

# UNPLOWED GROUND

*family & friends*



# UNPLOWED GROUND

## *a note to family & friends*

*Hello!*

If you are reading this, you're a family member or friend of an Unplowed Ground family. For a season, this family is providing a specialized level of care which their child needs to heal. They will need your support and encouragement, as we are sure you're ready to give!

There are lots of ways you can support and encourage a family during the season in which they are implementing Unplowed Ground therapeutic parenting. This packet is designed to help you find the support role that's right for you! Whatever you do, it is all valuable and so needed. In our years of experience working with hundreds of families, by the grace of God we have seen children heal and entire families thrive with Unplowed Ground... But a key component of each and every family's success is a good, strong support system. Therapeutic parenting is hard work. YOU are a crucial piece in the puzzle.

One day soon, this season will come to an end. A secure attachment is the basis for all future relationships. As this child forms more secure attachments first with their forever Mom and Dad, they will then be able to enjoy healthy and fun relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, church leaders, and lifelong friends. Thank you in advance for all the support and encouragement you are providing in the wait. Helping this child attach to their forever Mom and Dad might be one of the most important tasks you're given in this life. We are your biggest fans.

*Many blessings.  
The King's Ranch Team*

**UnplowedGROUND**  
THERAPEUTIC PARENTING

WWW.UNPLOWEDGROUND.ORG  
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# UNPLOWED GROUND

## family & friends FAQs

### WHAT IS UNPLOWED GROUND AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PARENTING METHODS?

Unplowed Ground is a brain-healing, attachment-driven, and biblically-based therapeutic parenting program for children affected by trauma. The most important way that Unplowed Ground is different from other parenting methods is that it provides an intensive level of nurture, as well as an intensive level of structure. This high nurture and high structure can seem odd to those of us who have parented healthy children. But for children with undeveloped or insecure attachments, this intensive level of care (nurture + structure) can re-wire their brains and empower them to be able to enjoy healthy relationships for the rest of their life. We like to think of it as the emotional "Intensive Care Unit." For this season, Unplowed Ground families operate with just the same intentionality as if their child was in the actual I.C.U., and they'll need just as much support from family and friends, as well.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF UNPLOWED GROUND?

The purpose of Unplowed Ground therapeutic parenting is to strengthen healthy attachment between the child and their loving parents, whether adoptive, foster, or biological. Every Unplowed Ground parenting technique is designed to build attachment between the child and the mom (as the primary caregiver). When this secure attachment is built, the child can finally go from living out of the survival center of their brain to enjoying life as a happy, healthy kid -- playing, learning, growing, and trusting their parents to provide, protect, and love them. In time, this leads to the child being able to grow in spiritual formation, developing both their understanding of God's character and their ability to trust Him.

### HOW LONG DOES THE UNPLOWED GROUND PROGRAM LAST?

Therapeutic parenting is not meant to last forever. It is just for a season. A reasonable goal is to be able to successfully transition to traditional parenting methods within 6-24 months. The Unplowed Ground training walks parents through this transition carefully, step-by-step. While most families see growth and healing in their child's attachment within 6-24 months, the timeline varies depending on each unique child and their specific needs.

### WHAT IS TRIANGULATION?

When a trauma-affected child struggles with trust and attachment, they often act out their feelings, one way being through triangulation. As a survival mechanism, the child might try to create a two-against-one situation, pitting the adults against one another (the child and other adult "against" the mom). Some triangulation behaviors to look for are: displays of affection toward the other adult (when mom is around), complaints about mom to the other adult (when mom is not around), and being on their best behavior around the other adult while acting completely differently when alone with mom. If the child is allowed to triangulate, it will only prolong their trauma and suffering. You can prevent and stop triangulation by always being on the mom's team, redirecting all positive attention and affection toward mom, and sticking to the support role mom has asked you to provide.



