

# On **TARGET**...Toward Togetherness

*“TARGET is a good way to talk about problems **without overreacting** and having to apologize later, LOL!”*  
– Lorna, mom by adoption and guardianship

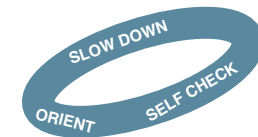


Life is not always a walk in the park. Stress happens. Adding adoption or guardianship to the mix can bring on other complications. When families need help to stay pointed in the right direction, there’s TARGET.

“TARGET taught me how to look at stressful situations and realize that my first reaction does not have to be my response,” Max\*, age 14, said after completing the program.

The 7 FREEDOM steps are the keys to helping young people and their families prevent triggers from past trauma from interfering with present situations and relationships.

Max learned there are simple ways he can do things differently. “My ‘SOS’ wristband



reminds me of the steps I can use to stay focused at school and at home.”

TARGET works for parents, too. “Sometimes without me realizing it, TARGET helps me rein it in when things that used to make me lose my cool with the kids come up,” mom Lorna said.

TARGET coaches arrange a comfortable and convenient


space to guide teens and parents through fun activities and discussions. Each weekly session is designed to be interactive, engaging and educational.

“I can’t think of anything that we have tried like TARGET. The activities and talks help you learn more about each other,” said Lorna. “We are doing things a lot differently now. You won’t believe the outcome.”

*\* Quotes from actual participants with names changed for privacy*

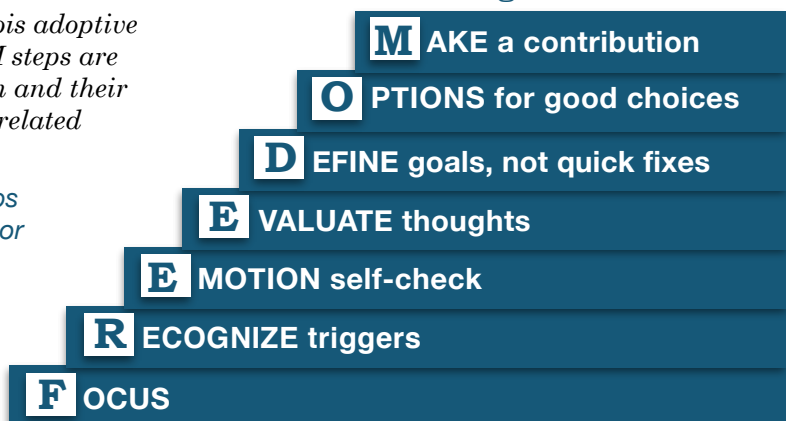
## **TARGET (Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy)**

is a free program that is being offered to Illinois adoptive and guardianship families. The 7 FREEDOM steps are shared in a series of in-home sessions so youth and their families can understand and control trauma-related reactions to everyday life stresses.

 Learn more about how TARGET helps families stay on track after adoption or guardianship

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## **FREEDOM** steps toward togetherness



# On **TARGET** ...to positive friendships

*“Junior High was so hard. After TARGET, I’m more confident in High School. I sit at a different table every day with different friends.”*

– Jamie, 13



There was a time when Jamie\* let people treat her “however they wanted” because she didn’t know how to handle it.

Jamie started TARGET right as she was going into high school. One goal she and her mother set with their TARGET coach Jill was to pick good friends.

The first test came in the lunchroom. “I decided I wasn’t going to be in just one

little group. I would be more sociable.”

Some kids she knew from eighth grade gave her a hard time about the friends she picked. But, instead of getting mad or isolating herself, Jamie expressed how she felt and went on to sit where she wanted.

“I’m not so emotional now. I know different ways to deal with things,” she said.

What helps Jamie also helps her help other people.

“After school one day, my friend got so mad when this guy started making fun of him for how he dressed. Instead of going after him, we talked. I told him about consequences and good choices– all of the steps from TARGET.”

Later he sent Jamie a text that said thanks for being a real friend. Jamie told her mom what happened saying, “That’s the reason I am here. I found my purpose.”

