

# BluesNews

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## Welcome...

We are good problem - solvers. When public child welfare agencies have are required to find a foster care solution for a child with extreme needs, we want them to call us. Let it be known Bluewater can help the Children's Aid Society find appropriate placements for children and youth with challenging placements needs. Call Bluewater: 519.294.6213

### [PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DATES INSIDE](#)

This is another single focus issue of BluesNews. The article is about "the link between running away and trauma. In work with traumatized children and young people, running away can be one of the most challenging and troubling themes. However, as a universal theme it is one of most important matters we need to find a way of thinking about and working with. We can't just 'lock' children up or ironically 'throw them out' after they've ran away."

We are always looking for solutions...

Hope you enjoy and be sure to share BluesNews with everyone who asks...



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## REASONS A TRAUMATIZED CHILD RUNS AWAY

**“I STARTED RUNNING AWAY WHEN I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD. IT WASN'T UNTIL I WAS AN ADULT THAT I REALIZED WHAT I REALLY WANTED WAS SOMEBODY TO COME AFTER ME WHEN I WAS RUNNING AWAY.”**

**WILLIE AAMES**

Writtten by PATRICK TOMLINSON (2015)

I have been thinking about the link between trauma and running away. In work with traumatized children and young people, running away can be one of the most challenging and troubling themes. However, as a universal theme it is one of most important matters we need to find a way of thinking about and working with. We can't just 'lock' children up or ironically 'throw them out' after they've ran away.

First of all, I should make it clear that I am not implying that the American actor Willie Aames was a traumatized child. I use the quote only because I think it makes at least three useful points. One is that running away as with many behaviors can have different meanings beneath the surface. Secondly, Aames implies that his behavior was a communication. It also seems that no-one picked up on his communication in the way he was hoping for unconsciously. Thirdly, he makes it clear that his conscious view only emerged many years later. So, as a child he didn't know why he was running away. If he had of been asked he probably could not have given a meaningful answer. Even though the quote says that he wanted someone to run after him, this doesn't explain why he had the impulse to run. Why did the impulse develop when he was five?

For most children there is a point in their development where they realize they can run away. This may just be a sign that the child has a healthy curiosity about what else might be out there. The child realizes she has the potential to go outside of her parent's world. It may be a way of experimenting with crossing boundaries. To run away one has to go over a line. This possibility, which is more an interest in exploration and discovery may enter the child's imagination and dreams even if it isn't literally acted out. Is the urge to run away a move towards independence? “Once I ran to you, now I'll run from you”, as the lyrics to the song ‘Tainted Love’ say. The child might feel excited and also slightly fearful about the possibilities.

A traumatized child may have far more troubled connections with the impulse to run away. It is clear that one of the terrifying things about trauma is that it is inescapable at the time. The body is unable to escape, leaving the mind and body unprotected from the full horror of what is happening. The only form of escape especially for children who face repeated traumas such as abuse may be to dissociate. In other words their mind becomes removed from the body. As if it isn't happening to them. Physiological and psychological mechanisms kick in to reduce pain and increase the chance of survival.

As a result, the child's body might feel useless to him. He may feel let down by his body and ashamed of his 'failure' to escape (van der Kolk, 2014). We often see traumatized children who are lacking basic physical competence. Many have difficulties in co-ordination and can appear clumsy. Self-esteem deteriorates and the problem of having an incompetent body and mind grows.

*(Continued on page 3)*

As a child begins to recover from trauma he will begin to gain confidence. He will become physically and mentally more capable. For the reasons I have mentioned, gaining a sense of physical mastery is extremely important for these children. Running might be one of those areas of mastery along with other physical activities. Their 'useless' bodies now begin to feel more capable. One upshot of this is that they can now experiment with escaping. I can only imagine if a small child has been unable to escape terrifying situations at the hands of an adult, as he grows bigger it must be liberating to be able to run away. The message might be, I am no longer powerless and I can get away when necessary. Just the experience that it is possible might be enough. The child can't necessarily trust that there won't be a need at some point.

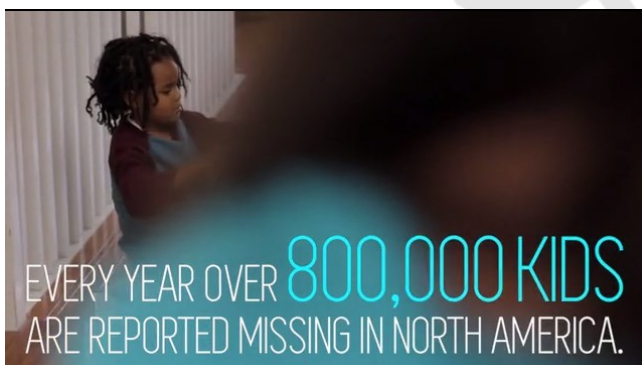
If a traumatized child feels empowered by being able to run away, in some ways it might be an important step forwards. If this is the case we need to be careful not to be punitive and harsh in our response. This would be a bit like punishing a victim for giving up the victim role. I would add that it is generally a good thing not to be punitive and harsh towards a traumatized child. This isn't likely to induce a feeling of wanting to stay. In fact, what we do on the child's return can be crucially important. How do we express our concern but also provide her with the space to discuss, explore and say anything that might be important? Does the child feel welcomed back? How do we feel about having her back? Sometimes people may feel relieved and angry at the same time?

