**Signaling and Claiming Behaviors**

**Signaling Behaviors**

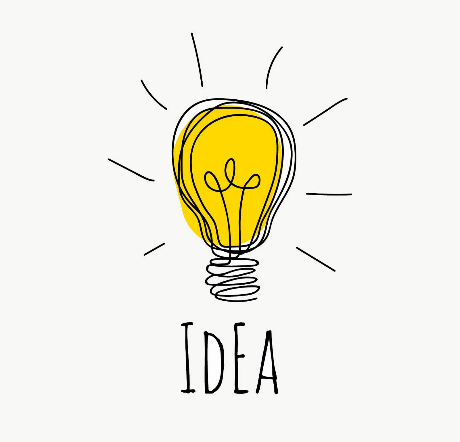
*What is signaling?*  In the same way that a stoplight acts as a signal to drivers, “signaling” in parenting is when a parent lets a child know by example what is safe and acceptable, and what is not. When a parent greets another adult with a smile and a warm handshake or hug, this is a “green light” for the child. On the other hand, if a parent greets another adult without smiling, with a reserved or stiff posture, and with minimal verbal interaction, the child reads this clearly as a “red light.”

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| **Green Light** | **Red Light** |
| Hospitality/Offerings such as asking if the other adult is hungry, wants something to drink or would you like to come in out of the cold. | Acting cold, and indifferent to one another. Failing to engage in common courtesies. |
| Compliment one another in the front of the youth. Compliments such as; I like your hair, nice outfit, cool watch or thank you for being flexible, driving, etc. | Criticizing or expressing disapproval through words or body language. |
| Showing curiosity and interest in the other adult by asking questions about the other adult’s day, family, work, or recreational activities. | Ignoring the other person or being abrupt or curt with your responses. |
| Offering assistance and **exercising common courtesies** such as holding open a door, finding a pen to write, or helping cleaning up. | No engagement or assistance when opportunities arise. Communicating frustration and disgust towards the other person. |
| Finding similarities to talk about, looking for the common things between both families, such as places they have lived or visited, pets they have, activities they enjoy. | Expressing and emphasizing differences without acknowledging similarities. |
| Be friendly and engaging when you meet each other; show gratitude for the other adult’s role in the child’s life. Do not be afraid to hug one another in front of the Sending children if you are comfortable. | Being indifferent, cold or rude in your interactions. Not showing any emotions, not acting grateful for the role each person plays in the child’s life. |
| Body Language: Open arms/open heart when child sees first interaction between the Receiving family and Sending family will go a long way in showing the child that the adults accept one another.  Make gentle eye contact and smile at one another. | Being stiff and cold when interacting with one another.  Not showing openness to each other.  Scowling or frowning at one another. |

**Claiming Behaviors**

*What is claiming?* Claiming is saying to a child, using words or actions, “You belong!” Though this is the task of sending parents, receiving parents can help by affirming the developing relationship between the child and the Receiving family.

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| **Claiming Behavior**  **(Receiving Family)** | **Affirming Statement**  **(Sending Family)** |
| Display the child’s photo at in your home. (receiving family). | “That is so special! They were really excited to put your picture up! Maybe we can find more to give them.” |
| Offer to provide a camera to the child to take pictures of memories they may want to keep. | “I would love to see pictures of you and your new family! Let’s print a picture of your new family that we can give them as a gift and one I can keep to look at when I’m thinking about you.” |
| Buy special bedding for the child’s room or purchasing new bedding with the child’s favorite colors/characters. | “How wonderful, you get to help decorate your room! They really want you to be comfortable in your new room.” |
| Decorate the room for child or allowing the child to assist (if age-appropriate). | “They asked me a lot of questions about what you like and about your favorite colors because they want you to like your new room”. |
| Take the kids shopping for clothes, decorations for the bedroom, and other items such as a journal or new toothbrush. | “I love that they are getting you new things for new beginnings. Tell me about the things you picked out. Which are your favorites?” |
| Use possessives when you (the receiving family ) talk about extended family to the child, referring to them as “your grandmother,” “your aunt,” “your sister.” | Show interest and excitement in learning about the Sending child’s new family members.  “I’m so happy you have so many more people who are going to love you!” |
| Share excitement about seeing them each visit and the upcoming move. | “They love spending time with you. They can’t wait to see you again!” |



**More Ideas for Signaling**

**And Claiming Behaviors**

* Sending family can help with transition by inviting receiving family to eat a meal together at child’s favorite restaurant.
* Sending parents can invite receiving family into home for a meal or show hospitality to receiving family by offering tea or coffee in the their home.
* Receiving family invites sending family into home with child to allow a comfortable transition time to new surroundings with safe adult. After the meet and greet, let child share feelings, while offering positive feedback that reinforces the feeling of them transitioning to a loving and safe family.
* For a younger child, the sending family can buy a doll that has similar characteristics to receiving mother/father such as hair color, eye color, skin color. Use the doll during play to express excitement about their new receiving parents.
* The sending family can buy a child a small hot wheel car that is same color as receiving family’s car and use it in play to talk about their new family and the car they drive. This will allow the children to envision their new family through play. Find ways to connect the child’s interest to the receiving family.
* Small compliments to receiving parents in front of child can go a long way. After initial meet and great talk with children about what you liked about the receiving parents. It could be something simple like they have a dog or drive a blue car, or they smile a lot. Sending children need to feel that the Sending family likes and approves of Receiving family.
* Make the transition fun by celebrating what is coming, such as having a mini “ getting adopted” party with a cake and picture book of receiving family.