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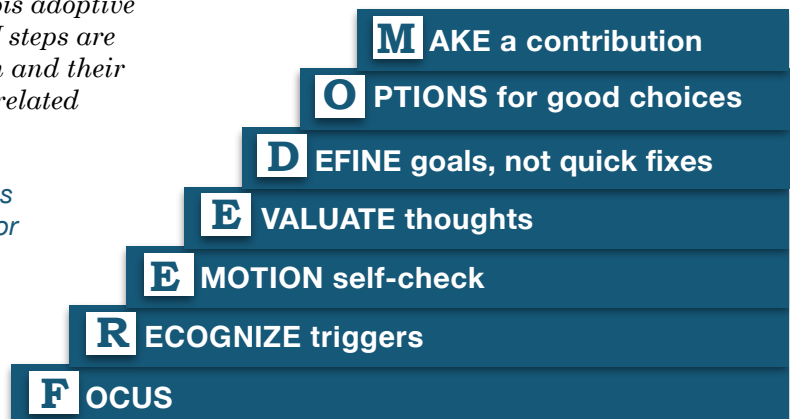
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## Jamie’s FREEDOM steps to positive friendships



# On **TARGET** ...to school success

*“I use what I learned in TARGET at school everyday when it’s time to really zoom in and focus.”*

– Lexi, 14



Lexi\* remembers that math was really hard the year before she started TARGET. She struggled to stay focused in class. She said she spent more time paying attention to her friends than to the teacher.

“Math is easier this year. Even though my teacher talks fast, now I get what he is explaining.”

“TARGET taught me how to block out distracting thoughts about other things that were bothering me.”

The new focus carried over to history class. When it was time to research poverty in African communities, Lexi turned her project in early.

When Lexi and her sister started the TARGET sessions they met with Lynn at home. At first, Lexi thought it was “weird” to have someone come to their house to talk. But, “then it was good” after the first couple of times with Lynn coaching them through it.

“TARGET is unique from other therapy because it takes you past what you are

going through to understand what is really going on behind it,” Lexi said.

After finishing the TARGET sessions, Lexi said the biggest surprise was that she had learned how to identify problems and find new, positive solutions. She is now able to help younger students in their transition to high school, by using the seven FREEDOM steps to keep from losing their cool.

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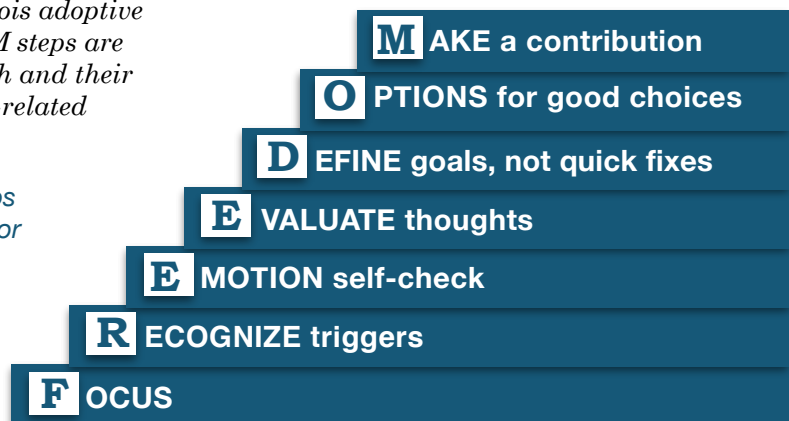
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## Lexi’s FREEDOM steps to success at school



# On **TARGET** ...to understanding each other better



“**T**ARGET is like a puzzle; and every time we met it was like adding a new piece,” is how Lucretia\* describes the weekly sessions she did with her mom Abigail.

*“We never really did much one-on-one before... But with **TARGET**, we focused on each other for an hour each week and it paid off!”*

– *Lucretia’s mom*

before I would have hollered, now I can stay calm,” Abigail said.

With the TARGET activities and games, she came to realize that kids go through stress too. Together, the TARGET sessions became a relaxing time

They keep the poster with the 7 FREEDOM steps taped to the refrigerator as a reminder. The plan is to keep their “talk times” going, even after completing the sessions with Liz, their TARGET coach.


they carved out...just for them.

“This has done wonders for our relationship. I learned that I can communicate better. Where

Lucretia likes that now she doesn’t jump to conclusions when one of her “alarms” goes off. “I don’t have to react,” she said. “Things are so much smoother now.”

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## Lucretia and her mom’s FREEDOM steps success



# On **TARGET** ...to making good choices

*“Stress is **powerful!** It doesn’t warn you. I still use the **TARGET** tips to ‘reset’ myself.” – Rick, 15*



**R**ick\* thought he knew what to expect when Tonya first came to the house for **TARGET**. He had done this kind of thing before.

