



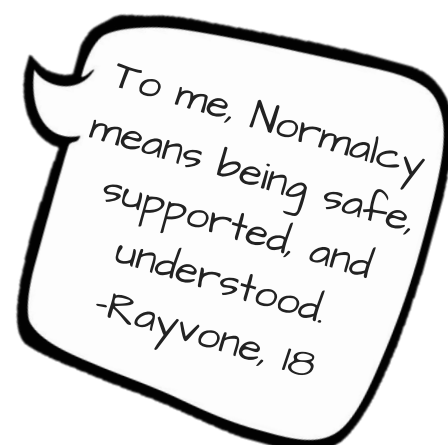
SUPPORTING NORMALCY

A Workbook for
Teenagers in Out-of-
Home Care & Their
Supportive Adults

Because everyone deserves the
opportunity to thrive.

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Supporting Normalcy: A workbook for teenagers in out-of-home care and their supportive adults was created by the Normalcy Committee of the New England Youth Coalition.

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CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT

Introduction

What are we talking about anyway?

Proudly promoting participation in age-appropriate activities and experiences that encourage healthy development and well-being among youth involved in foster care.

Why we believe in Normalcy

Because it's hard to be an adult unless you have a chance to be a kid.

Disclaimer!

The right to Normalcy exists within the context of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard set in your state. This means that parents and caregivers must make careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of the young person in their care.

Meet the authors of this workbook

This workbook has been brought to you by the youth advocates of the New England Youth Coalition (NEYC). NEYC is a dedicated group of young people with the shared experience of having grown up in their state's foster care system. We are working to better the quality of life for youth involved in the foster care system through education, advocacy, and direct involvement in the improvement of policy and practice in all six New England states.

To learn more, please visit us online at neyouthcoalition.org





Normalcy and

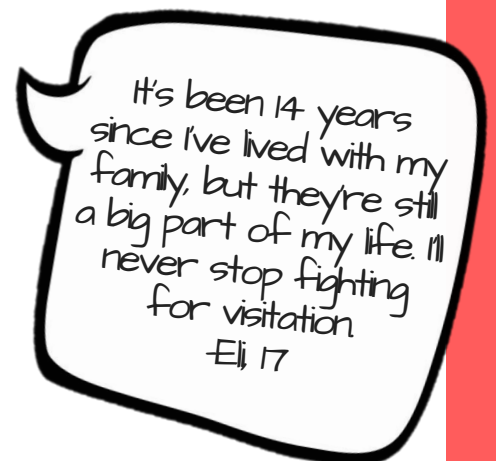
Families

There is nothing “normal” about being removed from the home of your biological parents, but Normalcy can be supported by making sure you can have a relationship with your parents, siblings, and anyone else you identify as part of your family. The Normalcy Bill of Rights says that whenever possible and safe, you should be able to have a relationship with your family and siblings, because it is important to your well-being.

Here are some ways adults can support Normalcy and Families:

- Allow contact between a youth and their biological family at the time of placements, which may include having the biological family participate in the initial placement;
- Support regular phone or Skype contact between youth and their biological family, siblings, and other youth-identified family members;
- Work with youth and families to make a plan that supports face-to-face time, which may include family visits at placements, in the community, or at the family home;
- Support permanency planning, and include youth and families in those plans;
- Place youth with foster parents who do their best to fully incorporate youth into their families and homes (i.e. including youth in family dinners, outing, etc.).

Sometimes people don't want to have contact with members of their biological family, and those feelings should also be respected. It is important for caseworkers to have an open and honest conversation when it comes to supporting normalcy with families.



