MEMBERSHIPS

North American Council on Adoptable Children  
 Statewide Adoption Network  
 United Way

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

We had a great turn out for TAP's summer picnic. There were a lot of new faces. We all spent the day eating, laughing, talking, and chasing kids. I not only enjoyed the day with you guys, but I also enjoyed the few families that stayed around when everyone had gone. We took time to talk, talk from the heart, about our children, about our families. I love being part of TAP; the Lord has truly given me my hearts desire.

TAP has received a grant from the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to continue to print and mail out updates to our Resource Directory. It is a one-year grant beginning October 2001. Our plan is to send out the first update under this grant in January, 2002.

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. You are invited to celebrate it with TAP and the Temple Owls Football Team. The cost is free! See inside for more details.

Did you know that the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) now have a toll free telephone number; (866) 622.2249

*TAP has received another award for its services to children. What makes this award most precious is that it was given based on "callers' feedback". This says to me that we are helping families. Families are using our web site [www.taplink.org](http://www.taplink.org), calling our help line, and finding the help they need. The "Reaching Out Award (for improved child health in Pennsylvania) was given by The Pennsylvania Department of Health, Special Kids Network.*

Have a happy and safe holiday!

See you at the Christmas party.

Phyllis

## **BUILDING FOUNDATIONS – SHARING THE FACTS**

**Adopted children between the ages of 9 and 12 are just beginning to come to a fuller understanding of the concept of adoption and what it means to them. Talking to youngsters who may be just beginning a grieving process for their “lost” family is an essential task for adoptive parents. In talking to children about their adoption, it is of the utmost importance to give them the facts. Here’s why.**

### **FACTS DISPEL MAGICAL THINKING**

Some children develop the perception that they are responsible for what happened to them. They believe that if one event happened after another event, the first event caused the second. If a child cried and dad hit mom, the child may feel responsible. Children can develop a deep sense of guilt and shame if they interpret their life circumstances to be their fault.

### **FACTS INTERRUPT UNREALISTIC FANTASIES**

Without knowledge of the circumstances surrounding his or her adoption, a child can develop unrealistic fantasies involving birthparents, former foster parents, or his or her new adoptive family.

**Good Mom/Bad Mom fantasies:** Unable to deal with the negative emotions about his or her birthmother, a child may convince him-or herself that the birthmother is the kind, giving mother and the foster mother or adoptive mother is the mean, abusive, scary mother.

**Good Memories Turn Bad fantasies:** All children who must relinquish their first love (a birthmother or foster mother) risk a particular problem with fantasy life. In memory, they turn an attachment that was good into one that was bad. A happy memory of a loving foster parent can be seared as the child is forced to break that attachment during the move to the adoptive home. The pain of separation and loss creates the fantasy that the loving person was mean and rejecting.

### **FACTS HELP SORT OUT LOYALTIES**

If communication about adoption is not part of the adoptive family life, a child can develop confusion and conflict when emotions about birthparents remain and new emotions regarding the adoptive family emerge. A youngster whose family did not discuss any adoption related issues one day blurted out to his adoptive parents, “What do I do about you? I still love my birthmom and birthdad. What am I supposed to do about how I feel about you?” This family needed to share the facts about their son’s adoption and assure him that it is possible to love more than one set of parents.

### **FACTS EASE IDENTITY CONFUSION**

Establishing identity is not something that happens only during a certain period in a child’s life. According to Joyce Maguire Pavo, Ph.D., adoption therapist and author, “Identity issues are an ongoing. Adoptees, especially those who have little to no information about where they came from, are aware that they don’t have the genetic information they need to really sort out their identity. They base the sorting they do on their adoptive family-but that’s not necessarily where they get their abilities, interests, and personality traits.

### **FACTS CALM FEARS AND AID ACCEPTANCE OF UNANSWERED QUESTIONS**

Having little or no knowledge about one’s genetic background and/or medical history can add to a sense of disconnectedness. One adoptee summed her feelings like this: “Where did I get my red hair? What nationality am I? What kind of body am I growing into? What talents or special skills are in my family line? What hidden illnesses may show up in my life? These questions follow me as I move into adulthood. I feel like I am walking around with gaps and holes in my life that I cannot fill without answers.”

Giving adopted children the facts about their history is important for emotional and psychological health and development. As parents deal with their 9 to 12 year old, the following tips may be helpful.

