

Reactive Attachment Disorder

Reactive Attachment Disorder: Reactive attachment disorder occurs when children are abandoned by parents or caregivers. Because the Asian Hope kids were abandoned by their biological parents, the caregivers who have cycled in and out, and all the short-term teams, they have differing degrees of attachment problems. It may be hard to imagine how short-term teams can contribute to this disorder, but the kids have voids in their lives because they have not had one single person who has been there for them consistently and because they attach so quickly to new people who show them attention and affection, they feel abandoned every time someone leaves them. This information is not meant to frighten or concern you but is merely informative. Our team here will help you navigate relationships during your stay.

Symptoms of RAD:

1. Superficially engaging and charming behavior
2. Indiscriminate affection with strangers
3. Persistent nonsense questions and incessant questions
4. Lack of impulse controls

How friends/acquaintances/teachers can help:

1. Children learn a survival tactic of getting attention and approval from anyone; continuing this practice does not help them to feel safe and protected by the parents in the family. Therefore, we must limit and highly structure their contact with strangers/acquaintances/and people outside the family and supportive team. We hope you understand that this is for their well-being.
2. If and when in contact with the kids, friends/acquaintances, teachers should drop eye contact if the child is gazing intensely. This gaze is often meant to exert control over others.

3. Don't spend time with only the children; include the whole family. Remember that we are trying to create a normal family environment for the children. A normal family does not have strangers come in and take their children away to spend time with only the kids.

4. Don't be sucked in to the "poor me" syndrome. Yes, the kids have had some hard things happen to them, but we don't want them to stay stuck there. Kids with RAD can use their "story" to manipulate.

5. Don't expect to come and "treat" the kids to outings, parties, gift-giving, or trips. Think of a divorced mom whose non-present husband who spends time with the kids by taking them to the mall, buying them presents, etc. The mom turns into the bad guy who must make the kids do homework, do chores, and obey house rules.

6. Find out how you can support the house parents, teachers, and other people who are consistently involved in the kids' lives. Also, spend time getting to know Cambodia and the issues present here. Find out about the lives of the Asian Hope kids through visiting the school and talking with teachers, meeting the "families" (Asian Hope girls and Asian Hope boys, along with their respective house parents), learning the history of Cambodia through the genocide museum and Killing Fields, going to visit various ministries that are focused on child trafficking, children who survive by picking through garbage, etc.