Resources

- Permanency Pact
- Sibling Bill of Rights
- Normalcy Bill of Rights



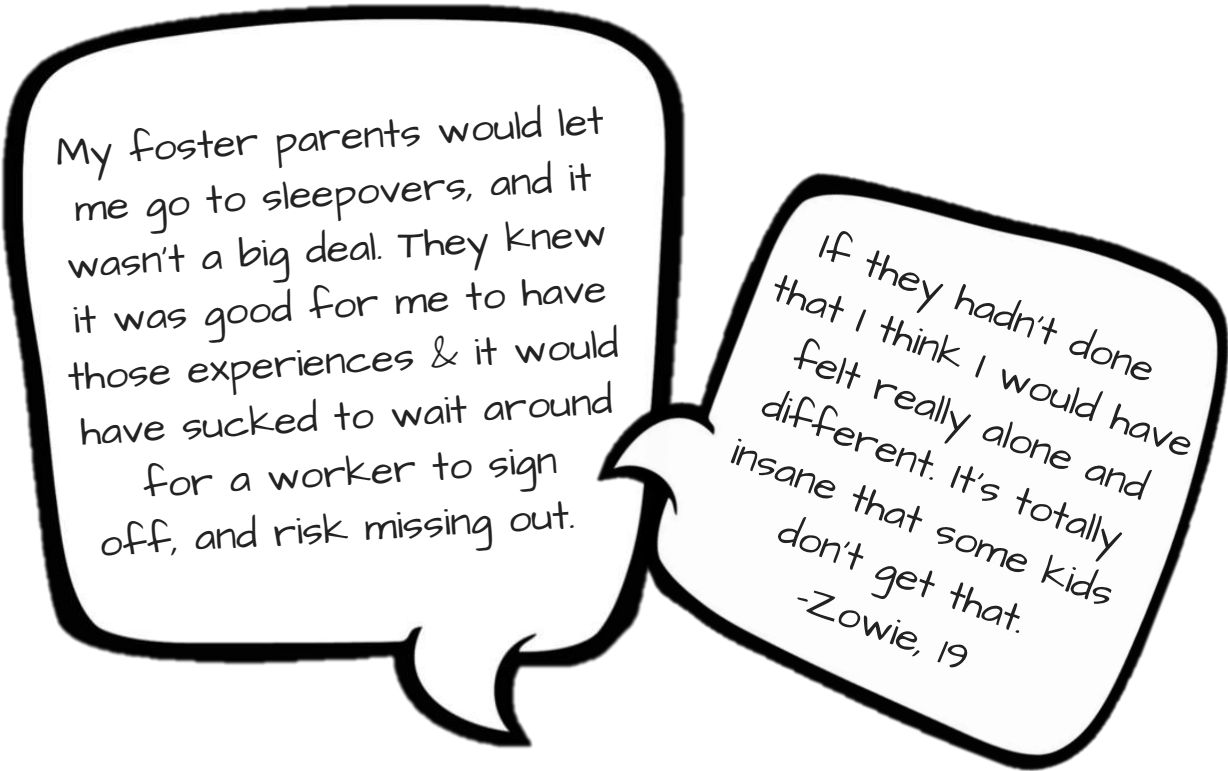
Normalcy and

Social Inclusion

You have the right to make friends and participate in social activities, and Normalcy in this context means that simply being in foster care should not prevent you from having relationships with your peers. You should be able to have open and honest discussions with adults about curfews, hanging out with friends, sleepovers, and the use of cell phones and social media.

Here are some ways adults can support Normalcy and Social Inclusion:

- Teach youth how to use social media responsibly;
- Model and guide youth to understand what healthy friendships and romantic relationships are like, and allow them opportunities to learn from experiences;
- Allow for a flexible and reasonable curfew that doesn't prohibit participation in activities that build supportive relationships and community involvement;
- Allow youth to spend time with friends and other people important to them outside of the home and advocate for less intrusive and faster ways to determine if the situation is safe;
- Allow youth to spend time with peers of varying genders.



My foster parents would let me go to sleepovers, and it wasn't a big deal. They knew it was good for me to have those experiences & it would have sucked to wait around for a worker to sign off, and risk missing out.

If they hadn't done that I think I would have felt really alone and different. It's totally insane that some kids don't get that.
-Zowie, 19

Resources

- Ecological Model
- Prudent Parenting Standard



Normalcy and

Community Inclusion

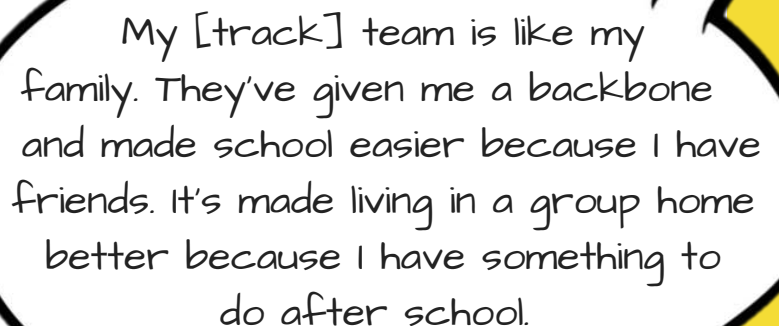
You have the right to build relationships in your home and school communities, just like peers who are not in care. Being engaged in your community gives you the ability to find welcoming and judgment-free environments, build supportive relationships with people in your community, develop social skills, and engage in activities that can help prepare you for college and a career. Normalcy also means being allowed to use tools that help you stay connected, such as a personal email and cell phone.

Examples of community inclusion opportunities include:

- Volunteering;
- Participating in sports teams and other extra-curricular clubs and lessons;
- Attending school or community sponsored events, such as field trips or dances;
- Going to camp;
- Having a part-time job;
- Joining a mentor program;
- Being involved in faith-based or other cultural programs;
- Joining other activities that provide support and structure.

Here are some ways adults can support Normalcy and Community Inclusion:

- Talk to youth about their hobbies and interests;
- Encourage and support youth to participate in any of the activities listed above;
- Allow exceptions to curfews for events that promote healthy community involvement;
- Be able to accommodate opportunities as they become available.