## HOW SHOULD I INTERACT WITH THE CHILD?

*We know you just want to show love and care for the child. There is no such thing as "too much" love, right?! While that is true, during this season the way to love the child is to always point them to their mom and dad for ALL their needs. This means that all the hugs, snuggles, and fun activities should ONLY come from mom and dad. It's just a season, and there will be a day for grandparents' hugs, for cousins' play dates at the park, for snuggling on the couch with a good book, for baking cookies and watching movies together. But in this season, your interaction should be limited to loving smiles, eye contact, and kind tone of voice. You give high fives. Hugs are from mom and dad. You do not want to compete with the parents.*

## WHY CAN THE CHILD NOT ATTACH TO ME?

*The hope is that one day he or she will indeed be ready to attach to you, as a loving grandparent, extended family member, or trusted family friend. However, a child from trauma must first build a secure attachment with mom. Healthy newborns begin building attachment to trustworthy mothers in the womb. The wounded child is making up for lost time, and until they attach securely to mom, they will remain unable to enjoy healthy attachments in their other relationships. Your time is coming, but attachment to mom must come first.*

## WHY DOES THE CHILD NEED TO DO "STATIONS"?

*Stations are simply areas where the child engages in parent-directed play. Stations are never a punishment, and they should be fun! The reason we use stations in Unplowed Ground is to help a child achieve "felt safety." Many times, children from trauma did not receive boundaries as a toddler. Playing in stations helps the child learn to accept the parents' safe boundaries, learn to trust the parent, and learn to stop feeling like they must be in charge of their own survival. This is part of revisiting the first years of life and rebuilding healthy neural pathways for attachment, both of which are key brain-healing elements of Unplowed Ground therapeutic parenting. The child in stations will just look like a child playing on a rug or in another defined space, with sensory-rich, developmentally-appropriate toys. The difference is that the play is parent-directed, and the boundaries are parent-placed.*

## IS UNPLOWED GROUND "MEAN" OR "UNKIND"?

*Absolutely not! Quite the opposite, Unplowed Ground therapeutic parenting requires an intensive level of nurture that immerses a child in loving care and 24/7 attention. (This is why having a support system for mom is so crucial!) In fact, with Unplowed Ground, parents learn how to replace common destructive parenting behaviors such as yelling, lecturing, threatening, and arguing, with loving responses and brain-healing communication techniques. Parents are taught that while consequences are necessary for brain-healing, they are never punitive, but rather always given in love. The goal of Unplowed Ground is cultivating the soil of a child's heart. A kind tone of voice, genuine smiles, plenty of hugs and snuggles, and lots of love from mom and dad are the basis for all of the other Unplowed Ground parenting techniques.*

## WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF UNPLOWED GROUND?

*Ultimately, the goal of Unplowed Ground is the healthy spiritual formation of the child. When a wounded child learns to trust a safe and loving parent, the hardened soil of their heart is softened, thorns of trauma are uprooted, and seeds of the gospel can grow. This is the ultimate goal of Unplowed Ground -- connecting mom and child in trust and love, so that the child can one day trust Jesus with their heart and live in healthy relationship with Him.*

## WHAT IF I DISAGREE?

*If you do not agree that the child needs a therapeutic approach to parenting, we ask you to consider the possibility that you do not see all that the parent sees. Children from trauma often "honeymoon" with other adults (grandparents, extended family, teachers, friends), saving their most problematic behaviors for mom and dad, since they are the ones who are trying to attach to them the most. Sometimes even the dad doesn't see the same child as the mom does, due to the fact that the mom is the primary attachment figure. Even if the child does not "need" Unplowed Ground as his or her parents believe, these parenting techniques will not harm even a healthy child. The high level of nurture and high level of structure will only serve to build more secure attachments for any and every child. So no worries. Your support and encouragement will go a long way in a short season. Trusting the child's parents to know what's best for the child and for them may be difficult, but will reap years of benefit for all involved.*

## WHY CAN NORMAL FUN ACTIVITIES (SUCH AS: GOING TO THE PARK OR GOING TO SEE A MOVIE) BE HARMFUL IN THIS SEASON OF THERAPEUTIC PARENTING?

