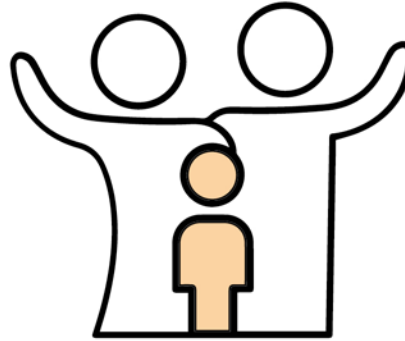


Improving Experiences in Care: Fostering Family Connections and Navigating Transitions

Candice Alusiola & Freida Bou Diab



The value of family connection



Why this matters

1. Sense of identity

- Family connections reinforce self-understanding and cultural identity
- Key for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Nyland Report, AIFS)
- Sibling ties support identity development (CREATE Foundation)

2. Belonging

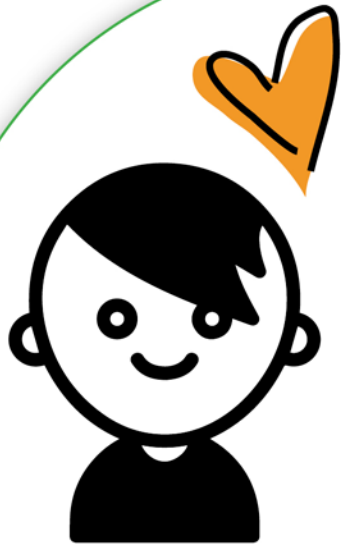
- Family relationships reduce placement disruptions (O'Neill et al., 2018)
- Supported contact fosters emotional safety and stability (CREATE Foundation)
- Consistent contact promotes inclusion (Nyland Report)

3. Emotional wellbeing

- Strong family ties buffer emotional distress (McGhee et al., 2021)
- Trauma-informed contact planning supports healing
- Emotional health improves with family engagement (CREATE foundation)

The Impact of Family Disconnection

Family disconnection can have significant impacts on emotional wellbeing, development, and identity formation.



Connection

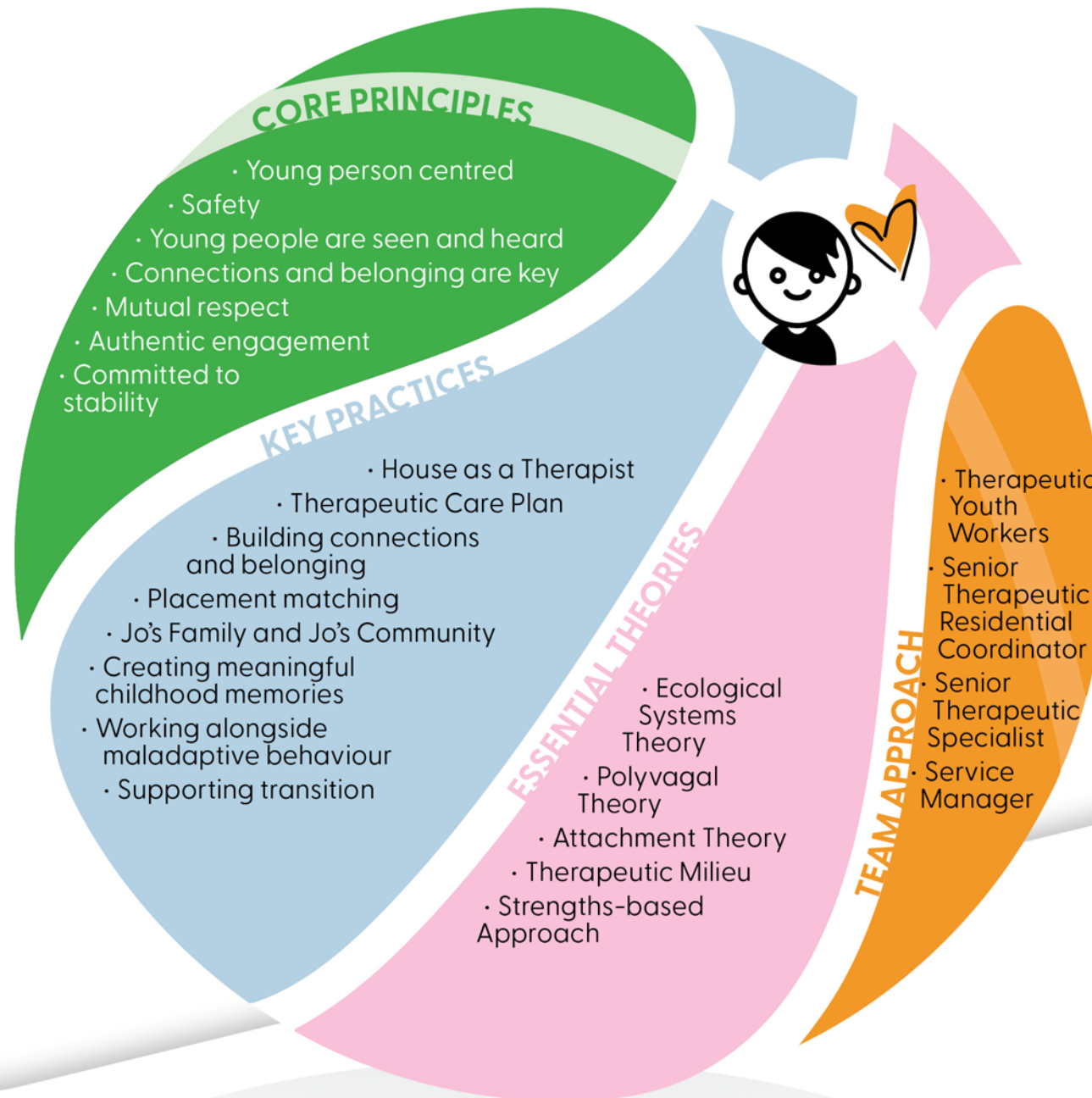
- Connected to culture
- Sense of identity
- Belonging
- Placement stability
- Relational safety
- Increased wellbeing