Wrong. “There’s nothing quite like **TARGET**. That’s what I liked about it.”

He definitely did not think he would learn about the *amygdala*, where his brain processes decisions. That new information helped him realize that there were reasons behind the “attitudes” that got in the way at school and at home.

“It was actually fun doing the activities with Tonya coaching us, because she knew what she was doing. We weren’t just going through a book, so it was never boring.”

Both Rick and his mom could see **TARGET** at work in the days between the weekly sessions. Instead of getting angry when he had to take care of his laundry, he remembered the **FREEDOM** steps to “chill himself down.” Rick could even spot on his mom’s face the exact moment when she “shifted gears” to bring her own emotions down

after reminding him (again) about the laundry.

He said, “I learned to think through options. I know that I can walk away. I also know how to take responsibility for my part when I don’t respond right the first time.”

“**Just think about it!** is the phrase that Rick thinks should go on **TARGET** t-shirts for everyone, because it works for all kinds of stresses in all kinds of circumstances.

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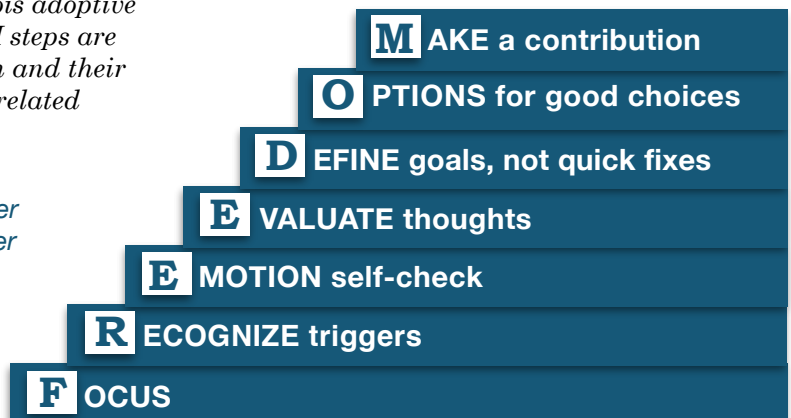
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Get started with **TARGET** and discover ways to keep your family on track after adoption or guardianship

The Cradle  
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## Rick’s **FREEDOM** steps to choosing how to respond



# On **TARGET**...to make it through the tough times

*“My mom worried about me when some crazy things were happening at school. Then, **she trusted me** more because **TARGET** showed me **how to handle my own emotions.**”*

– Travis, 14

**T**ravis\* had seen the bullying that had become a regular part of eighth grade. He mostly followed his mom’s advice to steer clear of the ones who started drama or kept it going. But, the whole school was shocked when a classmate committed suicide in the spring.

“My mom didn’t want me to go to the funeral. I think she was scared that I might not be able to handle it,” he said.

TARGET focuses on stress, including the extreme stresses like illness, moving or a loss. Travis was doing TARGET sessions when the crisis hit.

“What happened to my friend changed my life. The whole TARGET program helped me grow from it,” he said.

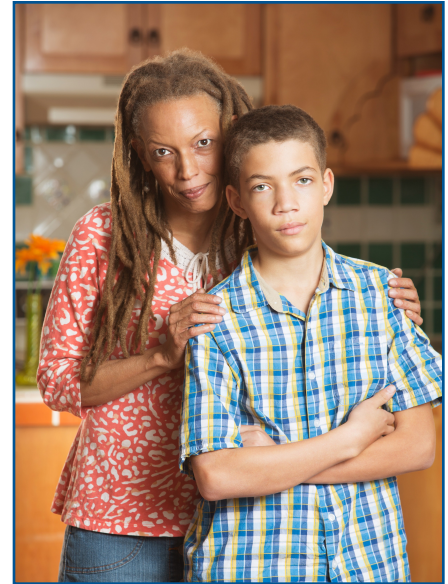
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Travis found the step-by-step approach, with Jonathan coaching them, made

TARGET different from other services. “It teaches you *how* to control yourself and to calm down.”

Now that Travis is in high school, his mom is surprised by how “mature” he has become. He gets to go places and do more because she trusts him—based on how he responds to situations.

“TARGET has brought all of us closer,” he said. That includes his younger brother and their older sibling who was not adopted with them. Travis even helped them talk through the emotions of what it was like to have that gap and then to reconnect.

## Travis’ **FREEDOM** steps to handling tough times

