



DOES LACK OF TRUTH TELLING DESTABILISE A CHILD'S LIFE JOURNEY?

Abstract/ Presentation outline by Helen Oakwater for IFCO European conference September 2016

The mismatch between a child's sensory memory of their maltreatment in infancy and the story they are subsequently told about their early life, creates long term confusion and feelings of shame which frequently derails them.

We know "the body keeps the score" (Bessel Van Der Kolk) yet adults often tell children a sanitised and saccharine version of their past, in the mistaken belief that this will protect the child. It doesn't. The child has experienced life from inside their own bodies while looking through their own eyes. This is the data they will use to make meaning of themselves and the world. What they need from adults is confirmation of the harsh truth, fresh perspectives and ongoing support to comprehend and integrate the knowledge and melt deep trauma.

Parents need understanding and support to see behind and beyond the child's presenting behaviour along with simple strategies to enable them to parent therapeutically.

Helen Oakwater has a reputation as an engaging and inspiring speaker. She will demonstrate the above using the example of a child (at different ages) dramatically showing how his life might develop and possible behaviour, allowing the audience to resonate with Tim (Traumatised Infant Maltreated) and his carers.

She will also stand in the shoes of the foster parent and offer options, ways of thinking, reframing and parenting strategies. Built on a robust theoretical framework, delivered with humour and passion: participants will deepen their understanding of trauma and acquire fresh ways of explaining the legacy of infant maltreatment and neglect to others.

NB. Helen presentation at International IFCO conference November 2015 in Sydney, Australia can be seen [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2EX3G1-XOs).

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HELEN OAKWATER : BIOGRAPHY

An adoptive parent, professional Coach and Trainer; Helen Oakwater is the author of *“Bubble Wrapped Children: How social networking is transforming the face of 21st century adoption”*.

Since adopting a sibling group from the UK care system in 1992, Helen has worn a variety of professional hats. She was a member of the Adoption UK Trustee Board, the Government Adoption Task Force and two adoption panels.

She has personal experience of parenting traumatised children, mentoring parents and has trained thousands of parents and professionals in trauma triggered behaviour in the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Helen is the founder of **FAB Parents** which provides resources, training and mentoring to: empower parents, transform the legacy of childhood neglect and maltreatment, melt trauma and future-proof children.
www.FABparents.co.uk