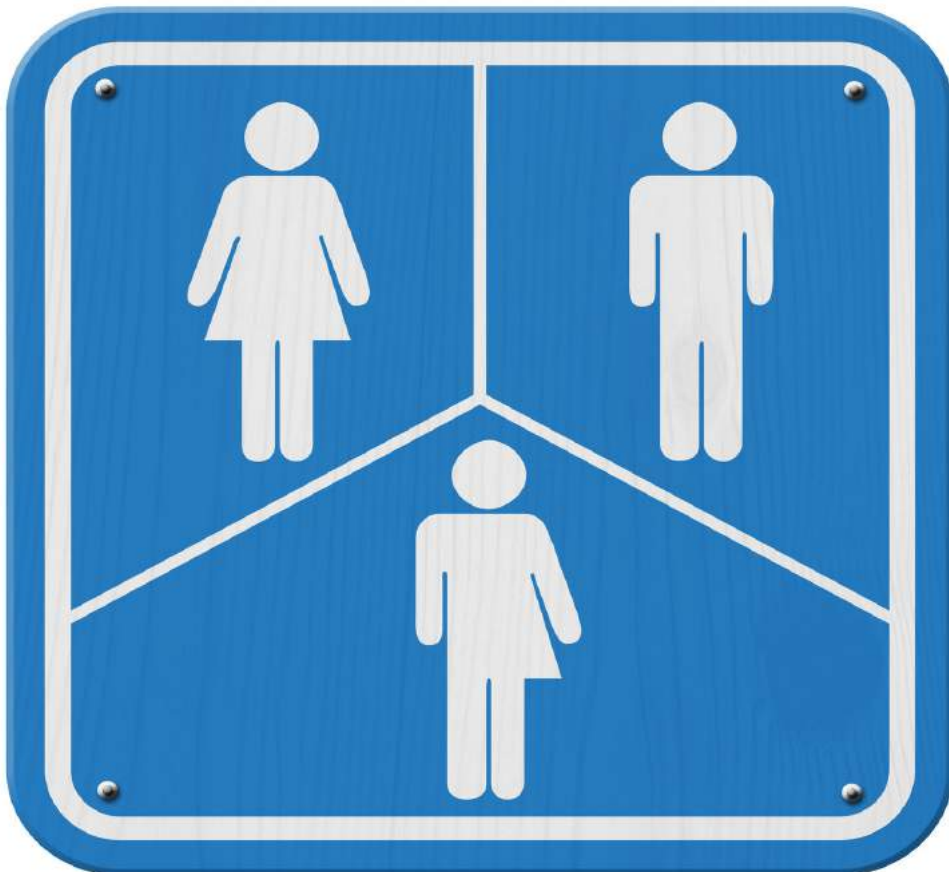


My [track] team is like my family. They've given me a backbone and made school easier because I have friends. It's made living in a group home better because I have something to do after school.

-Stephanie, 17

Resources

- Ecological Model
- Prudent Parenting Standard



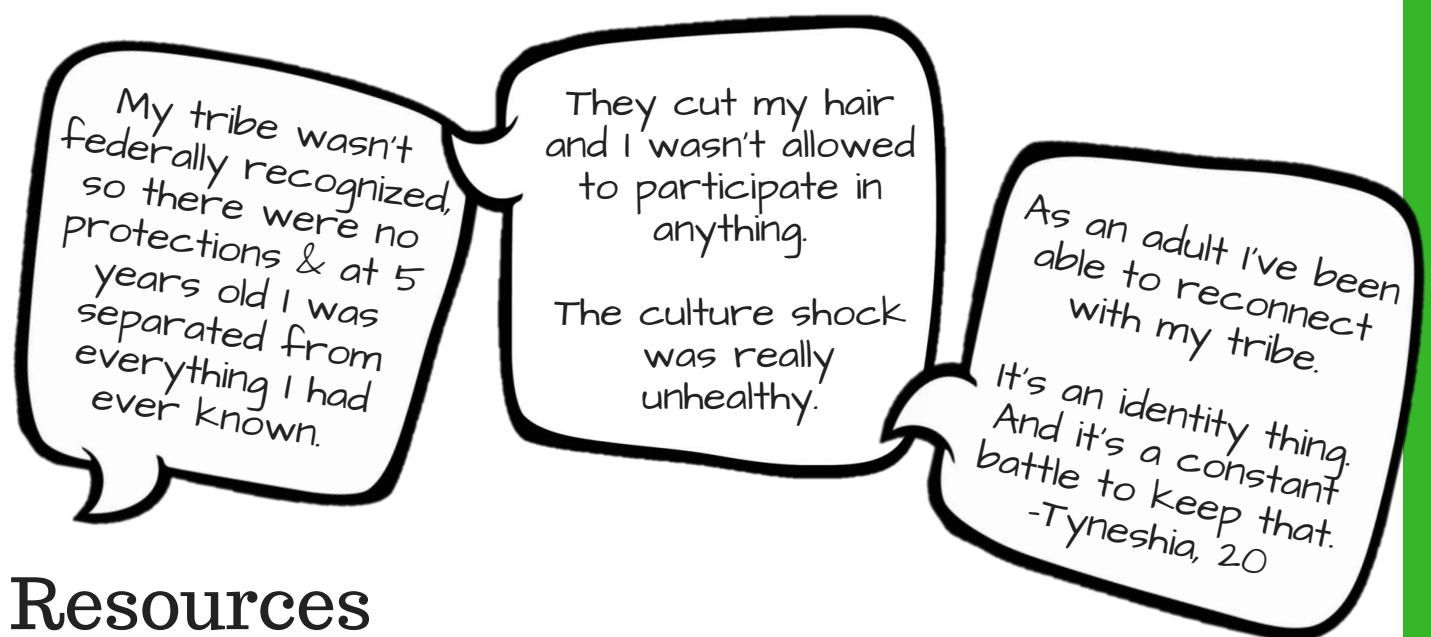
Normalcy and

Culture/Identity

You have the right to express yourself as you choose, because all people have the right to enjoy freedom, acceptance, and safety regardless of their circumstances. Cultural Normalcy means being able to practice your religious or cultural customs, listen to your choice of music, wear your preferred style of clothing, and participate in activities that help build your self-esteem and establish your sense of self.