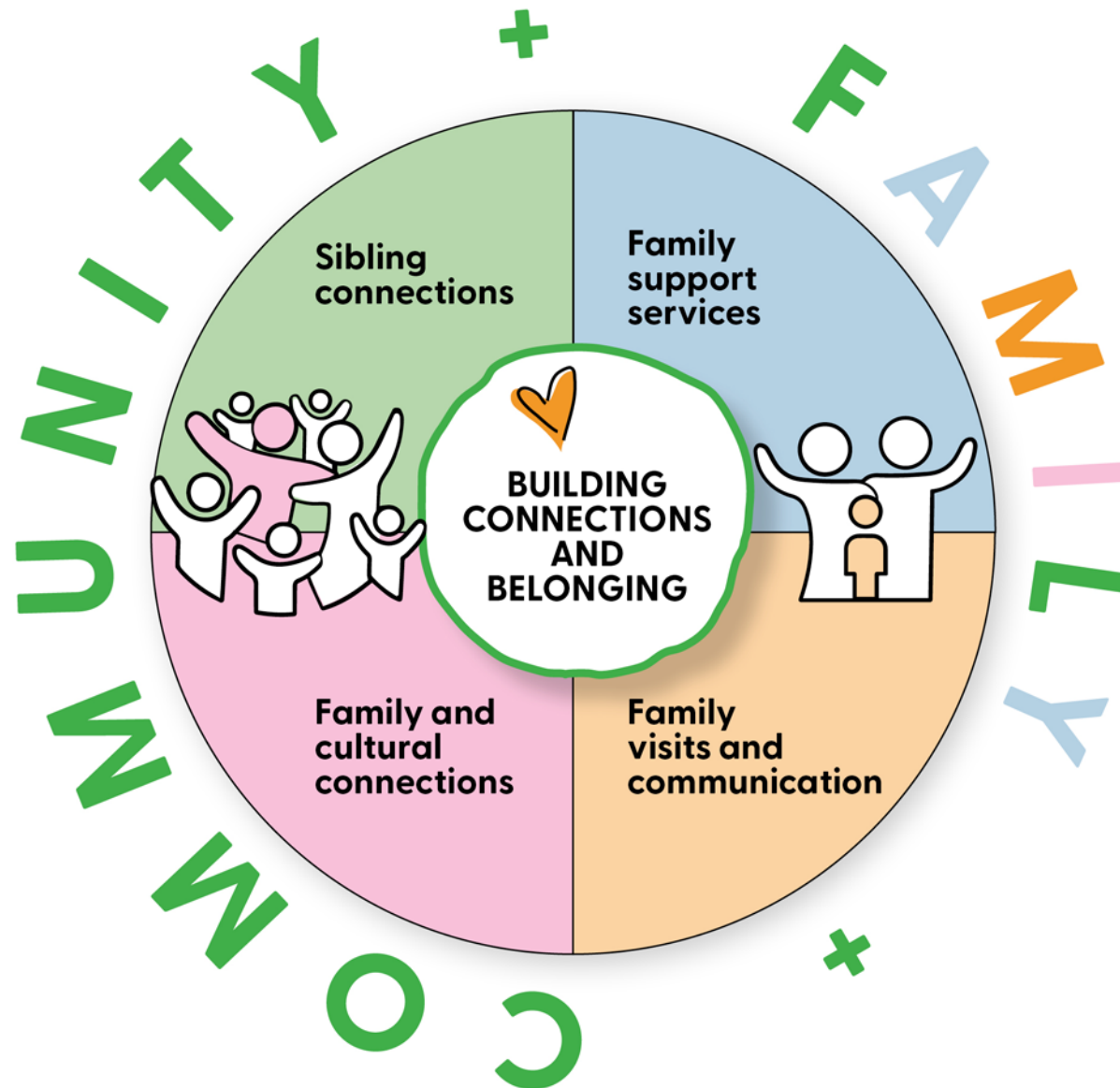
Disconnection

- Placement instability
- Rejection
- Lack of belonging
- Confusion
- Absence of relational safety
- Chronic hypervigilance