*It might help to think of this season as "emotional I.C.U." for the child. Just as we would never expect a child healing from a terrible accident in the I.C.U. to go run around the park or go out to the movies, we must let the trauma-affected child have the time and space to heal emotionally. For this season, mom is redoing their first three years of life in order to grow the foundation of trust that did not get established during those crucial years. For this reason, all fun activities should come from mom. This will signal to their healing brains to look to mom (not self-survival) all for their needs... including their need for fun!*

## WHY CAN NORMAL NURTURING ACTIVITIES (LIKE BAKING TOGETHER OR READING A STORY) BE HARMFUL IN THIS SEASON OF THERAPEUTIC PARENTING?

*During this season of rebuilding attachment with mom, it is of utmost importance that all nurturing activities come solely from her. Please don't compete with mom for the position of nurturer, as this only delays healing and prolongs the child's trauma and suffering. Rest assured, with Unplowed Ground the child is receiving an intensive level of nurture from mom; she is revisiting the first year of life through daily, intentional nurturing activities. This will build a foundation of trust that will allow the child to then be able to enjoy warm and fun activities with grandparents and other special adults in their lives when they are ready.*

## HOW CAN I BEST SUPPORT THIS FAMILY?

There are lots of ways to support an Unplowed Ground family, but the most important way is to be on their team. Let them know they're doing a great job! Let them know you are on the same page, that you support their decision to implement therapeutic parenting for this season, and that you want to do anything you can to help. Believe them when they express their concerns about their child's health to you. Realize that they see things you might not see. Cheer them on. Words of encouragement go a long way for parents who are likely much more discouraged and exhausted than you realize.

## WHAT SUPPORT ROLE IS RIGHT FOR ME?

That's a great question! The answer is really up to you! Here are some options:

- **CHEERLEADER**

A cheerleader is an enthusiastic and vocal supporter of something or someone. Cheerleaders may stand on the sidelines, but they are crucial to the win!! One thing most people don't realize about cheerleaders is that they must know quite a lot about the game! If you choose to be a cheerleader for an Unplowed Ground family, be sure and register for one of our free online trainings so that you can give specific encouragement!

- **RESPITE PROVIDER**

Respite Providers provide regular care for a child in an Unplowed Ground family. They implement Unplowed Ground parenting techniques while the child is in their care (high structure, but no nurture... that comes from Mom). If you choose to be a Respite Provider, you will want to complete our online Respite Training and schedule coaching consults with our Respite Specialists as needed. We are here to equip and support you!

- **PRAYER PARTNER**

The most important support role you can play is also one that anyone can do! "Pray continually" (1 Thess. 5:17) for this family and child's healing, and let them know you are praying for them, too!

## HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

We invite you to visit our website at [unplowedground.org](http://unplowedground.org) and register for one of our free online trainings. You can register for Unplowed Ground Basics and view all of the training videos the parents view. Or, if you'll be providing respite care for the child, you'll want to watch our Respite Provider training, designed specifically for babysitters, care providers, and friends and family members who occasionally watch the child while mom and dad enjoy a break. And of course, you may reach out to us anytime with your questions! Just email [info@unplowedground.org](mailto:info@unplowedground.org). We look forward to hearing from you!

# UNPLOWED GROUND

## friends & family cheatsheet

I WANT A HUG!  
WHY CAN'T I HUG  
YOU?

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

Oh! I'm sorry. Hugs **only** come from your awesome mom right now. I would love to give you a high five though!

CAN I HAVE  
SOMETHING  
SWEET? WHY NOT?

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

That's a great question! Sweet things come from your awesome mom! I bet she makes the most yummy treats for you. What is your favorite treat your mom makes for you?