Here are some ways adults can support Normalcy and Culture/Identity:

- Respect the youth's spiritual, religious, and cultural beliefs, and support them to participate in related activities;
- Do not force youth to participate in spiritual, religious, or cultural activities that are contrary to their own beliefs;
- Understand your state's rules around piercings and tattoos, and respect the desires of youth who wish to get piercings/tattoos by offering guidance and involving them in a honest and open conversation about their options;
- Be an ally of the LGBTQ community by paying attention to pronoun use and jargon, respecting choices around physical appearance, respecting relationships, and allowing transgender youth the option of transitioning while still in care;
- Place Native youth (from both federally recognized and unrecognized tribes) with Native families whenever possible;
- Respect youth's culture and identity preferences when considering placement;
- Move youth to a new home if their situation is not culturally supportive.



Resources

- Genderbread Person
- Indian Child Welfare Act



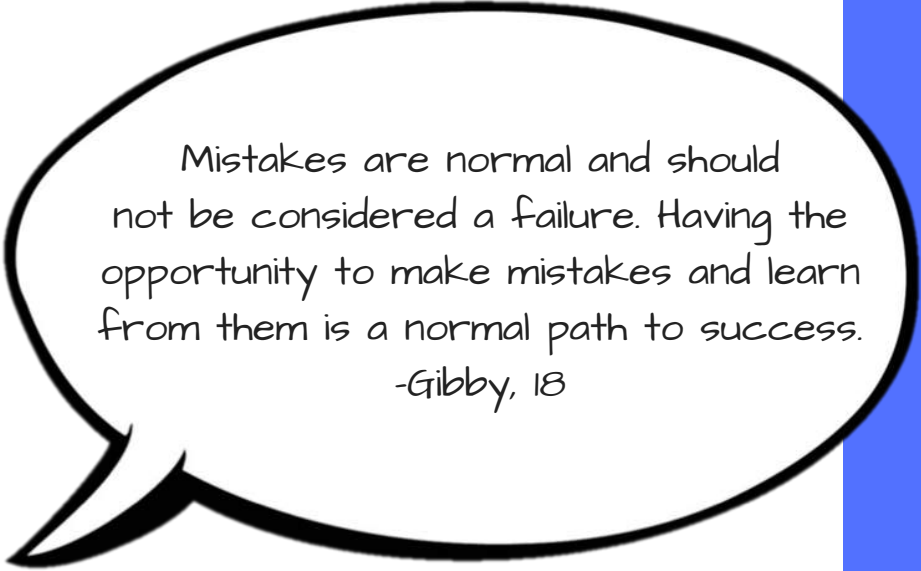
Normalcy and Decision Making

Normalcy for decision-making means being included in the decision-making process for anything that affects your life, including medical and mental health decisions. This means being able to make your own age-appropriate choices, with guidance from trusted peers and adults – even when others fear you might make a mistake. Being able to practice making healthy decisions is an important step in becoming a mature adult and developing self-advocacy skills.

Here are some ways adults can support Normalcy and Decision-Making:

- Provide appropriate levels of personal freedom so that there are opportunities for youth to make their own decisions;
- Invite youth to the decision-making table and teach them how to participate in these conversations.

We understand that sometimes people make poor choices that must be met with consequences. “Normal” consequences are those which are situational and age appropriate, and which could be applied to youth not in care who have made similar missteps. For example, threats of being kicked out or losing visitations with family members are not appropriate consequences.



Mistakes are normal and should not be considered a failure. Having the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them is a normal path to success.
-Gibby, 18

Resources

- SMART Goals



Normalcy and Age Related Milestones

Normalcy means you have a right to participate in age-related milestones.

Examples of these milestones include, but are not limited to:

- Getting a driver's license;
- Opening a bank account;
- Increasing personal freedom as you mature;
- Celebrating birthdays, graduations, and other achievements;
- Taking steps to prepare for adulthood, higher education, and the work force.

Here are some ways adults can support Normalcy and Age Related Milestones:

- Support youth through driver's education by helping them get their required practice hours;
- Teach youth about money management and guide them through opening a bank account and making a budget;
- Adjust curfews and allowances as youth get older.

When you don't understand how to budget your money or apply for the right kind of school loans, or use a credit card, it can really screw you up for a long time.

-Sean, 20

It's tough for kids to get their driver's license because most foster parents don't want them driving their car, and as social workers we're not allowed to let them practice with us. We need to find someone for them to practice with.