Even if there is a healthy aspect of development in a child running away, those being ran away from are not likely to welcome it. So, what are the kind of questions to consider? One well known and key question is whether the person is running away from or to something. Or as the American novelist Sherwood Anderson said it may be both? Is it possible that there is actually something going on in the living situation that the child is running away from? For example, is she being bullied? On the other hand, is someone luring her away? Are there actually seriously unsafe situations that she is either running away from or to? Does the child just feel safer, more free and in control being away from people? Is she running away from risking the possibility of a good relationship? Is there something positive she is running to? Such as a wish to be reunited with family. Even though we might have concerns about the family the wish for connection is natural.

As I have said, running away is often a very difficult experience for those who are being left behind. It can feel that a child running away is rejecting the care being offered. On top of this there can be a lot of worry and anxiety involved. When I started work looking after 10 traumatized boys it wasn't long before I experienced a child running away. Given the children's lack of concern for safety and their vulnerability the risks were significant. We were located in a therapeutic community on a farm, about 6 miles from the nearest town. Sometimes by the time a boy who had ran off got outside of the community he would come back, already tired by his efforts! This was one advantage of the location. Running away didn't put the children in such immediate danger as it might in a city. There have been many reported instances of children in out of home care, getting involved with gangs, drugs and sex, etc. This inevitably causes huge anxiety for the adults looking after the children. The anxiety can escalate so that all attention is on stopping the child from running away and little on thinking why she may be doing it.

It is also worth paying attention to our feelings and thoughts while the child is 'missing'. What is the running away evoking in us? For example, is the child projecting some of her fears in us? Is she giving us a taste of what it feels like to be abandoned and run away from?

A colleague, Tuhinul Islam Khalil (2013) mentioned that in Bangladesh, children living in a large residential home where he worked were often running away and 'dropping out'. Contact with the children's mothers was not encouraged as many of them were sex



workers. Tuhinul recognized that the children needed their 'mums'. He changed the organization's policy so that, "Mum can come and visit any time they want, they don't even need appointment to come. So, it is like magic, within a month the dropout rate has nearly gone". This was an excellent example of thinking about the underlying reason and meeting the need.

Back to my days of trudging around the muddy fields looking for run-away children. Sometimes I might find the child and he would return with me. Often it felt like a game of cat and mouse. This in itself could be exciting for the child and after a few hours he would usually return on his own accord for a warm bath and food. Simon Bain, a resident

"A path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you . . . Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself alone, one question . . . Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't it is of no use."

*(Continued on page 4)*

of this therapeutic community in the 1970s, commented (2012), "Although, you could say, I wasn't a success, the funniest and indeed my fondest memories are the 'running outs' we used to do, with the staff spending half the night chasing us".

This raises the question as to whether the need to 'run away and be found' can be built into daily life. For instance, hide and seek type of games or more adventurous orientation activities for older children. I imagine that hide and seek is a universally popular childhood game. Capturing why this game can be so meaningful, Winnicott (1963, p.186) said, "It is a joy to be hidden and a disaster not to be found". The child has a simultaneous wish both to be hidden and to be found. Symbolically this may represent the child's inner self being hidden but also wishing to be found. Some children might feel like no-one cares enough to look for and find them. They might feel they aren't even noticed and seen. 'Out of sight out of mind', as is so often the reality for traumatized children.

Sometimes when a child ran away, being the one to go look for him was actually a preferable activity to some of the alternatives, such as cleaning the house or attending a difficult meeting. Of course, we couldn't easily admit this, but it highlights one of the possible dynamics. As adults, what might we have invested in the child running away? Might the child be running away for the adult? Is the child running away from something that he senses is going on between the adults? Thinking about what we do and feel in response to the run-away child may give us a helpful clue.

In one of the training sessions I attended in those early days of my career we watched a video of a well-known psychologist talking about his work in a famous institution. He said that sometimes a child could not be stopped from running away so rather than 'run after him' they tried to 'run with him'. I found this a revolutionary way of re-framing the problem. Maybe sometimes our job wasn't to stop a child running away but to make the running away safe. To be alongside the child.