WHY DO I HAVE TO  
USE A DOOR CHIME  
AT YOUR HOUSE?

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

I want you to have a door chime at my house so that I can know and you can know if anyone opens your door. I want you to feel safe.

I'D RATHER BE  
WITH YOU THAN  
WITH MY PARENTS.

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

Thanks for letting me know! You have amazing and caring parents. I wonder if that's really true.

I DON'T LIKE MY  
MOM/DAD. THEY  
ARE MEAN!

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

Hmmm... thanks for letting me know! I wonder if that's true?

WHY CAN'T WE DO  
THINGS LIKE WE  
USED TO?

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

Right now, you and your parents are working so hard to help your heart get stronger. For now, that is our focus.

I HAD A REALLY  
HARD LIFE. MY  
PARENTS ADOPTED  
ME BECAUSE OF  
XYZ.

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

Wow. Thanks for sharing that. That sounds like some stuff you should share with your forever mom. I'm sure she would love to talk to you about that.

I DON'T KNOW WHY  
I HAVE TO DO XYZ.  
I ALWAYS OBEY AT  
HOME.

**YOU MIGHT SAY...**

Hmmm... I wonder if that's true? What would your parents say?

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

- **All of these responses are to be said in a loving yet matter-of-fact tone of voice. It's important not to use a sarcastic tone of voice!**
- **All questions are rhetorical. no further explanations needed.**

## REMEMBER...

*This is just for a season.*

# SUPPORT ROLE # 1

## cheerleader

### PHYSICAL SUPPORT

Support this family similarly to how you might support a family with a new baby. They are revisiting the first three years of life, so it is appropriate to assume they need care like having a baby in their home, even if the child is older. Some examples include...

- Providing meals
- Offering to keep the healthy kids (i.e. taking them out, providing some normalcy for them on hard days)
- Offering to carpool with healthy kids
- Drop off encouraging "happies"
- **Educate yourself (be trained!!)**
- In all interaction with the child, be mindful of attachment and push him/her toward mom

### EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

This work is very emotionally involved (and draining). Support the parents by listening, understanding, and checking in on their mental/emotional health. This may also include taking a "front seat role" in your relationship for this season with no hurt feelings or judgement, meaning they won't always be the first to reach out or initiate plans. Offer emotional support by...

- Being a safe space for them to talk to
- Checking on them periodically to see how they're doing
- Providing a no-judgement zone
- Being extra understanding when plans are cancelled or things change last minute
- Committing to always be on the parents' team

### SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

This is the most important means of support you can offer. Commit to pray for this family during this season. Pray consistently, intentionally and specifically. Let the family know you are praying. Commit in prayer by...

- Going to battle for their child's healing in prayer
- Praying for the parents
- Praying for their healthy children
- Praying consistently and specifically

\*See prayer prompts under the "Prayer Partner" document for ideas of specific ways to pray



# SUPPORT ROLE # 2

## respite provider

### BE TRAINED

*In order to become an effective respite provider for this family, you will need to be trained. Here are some of the main ways to make sure you are the best respite provider you can be...*

- *Commit to be trained. We offer Unplowed Ground Respite training at [unplowedground.org/respite](http://unplowedground.org/respite)*
- *Schedule a Respite Provider consultation with a member of our team*
- *Commit to **fully** implement every aspect of the training*
- *Commit to keeping things as consistent as possible to what Mom and Dad are doing at home*

### BE UNIFIED

*As a respite provider, you are a crucial part of this family's support team. It is critical that your priority is to be unified with the parents first, not the child. Some ways you can do this might be...*

- *Learning about triangulation*
- *Staying in continual communication with the parents*
- *Prioritizing pushing the child toward their parents*
- *Providing **NO** level of competition in connection or affection*

### BE AVAILABLE

*Because respite is a crucial supportive measure in therapeutic parenting, it is important that you are available to provide respite consistently. Make sure to...*

