

## HELPING A CHILD THROUGH A PERMANENT SEPARATION,

North Carolina Children's Services Practice Notes, 4(2)

<p>1. <b>Help the child face reality.</b> The pain needs to be acknowledged and the grieving process allowed.</p>	<p>2. <b>Encourage the child to express feelings.</b> There can be expressions of reasons for the separation without condemning parents.</p>
<p>3. <b>Tell the truth.</b> You can emphasize that his parents were not able to take care of him. A parent's alcoholism can be reframed as "your." Also, try to deal with the fantasy that children often have that the parents will return. The permanency of the loss needs to be <i>realized</i>.</p>	<p>4. <b>Encourage the child to ask questions.</b> Again, be as truthful in your responses as you can without hurting the child. Never lie to the child, even to spare some pain.</p>
<p>5. <b>Process with the child why the losses occurred.</b> Ask about his ideas of why he has made the moves he has and experienced these losses</p>	<p>6. <b>Spend time with the child.</b> Any child who has experienced separation feels rejection and guilt. This can interfere with his sense of trust in others and himself. By spending time and talking with the child, a new, trusting relationship can be built with the child. This, in turn, can lead to other healthy relationships.</p>
<p>7. <b>Encourage information about the past.</b> A child's identity is partly a result of having a past that is continuous. To achieve this continuity, various techniques, such as the Life Book, are valuable. Social, cultural, and developmental information needs to be included in the book and made available to the child</p>	<p>8. <b>Understand your own feelings.</b> It is difficult to share the pain of separation and to be the one who helps the child face reality—such as the fact that he may never see his biological or foster parents again. Your own feeling must be dealt with or they will recur and may hinder the child's healthy development.</p>