Sometimes a child may run away on his own and other times with another child or group of children. This can raise additional worries and questions. Such as, is one or more of the children abusing another? What are they doing when they are away? Are they getting into exciting delinquent activities? If they feel excited having adults on the run do we make matters worse by joining in with the chase? If we don't are we like the neglectful parent? What happens to any children who do not join in with the running away? Is all of our attention on them distracted, so running away becomes a way of gaining attention? Is what we are providing in the home interesting, nurturing and stimulating so that there is a bigger pull towards staying rather than leaving?

Knowing the child's history may also give us important clues. Is there a pattern of running away in the child's life? Did important people in the child's life run away? If the child did run away before what happened afterwards? Did she get punished or eventually moved to another placement? Is the running away a form of testing to see what we will do?

Running away can also be seen as a symbolic wish to escape fears and situations, which might be connected to the past rather than a reality in the present. A traumatized child feels as if the trauma or the possibility of it is still present. Is being on the move a way of avoiding pain? If the child had someone alongside her to hold and work with her pain would the need to run away change? If we work on facing the pain, might the need to run away get worse? Thinking what the running may mean symbolically can be a helpful area to explore. A psychologist, Rudy Gonzalez explained a useful example to me. He had noticed in Australia that children in 'out of home' care would often be attracted towards a train track if there was one close by. Young people and adults who have 'behavior problems' are often referred to as being 'off the rails' or 'on the wrong track'. Rudy refers to Sharon who could often be found by the train tracks,

"We could have judged Sharon's behaviour as being only destructive, which may have resulted in a punitive response. In contrast, seeing the behaviour as an attempt to act out a positive desire which was to get on the 'right track' led to a more empathetic response. Through her behavior, Sharon had introduced the symbol of the train tracks. Travel metaphors such as trains and train tracks are full of symbolic possibilities – excitement, envy for those on the train, danger, change, escape, being on the move, a new life." (Barton et al., 2011)

I think that is a good place to finish, there is plenty to think about on this subject!



M-12

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Patrick Tomlinson Blog: [patricktomlinson.blogspot.com/](http://patricktomlinson.blogspot.com/)

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 2015 - 2016

PARKHILL		September 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015
		Sept 23	Oct 14 Oct 28	Nov 11 Nov 25	Dec 9
January 2016	February 2016	March 2016	April 2016	May 2016	June 2016
Jan 13 Jan 27	Feb 10 Feb 24	March 9 March 24	April 13 April 27	May 11 May 25	June 8
LEAMINGTON		September 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015
		Sept 25	Oct 7 Oct 21	Nov 4 Nov 18	Dec 2 Dec 16
January 2016	February 2016	March 2016	April 2016	May 2016	June 2016
Jan 6 Jan 20	Feb 3 Feb 17	March 2 March 16	April 6 April 20	May 4 May 25	June 1 June 15



# Out of the mouths of babes

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A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 to 8 year-olds, 'What does love mean?'

The answers they got were broader, deeper, and more profound than anyone could have ever imagined !

'When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore.. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love.

Rebecca- age 8

'When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.'

Billy - age 4

'Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.'

Karl - age 5

'Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs.'

Chrissy - age 6

'Love is what makes you smile when you're tired.'

Terri - age 4

'Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK.'

Danny - age 8

'Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and just listen.'

Bobby - age 7

'If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate'

Nikka - age 6

'Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it everyday.'

Noelle - age 7

'Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well.'

Tommy - age 6

'During my piano recital , I was on a stage and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore.'

Cindy - age 8

'My mommy loves me more than anybody. You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night.'

Clare - age 6

'Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken.'

Elaine-age 5

'Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford.'

Chris - age 7

'Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day.'

Mary Ann - age 4

'I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.'

Lauren - age 4

'When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.'

Karen - age 7

'Love is when Mommy sees Daddy on the toilet and she doesn't think it's gross..'

Mark - age 6

'You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.'

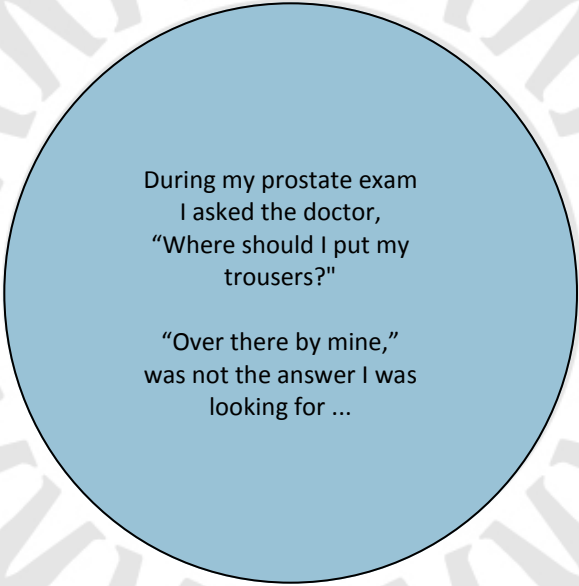
Jessica - age 8

And the final one:

The winner was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there.