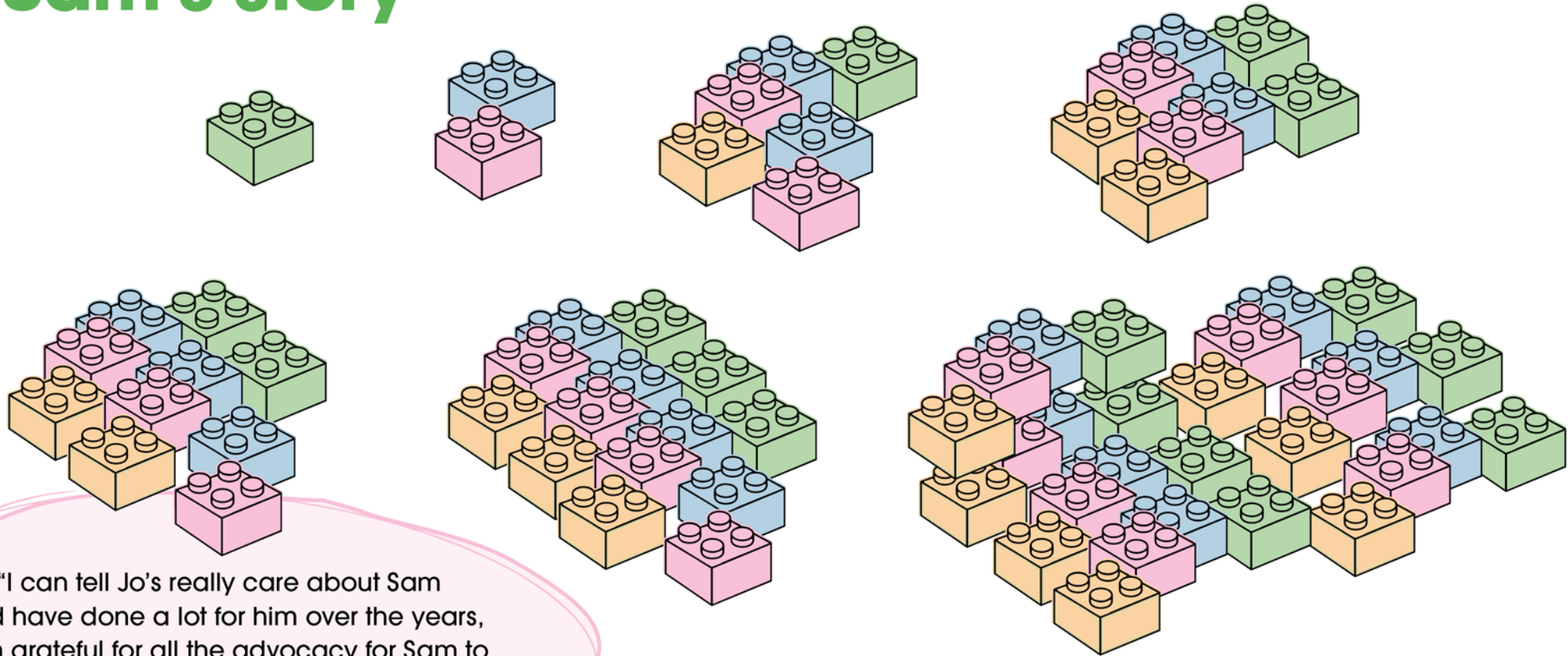
Jo's Model



How Jo's work with Family

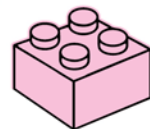


Sam's story



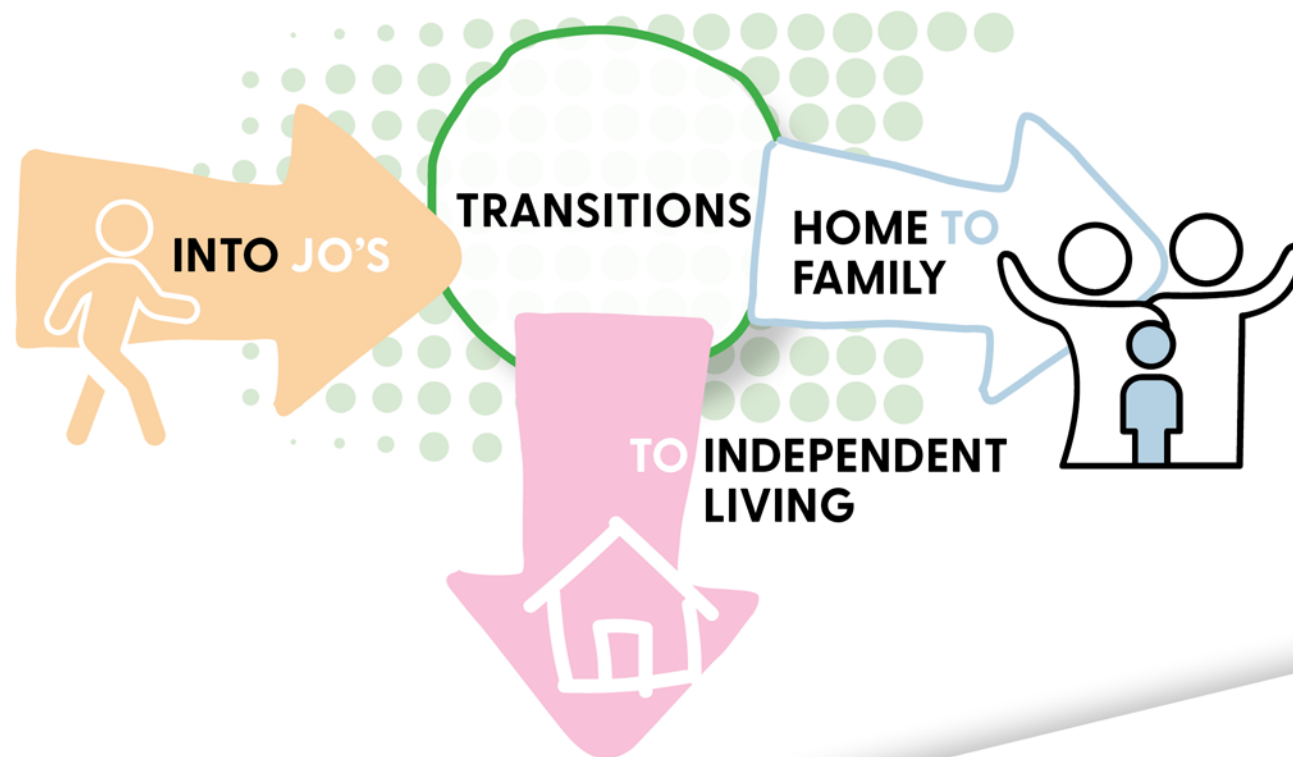
"I can tell Jo's really care about Sam and have done a lot for him over the years, I am grateful for all the advocacy for Sam to have for more time with us – his family."