1. Don’t force your child to discuss issues, but let him or her know you are comfortable and available when he or she is ready.
2. Let your child know he or she can love both sets of parents.
3. Let your child know that you are not threatened or angry about birth family questions.

# THE TWO- SIDED HEART

Mom:

Remember how you said yesterday that I have probably hated you more than I have ever hated anyone, and I said, yea, but I have also loved you more than I have ever loved anyone? Well, I decided to write about it. I think it is true for every kid who was or is unattached, but finally got better. I hope you understand and I hope you like it.

Love, Starla

*I hated you more than I ever hated anyone,  
I loved you more than I ever loved anyone*

*I mistrusted you more than I ever mistrusted anyone,  
I trusted you more than I have trusted anyone.*

*You were in my scariest nightmares,  
You were in my best dreams.*

*You were my worst enemy,  
You were my best friend.*

*I wanted to kill you more than I ever wanted to kill anyone,  
I wanted to protect you more than I ever wanted to protect anyone.*

*I wanted to make you more mad than I ever wanted to make anyone,  
I wanted to please you more than I ever wanted to please anyone.*

*You were my destroyer,  
You were my architect.*

*You were my friend.  
Now you are my mother and without you,  
I would be nothing.*

Source unknown.

## **LOOKING FOR A JOB!**

### **Adoption Researcher**

**Conduct research for adoption-related community resources.**

**Locate resources via the Internet, internal database,  
and telephone outreach.**

**Create and maintain data for future research requests.**

**Document research processes and results.**

**BA/BS preferred**

**3+ years experience in adoption/issues facing adoption.**

**Excellent computer experience, including Internet.**

**Proven communication/organization skills.**

**Preferred candidates, email your resume and salary history/requirements to:**

**careers@ceridian.com**

**Ceridian**

**HQE03D, KGS**

**3311 E. Old Shakopee Rd**

**Minneapolis, MN 55425**

**(job is in Plymouth Meeting, PA)**

It's always nice to receive letters here at TAP. Ones like this make us realize why we do this! Keep the mail coming.

Dear Phyllis,

For many years we have received TAPROOT! I have always paged through it with great interest. I find the articles you include and the information you pass along to be VERY valuable. This newsletter arrived after an unusually difficult few weeks with one of our adopted sons. The family had been in complete upheaval for two weeks, and my husband and I had little energy to continue on. As things began to look a little better, our energy grew stronger. The mood around the house is picking up and we are pushing forward.

After reading the October newsletter (as with all TAPROOT's). I walked away from it with a great feeling about our decision to adopt, not just once (an infant boy), but twice (a seven year old boy). Brian Keck's article was so inspirational – our son is going to take it in to his reading class and read it out loud. Robert Nasef's article talked so eloquently about an issue that so many make quick judgments about.

And lastly the poem by Laurie Elliott "Adoption may be our dream, our nightmare, or both". Thank you Phyllis for all of your time and effort that you put into this great publication. I really appreciate it!!! I wish I had more time to contribute to your efforts. For now, the family is first. Please keep me on your mailing list. Sharon

## DONATE TO TAP THROUGH UNITED WAY

Did you know that you could donate to TAP through United Way? Your United Way contribution to Together as Adoptive Parents, Inc.. ensures that our many worthwhile services to adoptive and foster families continue.



It's easy to designate your United Way contributions to Together as Adoptive Parents, Inc. Here's how:

1. Request a Donor Option Card.
2. Print on the card; Together as Adoptive Parents, 478 Moyers Rd Harleysville, PA 19438-2302
3. TAP's United Way I.D. code is **10860**

# Opt to Adopt

**Teairra**  
(dob 8/29/88)

Teairra is a twelve-year old, African American young lady with a terrific smile. She enjoys shopping at the mall and playing with her baby dolls. She attends church on a regular basis and participates in youth group activities. She is talkative and energetic. Teairra often helps to collect eggs in the henhouse owned by her current foster parents. She rides her bike and loves to jump on her foster family's trampoline as well.

Teairra is diagnosed with Conduct Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Adjustment Disorder. She takes medication to control these disorders as well as Petit Mal Epilepsy. She has very infrequent seizures. Teairra has suffered many losses in her life and she is described as an angry child; however, she has bonded extremely well with her foster mother. At times, Teairra can be destructive and she must be redirected often. She attends school in an emotional support life skills program and is functioning below grade level. She has therapeutic support services after school during which she interacts well with her therapeutic caseworker. Teairra can become jealous and requires quite a lot of one-on-one attention. She does well when kept very busy and she enjoys being involved in many activities.