-Social Worker, MA

Resources

- Opportunity Passport

Resources

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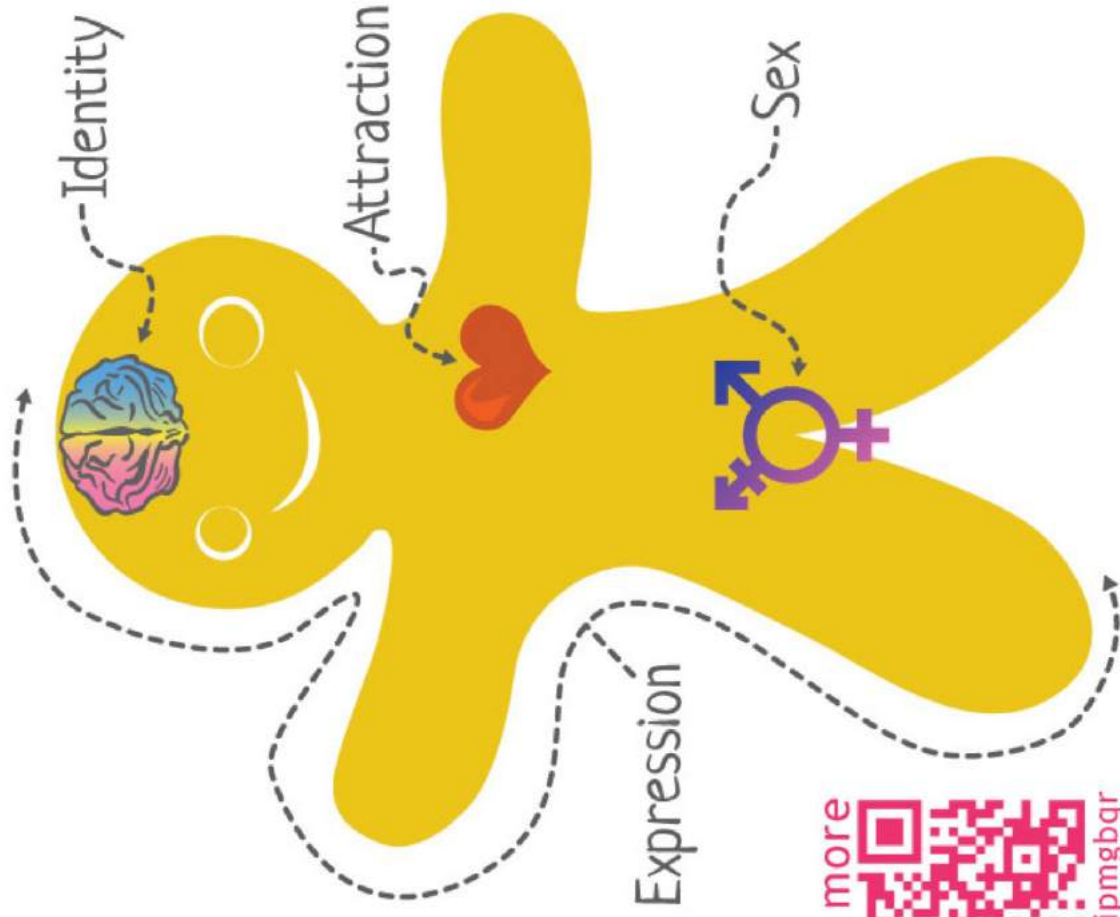
Links

- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA): www.nicwa.org
- Opportunity Passport: www.aecf.org
- Permanency Pact Resource: www.fosterclub.com
- Prudent Parenting Standard & Strengthening Families Act of 2014: www.ncsl.org
- Trans Student Educational Resources: transstudent.org

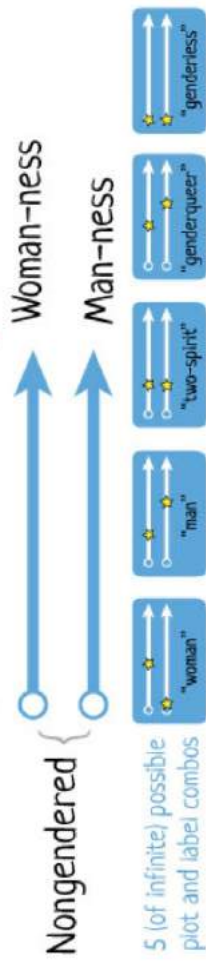
The Genderbread Person v2.0

by its pronounced **METROsexual** .com

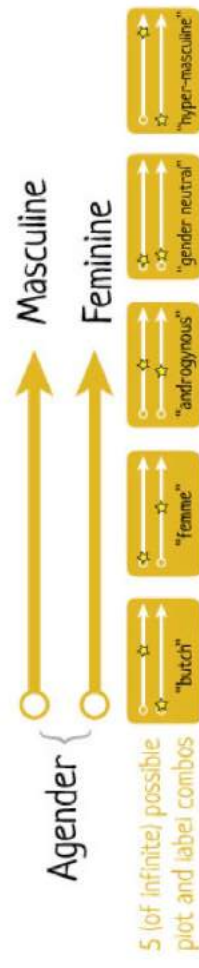
Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more.



