

HANDOUT #4: ADDRESSING DARREN'S GRIEF



Darren is 13 years old. He was removed from his parents' care due to their drug use and placed with his paternal grandparents at birth. He was adopted by them and raised by them until age 9 when his grandmother passed away, and his grandfather was not able to care for him alone. He came into foster care at that time and had some limited contact with his grandfather until he too became ill with dementia. Neither of his parents have had any contact with him, and Darren believes that his grandparents are his parents, since he always called them Mama and Pop. He has not been told about his parents, or any other relatives since he has been in the child welfare system. Darren does not want to talk about his Mama and Pop, and he has made comments like, "I don't need anyone to take care of me." He does not seem to have a clear understanding of his own story or why he is in foster care.

Darren has been in three different foster homes, and, in addition, he has met two different possible adoptive parents, but neither one of them followed through. He is described by his current foster parents as quiet and withdrawn at home, but quick to anger when he is corrected, or limits are set for him. Darren is intelligent, and he does well in school academically, although his teachers have noted that he "daydreams" in class quite a bit, sometimes has difficulty finishing projects, and is often late handing in homework. However, he has difficulty with peer relationships and gets into fights easily at school when he feels slighted by other children.

On the positive side, Darren is good at sports, and this is the one area where he feels comfortable and can participate as a team member.

Darren has difficulty sleeping and gets up during the night several times. He has been found on several occasions in the family room watching television at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. Once he returns to bed, he has difficulty getting up in the morning for school.

Darren has only a couple of friends outside of the sports teams, and he is anxious when in social situations, where he usually hangs back and does not engage with other children he does not know. He does not answer questions about himself, or why he is living in foster care.

Which of the following are some possible signs that Darren is dealing with grief and loss issues? Circle all that apply.

- a) He is quiet and withdrawn much of the time.
- b) He does not want to talk about Mama and Pop.
- c) He likes watching TV.
- d) He gets into fights with other children when he feels slighted.
- e) He is good at sports.
- f) He "daydreams" in class, has difficulty finishing projects, and hands in homework late.
- g) He has not been told anything about his parents or other family members.
- h) He has trouble sleeping.
- i) He is intelligent and does well academically.
- j) Darren has a couple of friends outside of sports.
- k) He is anxious in social situations and does not answer questions about himself.