**Robert**  
(dob 1/10/92)

Robert is a handsome, eight-year-old African American boy. He is noted by his foster parents to be a very charming boy who is compliant and helpful. Robert was recently placed in his current foster home to be with his sister, Teairra, who was placed there previously. Robert takes medication to alleviate the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. His adjustment has been noted as excellent. He has settled well into his daily routine and become an integral part of his foster family. He also loves jumping on the trampoline and staying busy. He is noted as responding well to firm commands and limit-setting. Robert attends third grade in an emotional support classroom and has done extremely well in school. His teacher has reported that Robert has been extremely compliant and accepting of discipline with the school setting. Robert's foster mother is Korean and he has become very fond of Korean food. He also likes pizza and living in the country. Robert also enjoys attending church on a regular basis.

Teairra and Robert would do best in a two-parent family that can provide them with a loving, structured environment. A family with one stay-home parent would be beneficial to this sibling group as well. Both Robert and Teairra simply want the chance to become a part of a "forever family". As the two have experienced great loss in their lives, it is expected that they will need continued therapy and support through good and bad times as they adjust to new placement. A family that is knowledgeable concerning the special education system and that is willing to advocate for their children with the school system would truly benefit Teairra and Robert.

*For more information concerning Teairra and Robert or for a videotape, please contact Elisa Esh at Common Sense Adoption Services at (717)766-6449 or at (800)445-2444.*

# Some Universal Laws For Raising Decent Teens

By Jeff Herring



A couple asks: *“We have two children who are about to enter teenage years. Their ages are 10 and 12. We have had little trouble so far and would like to keep it that way. Are there any general guidelines for parents of teenagers?”*

These parents are asking for assistance before any problems arise, wisely thinking preventively. “Raise up children in the way they should go,” according to a proverb, “and when they are old they will not depart from it.” I’d go so far as to offer them universal laws on the raising of teenagers.

Here’s a sampling of some of these universal laws.

**Law of Belonging.** The greatest need of teenagers (after music and the phone) is a strong sense of belonging. They need to feel they are a part of something bigger than themselves. If they don’t get it in a healthy place – with family, worthwhile friends, clubs, sports, youth groups, etc. – they will get it in an unhealthy place – with inappropriate friends, drugs, gangs or cults.

**Law of Hope.** Recent statistics show that the only age group in which the suicide rate is rising is adolescence. This is the direct result of a lack of hope – hope for the future, hope that things will get better.

**Law of Power.** Once you enter into a power struggle with a teen, you have already lost. Remember the closing line of the movie “War and Games”: “Interesting game..the only winning move is not to plan.

**Law of Control.** Trying to control a teen is like trying to put pants on a gorilla. It’s just going to frustrate you and really irritate the gorilla.

**Law of Management.** A management approach in raising teens put parents clearly in charge. The goal is to manage the teens eventually out of your lives, and into their own.

**Law of Voice.** In a well-functioning family, teens almost always get a voice. They just don’t always get to vote. Violate either side of this equation and you’ve got trouble.

**Law of Modeling.** If you don’t want your teen doing something, don’t do it yourself. Teens have very strong and sensitive “hypocrisy meters,” and are eager to use them.

**Law of Punishment.** Punishment often springs from anger. Punishment breeds resentment and a desire for revenge. Teens have many creative ways to retaliate.

**Law of Consequences.** Consequences teach teens about the real world. Consequences need to be reasonable, respectful, swift and strong enough to get the teen’s attention.

**Law of Structure, Part I.** Parents need to set boundaries and structure from Day One. If you don’t do this while they are young, what makes you think they will obey a curfew once they have a car?

**Law of Structure, Part II.** Child therapist Art Cleveland says: “We tend to over-structure the time of children and under-structure the time of teenagers.” Teens need boundaries and structure just as much as children do, if not more.

**Law of 20 Feet.** This law states that, at a certain age, you must walk at least 20 feet away from your teen if you are in a public place. Thirty feet is you’re in the mall.

I hope these laws get you started on managing the teen years.