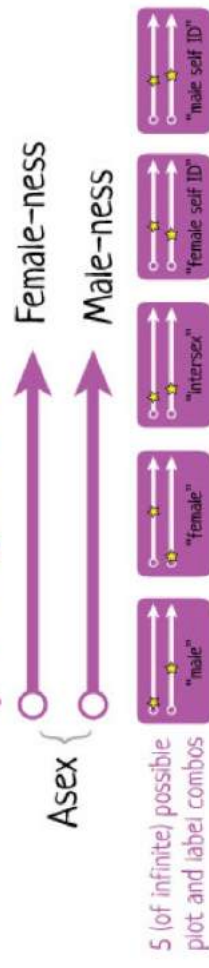
Gender Identity



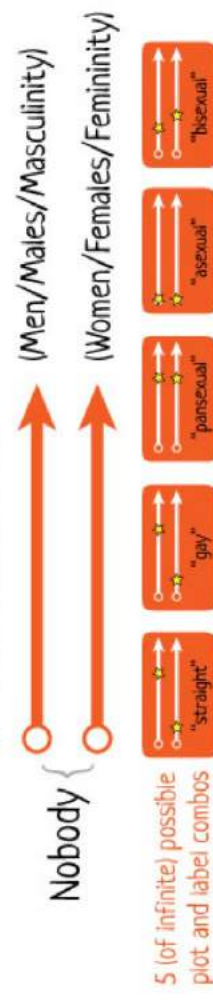
Gender Expression



Biological Sex



Attracted to



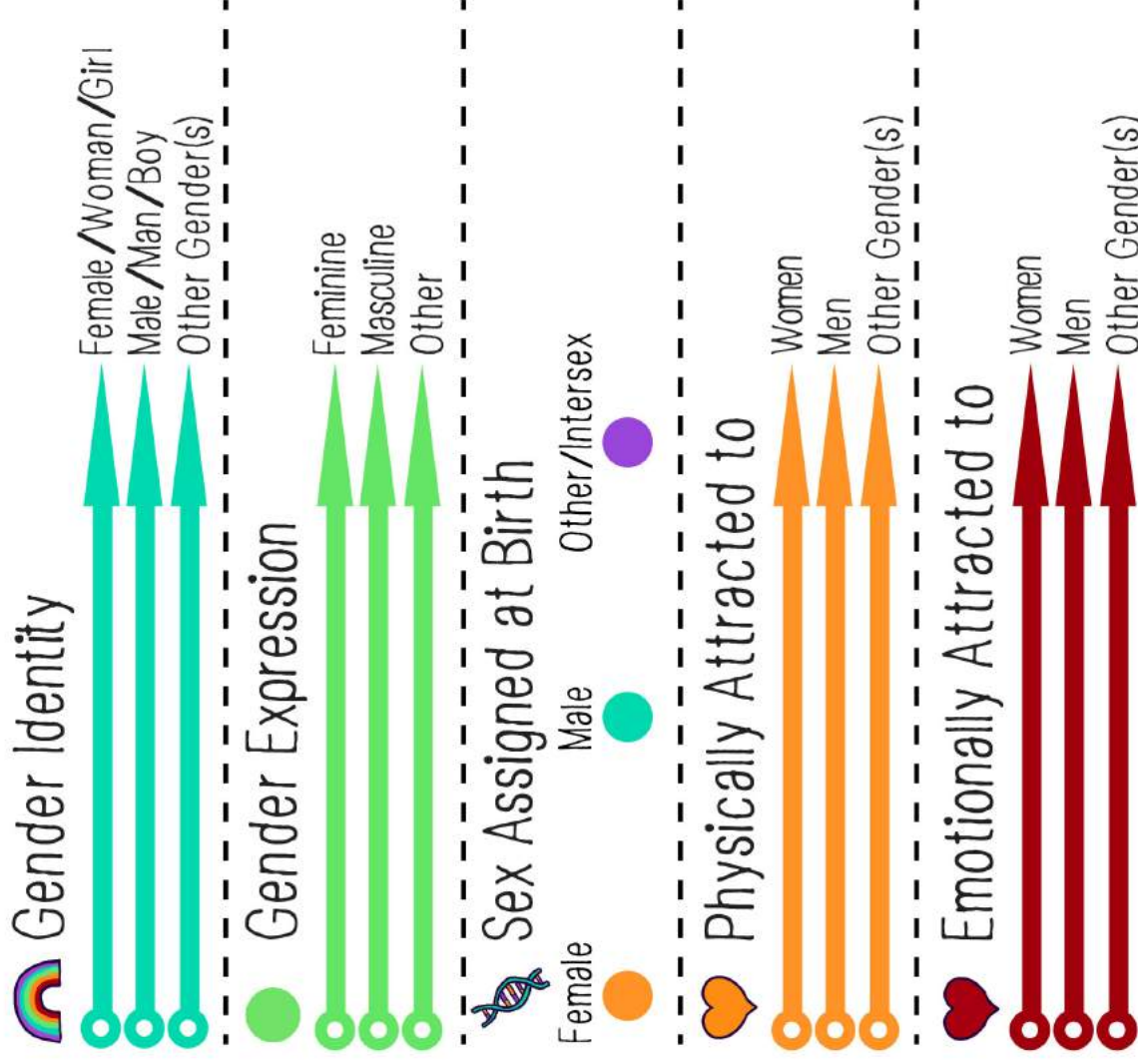
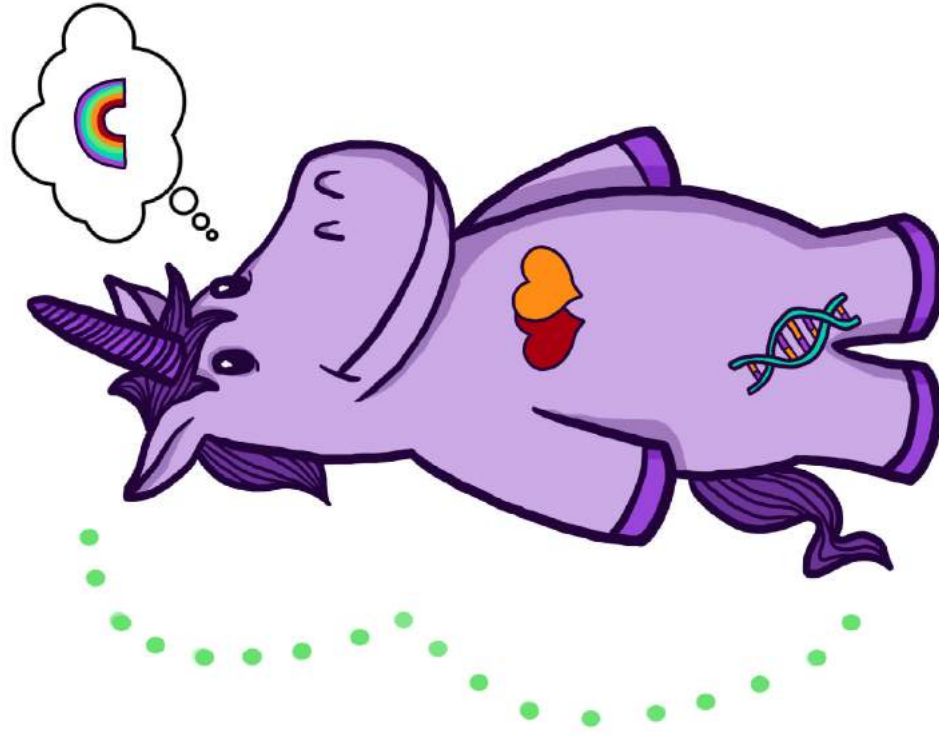
read more