When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, 'Nothing , I just helped him cry'



During my prostate exam  
I asked the doctor,  
"Where should I put my  
trousers?"

"Over there by mine,"  
was not the answer I was  
looking for ...

A Blonde goes to a shop to buy curtains. She says to the salesman, 'I would like to buy a pair of pink curtains.'

The salesman assures her that they have a large selection of pink curtains. He shows her several patterns but the blonde seems to be having a hard time choosing. Finally she selects a lovely pink floral print.

The salesman then asks what size curtains she needs. The blonde promptly replies, 'Seventeen inches.' 'Seventeen inches ?' asked the salesman. 'That sounds very small, what room are they for ?'

The blonde says, 'They aren't for a room, they are for my new computer monitor.'

The surprised salesman replies, 'But Miss, computers do not need curtains!'

The blonde says, 'HeIIIIloooooo ..... mine has Windows..'

**BLUEWATER FAMILY SUPPORT  
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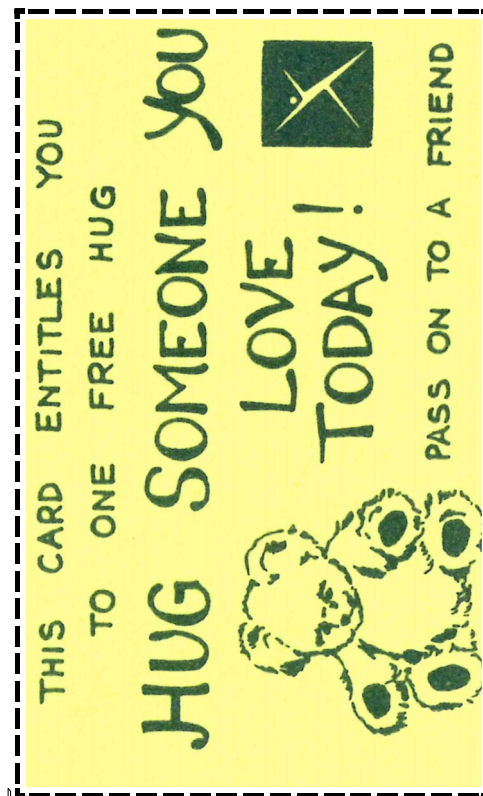
say what?!

*Music can be a powerful tool for communicating difficult feelings or thoughts. Songwriters often give a voice to our thoughts and express our feelings better than we might ever have dreamt.*

*Here are a couple of Youtube links*

[HIGHER TRUTH](#)

[PRAYING FOR RAIN](#)

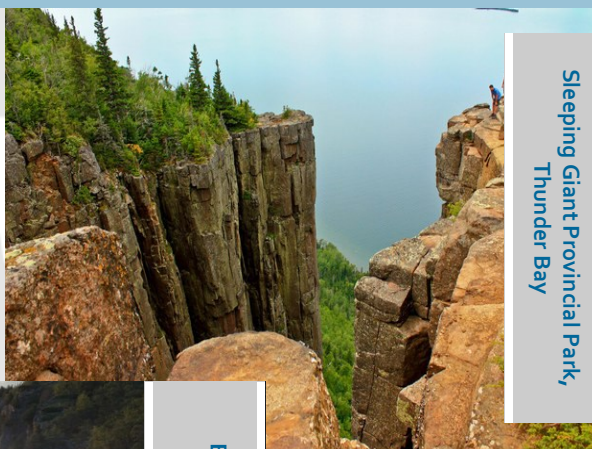


## BEAUTY in ONTARIO



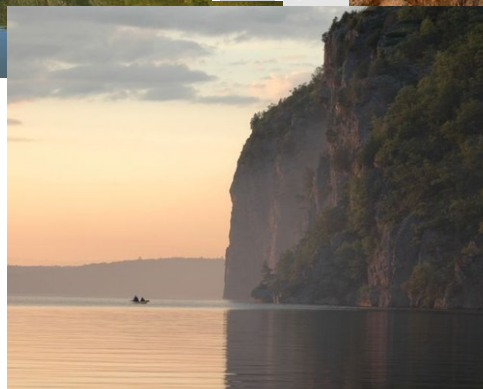
The Bluffs, Scarborough

Fun Fact: Scarborough, Ontario was named after Scarborough, England because of the similarities of the bluffs and the limestone cliffs in North Yorkshire.



Sleeping Giant Provincial Park, Thunder Bay

This park gets its name from a formation of sedimentary rock which, from a distance, looks like (you guessed it) a sleeping giant.



Bon Echo Provincial Park, Addington Highlands

Over 260 aboriginal pictographs cover the 100 metre escarpment, making the Mazinaw Rock a National Historic Site of Canada.