# Creating Sexual Safety in Foster Care

Current estimates of sexual abuse among children entering foster care range from 75 to 85 per cent. Given this high incidence, foster care personnel as well as foster families must understand the facts of sexual abuse and the role they play in the healing process. Since sexual abuse is the ultimate betrayal of the adult-child relationship, the primary therapeutic resource available to sexually abused children is understanding, committed foster families willing to accept the challenge of these special needs children can successfully parent them and become the central ingredient of their recovery from past trauma.

Three factors must be present if foster families are to be able to successfully parent these children: (1) comprehensive training regarding the dynamics of sexual abuse, the special needs of sexually abused children, and specific parenting skills (2) complete information about the child's background and behavior, including the specifics of the sexual abuse and the child's background and behavior, including the specifics of the sexual abuse and the child's emotional and behavioral reactions to it; and (3) professional support services before, during, and after placement.

## A few words about sexual vocabulary

Although the use of the appropriate sexual vocabulary (genitals, penis, vagina, breasts, etc.) is recommended, it is important to demonstrate to the child that as an adult you are not shocked by the 'street' terms (dick, pussy, rod, butt, boobs, etc.), have heard them before, and are not intimidated by hearing these terms used. In addition, there are many children in care who have not been exposed to appropriate sexual terminology. Later and when appropriate, the parent will explain to the child that while they are not intimidated by hearing these commonly used sexual terms, and can comfortably say them too, these words are often used to show disrespect for parts of one's own and another person's body and are often said to exploit, intimidate, groom, victimize, dehumanize, and demean another.

### Creating sexual safety:

**VERBALLY ASSURE THE CHILD OF FOSTER PARENT'S DESIRE TO PROTECT HIM/HER AND THAT HE/SHE WILL NOT BE SEXUALLY VICTIMIZED IN HIS/HER NEW HOME.**

*For example:*

"We want to keep you safe from harm and sexual abuse in this home. In this home, grown-ups aren't sexual with children, children aren't sexual with grown-ups and children aren't sexual with each other. You will not be sexually or physically abused here and you will not be able to sexually abuse or hurt anyone else. This includes the dog and the cat. Everyone is safe from harm and abuse in this family -Dad and I, you, the other kids, and our family pets."

**DISCUSS THE CHILD'S NEED FOR PRIVACY AND HOW THE FAMILY WILL PROTECT THIS NEED.**

*For example:*

"Grown-ups have a right to privacy and kids have a right to privacy, too. You have private areas on your body-like your genitals and breasts (vagina, penis, etc.)-and no one has the right to touch those parts or put their hands on you or in your pants except you. If anyone does that, it is your responsibility to tell me." "There are also places in the house where you can have privacy-your bedroom, and the bathroom-and when you are in your bedroom with the door closed, people have to knock first to get permission to come in. And if they come in, the bedroom door is to remain open. If you are in the bathroom peeing or pooping or taking a bath, the door will be closed so you can do that in private and we won't come in without your permission. And if you see a closed door, you can't open it without knocking first and asking permission to open the door."

**CLEARLY STATE, AS APPROPRIATE, WHEN AND WHERE VARIOUS FAMILY MEMBERS MEET THEIR OWN SEXUAL NEEDS, ESPECIALLY IF THERE ARE OTHER CHILDREN IN THE HOME.**

*For example:*

"The only members of this family who have sex with each other are Mom and Dad. We do this in private, in our bedroom and always with the door closed. The thought of having sex with a child is grossly offensive to me and to Mom. Mom and I are a tight sexual unit and there is nothing you can do to involve us sexually with you or any other children in our home."

"If Julie or Ted (other children in the home) want to touch (including excessive scratching) in their own private parts, they do that in private, alone in their own bedrooms, with the door closed. Children do not touch their private parts in public areas of our home, like the living room, den, dining room, etc."

**RECOGNIZE THAT THE CHILD MAY HAVE INITIAL DIFFICULTY IN ACCEPTING THAT HE/SHE IS SAFE.**

*For example:*

"You probably don't believe all this, and figure you have to find out on your own if what I say is true. For example, if you try to kiss me on the mouth and lick my face, I will tell you to stop, that I don't want you to kiss me that way. And if you touch me in my private areas, I will take your hand away and remind you that in this family, children and adults aren't sexual with each other."