bit.ly/ipmgbqr

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

PERMANENCY PACT

In an effort to substantiate and sustain
an on-going connection between a youth and a supportive adult,

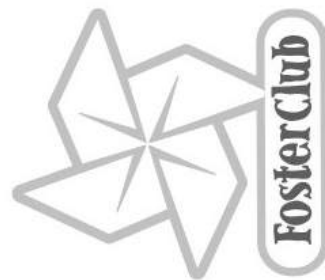
SUPPORTIVE ADULT

pledges to provide specific support to, and has been accepted as a
provider of such support by,

YOUTH

confirmed this _____ day of _____, _____
DAY MONTH YEAR

as witnessed by _____
FACILITATOR



*FosterClub's Permanency Pact documents a
life-long, kin-like commitment to a relationship
between a youth and a supportive adult.*

the national network for young people in foster care | www.fosterclub.org

- ☐ A Home For The Holidays
- ☐ A Place To Do Laundry
- ☐ Emergency Place To Stay
- ☐ Food/Occasional Meals
- ☐ Care Packages At College
- ☐ Employment Opportunity
- ☐ Job Search Assistance
- ☐ Career Counseling
- ☐ Housing Hunt
- ☐ Recreational Activities
- ☐ Mentor
- ☐ Educational Assistance
- ☐ Relationship/Marriage/Parenting
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Assistance With Medical Appts
- ☐ Storage
- ☐ Motivation
- ☐ Someone To Talk To/Discuss Problems
- ☐ A Phone To Use
- ☐ A Computer To Use
- ☐ Clothing
- ☐ Spiritual Support
- ☐ Legal Troubles
- ☐ Cultural Experience
- ☐ Apartment Move-in
- ☐ Cooking Lessons/Assistance
- ☐ Regular Check-in
- ☐ Bills & Money Management Assistance
- ☐ Drug And Alcohol Addiction Help
- ☐ Mental Health Support
- ☐ Co-Signer
- ☐ Help Reading Forms, Complex Docs
- ☐ Mechanical/Building Projects
- ☐ Housekeeping
- ☐ Home Decorating
- ☐ Voting
- ☐ Volunteerism
- ☐ Finding Community Resources
- ☐ Safety And Personal Security
- ☐ Babysitting
- ☐ Emergency Cash
- ☐ Social Circle/Community Activities
- ☐ Advocacy
- ☐ Reference
- ☐ Adoption
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



The Sibling Bill of Rights

Approved by NEYC & NEACWCD January 2012

Preamble: The New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors recognizes the importance and value of sibling relationships. These rights are intended to guide the New England Child Welfare agencies and their providers in the delivery of care and services to foster youth with the commitment to permanency, safety and well being. This Bill of Rights was developed by the New England Youth Coalition with the support of this Association.

Whereas: the importance of sibling relationships is recognized and respected;
Whereas: sibling relationships provide needed continuity and stability during a child's placement;

Whereas: the sibling bond is unique and separate from the parent-child bond, and may include relations with people not linked by blood;

Whereas: siblings share similar history, heritage, culture and often biology that must be preserved;

Whereas: sibling separation is a significant and distinct loss that must be repaired by frequent and regular contact;

Whereas: every foster child deserves the right to know and be actively involved in his/her siblings' lives absent extraordinary circumstances.

Every foster child:

1. Shall be placed with siblings.
2. Shall be in close proximity to siblings if unable to be in same setting to facilitate frequent and meaningful contact.
3. Shall be afforded contact with siblings regardless of geographic barriers. The methods for contact should be outlined in the child's service plan.
4. Shall be actively involved in his/her siblings' lives and share celebrations including birthdays, holidays, graduations, and meaningful milestones.
5. Shall maintain consistent and regular contact that will be included in service planning.
6. Shall be included in permanency planning decisions relative to his/her siblings. Foster children should know what the expectations are for continued contact when a sibling is adopted or guardianed.
7. Shall be notified by the child welfare agency or its agents regarding a sibling's change of placement.
8. Shall be informed when a sibling is discharged from foster care. Alumni shall be allowed to maintain contact with a sibling who remains in state care.
9. Shall be supported by the child welfare agency in his/her efforts to maintain relationships with siblings who are not in care or have been adopted or guardianed. The Department shall facilitate such contact as appropriate.
10. Shall have predictable, regular contact with siblings that shall not be withheld as a behavioral consequence absent safety concerns.