– Lucy, Sam's mum



One block = one family visit per month

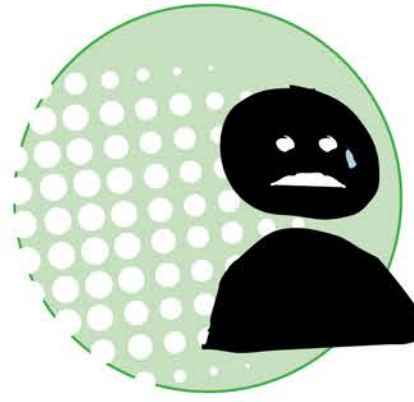
Transitions in care



What does the research say about transitions?



Stability of relationships
reduces trauma



Poorly managed transitions
increase emotional harm



Young people need agency
and support when exiting care



Jo's approach to transitions

- Planned, child-focused transitions
- Emotional and relational continuity
- Young person's involvement in decision-making (voice and choice)
- Gradual preparation for independent living



A closer look at collaborative transitions

"I liked the organisation in the house and the routines, I felt like I knew what was happening. I liked my how smooth my transition was."

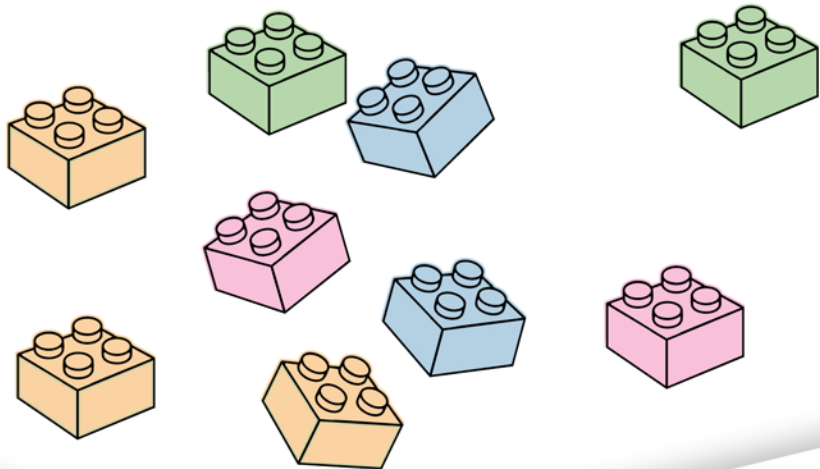
- Fatima, care leaver



Challenges and lessons learned

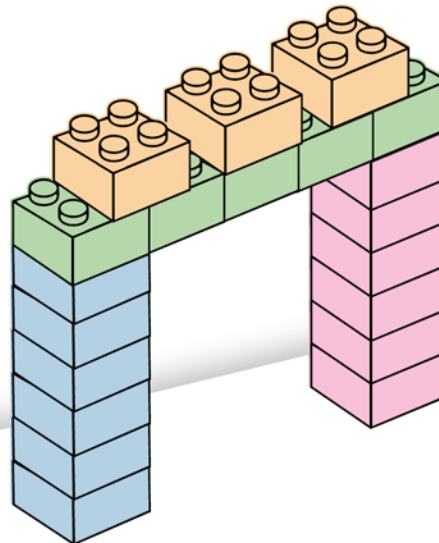
Common barriers:

- Safety concerns
- Resource constraints
- Limited family capacity



Strategies to overcome them:

- Risk-managed family engagement
- Partnerships with DCP
- Emphasise learning and adaptation



Questions?