## Rules for sexual safety:

Some suggested rules to include in a family sexual safety plan. These would be put in writing and signed by everyone:

*I understand that*

*Before I go into another person's bedroom, I must get permission first.*

*2. If no one is home to give me permission to enter their room, I am not to go I into another's bedroom. Even if I have permission to enter another's room, I will not go through their things. I will not open someone else's mail.*

*When visiting another person's bedroom, the door must be open.*

*If my foster parent(s) talk with me in my bedroom, the door must be open.*

*Undressing is allowed only in my bedroom and in the bathroom with the door closed.*

*I will dress appropriately around the house. I will always wear a robe or a t-shirt over my underclothes. I will not walk around with just underclothes or shorts without a t-shirt.*

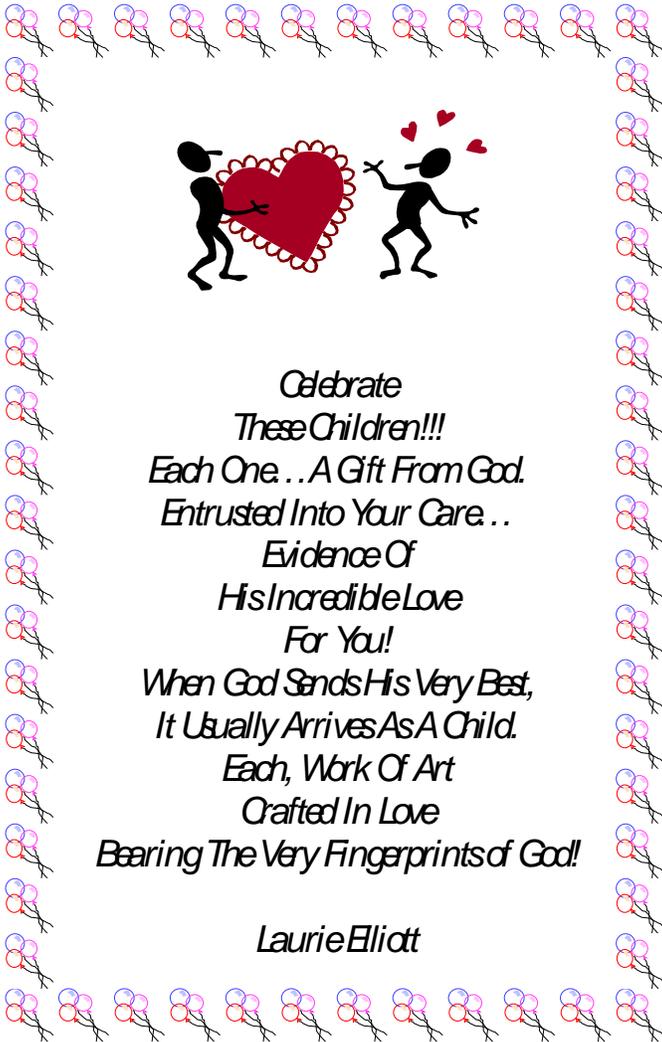
*Everyone sleeps in his/her own bed.*

*Children do not sleep in the same bedroom with the foster parents, unless younger than one year old. Sleeping arrangements while traveling will be discussed with the caseworker prior to the trip.*

*If the bathroom door is closed, there is to be only one person in the bathroom at a time. Specific exceptions to this item are as follows: \_\_\_\_\_*

*There will be no sexual play and sexual touching that includes, playing doctor, nurse, or things like that.*

From presentation May 14, 2001-Kailua, HI, Wayne Duehn, PhD, Profession of Social Work, University of Texas, Arlington



## Upcoming Conferences

### **REJOICE, Inc.**

2002 Annual African American Foster Care and Adoption Summit

February 15-17, 2002

Crown Plaza Harrisburg

"Breaking The Cycle: Let the Healing Begin"

For more information call REJOICE at (717) 221.0722

### **Pennsylvania Adoption Conference**

July 10-12, 2002

Lancaster Host, Lancaster, PA

"Listening to the Children"

For more information call SWAN at 800.585.SWAN

### **North American Council on Adoptable Children**

August 1-4, 2002

Hyatt Regency O'Hare

Chicago, Illinois

For more information call NACAC at 651.644.3036



## Casey Family Programs and Orphan Foundation of America



Each year, more than 25,000 youth attempt to make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency as they reach age 18. Only half finish high school, and about 11% go on to college or vocational education much lower rates than national averages.

Through a new post-secondary education scholarship program, The Casey Family Programs will provide up to **\$10,000** per year to under the age of 25 who have spent at least 12 months in foster care and were not subsequently adopted.