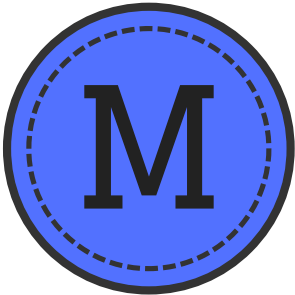
SMART GOALS

A guide for setting yourself up for success



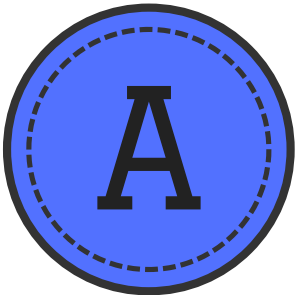
SPECIFIC

What is the exact outcome you're hoping to achieve?



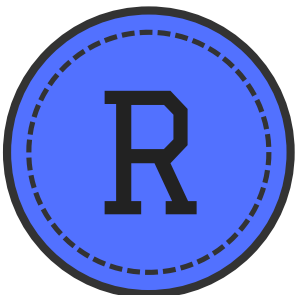
MEASURABLE

How will you measure progress and success?



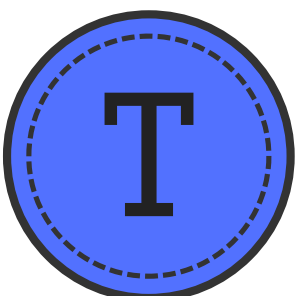
ACHIEVABLE

Can this be done? Do you have control over the necessary factors?



RELEVANT

Does this goal make sense in your life right now?



TIME-BOUND

What is a realistic timeframe for achieving the goal?



Normalcy Bill of Rights

Preamble: "Normal" refers to standards or usual activities regularly experienced by youth not in out-of-home care. 'Out-of-home care' includes residential treatment facilities, foster homes, group homes, and placements with relatives or kin. In addition to 'standard or usual activities,' normalcy for youth in out-of-home care includes opportunities for input and participation in decision-making for their cases and day-to-day lives.

In our definition we focus on six major areas of "Normalcy":

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Families | 3. Social and Peer Inclusion | 5. Community Inclusion |
| 2. Cultural Awareness | 4. Age-Related Milestones | 6. Decision-Making |

Along with defining what "Normalcy" looks like in these areas, the New England Youth Coalition hopes this document will raise awareness of the unique experiences of:

Youth in secure facilities,
 Youth from varying ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds - including Native youth,
 Youth with non-conforming gender identification and sexual orientations, and,
 Youth with physical and mental disabilities (IEP, learning disabilities, physical handicaps).

- Whereas: The right to maintain regular contact with our families as we define them and support for those relationships during our time in out of home care, taking into account the safety of the youth.
- Whereas: The right to build and maintain relationships with peers during our time in out-of-home care.
- Whereas: The right to independently participate in activities in our communities to build skills, network of social relationships, and a sense of belonging.
- Whereas: The right to express ourselves and our personal and cultural identities.
- Whereas: The right to experience and celebrate the developmental events and milestones of adolescence and young adulthood.
- Whereas: The right to take the central role in decisions about our lives with the support of caring adults

Every foster child:

1. Shall have regular visits with their families and siblings regardless of "good" behavior. (see: Sibling Bill of Rights)
2. Shall be educated on the components of healthy romantic relationships through guidance from a supportive adult.
3. Shall be able to participate in activities that build a supportive social network, and have a curfew that allows for such activities.
4. Shall be allowed to build relationships with peers regardless of gender or sex.
5. Shall have opportunities to build relationships within their home and school communities equal to their peers not in care.
6. Shall be taught how to use tools such as personal e-mail, social media, and cell phones in a safe and healthy way that promotes an inclusivity with their communities, peers, and family.
7. Shall be able to express their identity as they choose, with guidance from supportive adults, because all people have the right to safety regardless of their circumstances.
8. Shall not be restricted in practicing religious or cultural customs, listening to their choice of music, wearing their preferred style of clothing etc.
9. Shall be showed respect for their religious and cultural beliefs and shall be able to participate in any activities associated with their religious beliefs.
10. Shall be allowed to discover and express their gender and sexual identity regardless of placement, and shall not be subjected to discrimination or fear for their safety because of their gender or sexual identity.
11. Shall be supported to reach age-related milestones including but not limited to obtaining a driver's license, opening a bank account, celebrating birthdays, graduations, etc.

DISCLAIMER: The right of youth in care to normalcy exists within the context of the reasonable and prudent parent standard, meaning that parents and caretakers must make careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety and best interests of a child or youth.



Approved by NEYC & NEACWCD June 2016





History of NEYC

The New England Youth Coalition (NEYC) is youth led and adult supported.

We've been meeting since 2008. NEYC is supported by and works closely with child welfare Commissioners and Directors in each of the six New England States. Members include youth advocates and adult supporters who are chosen to represent their state. NEYC meets in person 2-3 times a year. One of these meetings includes a Regional Youth Leadership Conference that equips young leaders with valuable skills in the area of professional development. In between these in person meetings, NEYC members participate in committees by working virtually with one another.