- *Communicate with the parents about a healthy schedule for the family.*
- *Understand the family's specific needs*
- *Determine a good location for both you and the family*

# SUPPORT ROLE # 3

## prayer partner

*Regardless of which level of involvement you choose, we hope you will commit to pray for this family!*

### FOR THE CHILD...

#### PRAY FOR REMOVAL OF HURT AND ANGER

*Father, You are the Healer of the brokenhearted. You declare that You bind up their wounds. Because it is Your nature to heal, I ask You to heal \_\_\_\_\_ of all his/her emotional wounds. By Your love and power, remove the hurt and anger that \_\_\_\_\_ is experiencing. Help him/her move on to emotional wholeness (Psalm 147:3).*

#### PRAY FOR HEALING

*Father, You sent Jesus to heal the brokenhearted. You sent Him to set the captives free. I plead in the name of Jesus that \_\_\_\_\_ would experience complete emotional healing. In the name of Jesus, I pray that \_\_\_\_\_ would be set free from every past hurt that binds him/her. Through Your Son Jesus, heal \_\_\_\_\_ and grant him/her freedom from the consequences of his/her past hurts (Luke 4:18-19).*

#### PRAY FOR THE CHILD'S DESIRE TO SEEK GOD

*Father, I plead that \_\_\_\_\_ would seek You with all his/her heart. I ask that \_\_\_\_\_ would cry out to You for emotional healing. I plead that \_\_\_\_\_ would seek You with all his/her being and that You would release Your healing into his/her life (Jeremiah 29:13).*

#### PRAY FOR UNFORGIVENESS

*Father, I ask You to set \_\_\_\_\_ free from any unforgiveness in his/her life. Deeply convict him/ her of any unforgiveness that he/she is harboring. Through Your grace and power, enable him/her to release the debt, the anger, and the damage into Your hands. I plead that he/she would forgive as You do for the sake of Christ (Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:32).*

#### PRAY FOR FRUIT IN THE CHILD'S LIFE

*Father, I pray that You would cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in \_\_\_\_\_'s life. I plead with You to transform \_\_\_\_\_. Root out the sinful, negative emotions that have been cultivated in his/her life. Replace these things with Your fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).*

# SUPPORT ROLE # 3

## *prayer partner*

### FOR THE FAMILY...

#### PRAY FOR ENDURANCE FOR MOM AND DAD

*Therapeutic parenting is not for the faint of heart. It is hard work, and can be hard on mom and dad's marriage and personal lives, too. Pray that they will have endurance to continue in the call God has placed on their life to be forever parents to this child!*

#### PRAY FOR A SOFTENED HEART FOR MOM AND DAD

*Sometimes, when behaviors are tough, it is easy to have a hardened heart toward the challenging child, especially when these patterns of hurtful behavior have been going on for a period of time. We all need God to work in our hearts... to revive the past of brokenness and give us His eyes to see this child the way He sees them.*

#### PRAY FOR REST IN THE MOM'S HEART AS SHE INTENSIVELY NURTURES

*This process is especially demanding of mom. Mom is the first and main person with whom the child will attach. The intensive nurture and structure required of her is incredibly draining, physically and emotionally. Pray that God will give her the strength she needs to keep going and be a strong attachment figure for this child!*

#### PRAY THAT HEALTHY SIBLINGS ARE ABLE TO FEEL SAFE AND LOVED

*In our years of working with families, one of the biggest concerns we hear is the toll these struggles have taken on their healthy children. Please pray against secondary trauma, and pray that in the midst of this intense healing period, the family's other children would remain healthy and happy.*

#### PRAY THAT GOD WOULD HEAL THEIR FAMILY IN JESUS' NAME

*Ultimately, we hope and pray that each child finds a place of healing, and is able to attach with their forever parents. We are asking you to join us in this BIG prayer that God would heal their family in Jesus' name - for His glory! We know He can do it!*