The awards will be renewable each year, based on satisfactory progress and financial need. The Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) will administer the programs, and the recipients will also receive ongoing support through OFA's E-Mentor Program. OFA scholarship coordinators will match each student with a trained, screened adult who will interact with the student via e-mail, letters, and phone calls on a weekly basis to address specific issues faced by young people without parental support, including money management and life skills.

Casey Family Programs, begun in 1966 by UPS founder Jim Casey, supports foster children, birth families, and foster parents with direct services. OFA, a national nonprofit organization established in 1981 by a former foster youth, began awarding post-secondary scholarships to foster youth in 1991.

To date, OFA has awarded over \$1.3 million to students in 46 states, according to Eileen McCaffrey, OFA's executive director. For more information on this and other OFA scholarships programs, visit [www.orphan.org/casey.html](http://www.orphan.org/casey.html) or call 800.950.4673.

### Adoption Books



#### **Dasher Gets Adopted: A Story of Love, Trust, and Family**

*By Julie Hatley; illustrated by Shay Jones. 2001*

Dasher is a greyhound who lives at a dog-racing track until he is adopted by Georgia, John, and their son, Bobby. The author uses Dasher's adoption to teach children about the worries, fears, and surprises they might experience with a new adoptive family, and the trust and comfort that grows over time. Order from Shine Publication; call 425.254.0030 or visit [www.shinepublications.com](http://www.shinepublications.com).

#### **Jin Woo**

*By Eve Bunting; illustrated by Chris Soentpiet, 2001.*

This vivid and compelling book tells the story of David, an only child, as he struggles with his conflicted feelings over the arrival of a new brother, Jin Woo, from Korea. When David reads a letter "written" by Jin Woo, he becomes aware of Jin Woo's own hopes and fears and his feelings begin to change about becoming an older brother. To order this publication, visit [www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com](http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com)

#### **Raising Children Who Refuse to be Raised**

*By Dave Ziegler, 2000.*

This book provides an accessible and practical resource for adoptive and foster parents who are struggling to raise children who have multiple problems. The author uses real-life examples to illustrate issues, such as attachment problems and acting out, while giving tools and suggesting how to deal with specific situations. Obtain a copy from Acacia Publishing Inc. by calling 866.265.4553.

### The Oyster

There once was an oyster  
Whose story I tell,  
Who found that some sand  
Had got into his shell.

It was only a grain,  
But it gave him great pain.  
For oysters have feelings,  
Although they're so plain.

Now, did he berate  
The harsh workings of fate  
That had brought him  
To such a deplorable state?

Did he curse at the government,  
Cry for election,  
And claim that these should  
Have given him protection?

"No," he said to himself  
As he lay on a shell,  
Since I cannot remove it,  
I shall try to improve it.

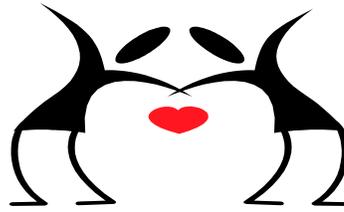
Now they ears have dived around,  
As they ears always do  
And he came to his ultimate  
Destiny – stew.

And the small grain of sand  
That had bothered him so  
Was a beautiful pearl  
All richly aglow.

Now the tale has a moral,  
For isn't it grand  
What an oyster can do  
With a morsel of sand?

What couldn't we do  
If we'd only begin  
With some of the things  
That get under our skin.

(Taken from an internet message)



Come away from your hectic world . . .

### Oasis

A marriage enrichment weekend for special needs adoptive parents

May 17 – 19, 2002

Black Rock Retreat Center

Quarryville, PA

Cosponsored by

Bethany Christian Services

And

Attach of Eastern PA

For more information call Elaine MacQueen

215.628.0202, ext. 228

### And now the manual you have been waiting for!

The long awaited **“Following Adoption: Strengthening Adoption Families Through Groups for Parents, Teens and Children”** manual is finally available on our web site [www.taplink.org](http://www.taplink.org). (check the Resource Lookup button)

This manual is a must for professional and support group leaders. It is full of group activities for parents, teens and children.

I must warn you before you jump onto our web site to download a copy and you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader installed before you can use it. It is over 170 pages long and will take 10 to 30 minutes to download on a dial up line. We are in the process of securing more funding for the web, when we do we will republish this manual so that you will be able to download it a section at a time.



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