

WHAT IS BELONGING?

Social Psychologist Carl Rogers defines belonging as “a unique and subjective experience that relates to the yearning for connection with others, the need for positive regard, and the desire for personal connection.”

Belonging is an innate and fundamental need that we all have. Research shows that belonging is one of the most critical ingredients for children to attach, grow, and develop, especially in their early years.

Belonging continues to be a driving factor in decision-making as they grow older, even so much so that our brain assesses belonging every time our environment shifts, even as adults. Studies have shown that a child's top three sources of belonging are **family, school, and community**.

THIS IS THE BELONGING GAP

The belonging gap refers to the unique circumstances that separate a child from the top three sources of belonging; family, school, and community.

When a child enters the system, statistics show a virtual guarantee that their relationship and experience with family, school, and community will be fractured.

This unfortunate reality creates a massive cavern that youth in care must navigate to experience belonging, which is required for them to thrive. If all children start at zero in their journey to realize their full potential, the belonging gap forces children within the system to start at negative 10 (if not worse).



WHY DO WE NEED TO ERASE THE GAP?

Consider any other scenario where a people group is deprived of the top three sources of a fundamental developmental need. How would we respond? Now consider that belonging is directly connected to self-esteem, mood, motivation, intellectual capacity, intellectual achievement, resiliency, and mental and physical health.

SOME EVERYDAY BARRIERS TO BELONGING

- HOLIDAYS
- BIRTHDAYS
- PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES
- FAMILY TRADITIONS OF FOSTER HOME
- NEW PLACEMENTS
- NEW CASEWORKERS
- FAMILY PHOTOS

"At the very heart of "belonging" is the word "long." To belong to something is to stay with it for the long haul. It is an active choice we make to a relationship, to a place, to our body, to a life, because we value it."

• Poet Toko-pa Turner



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"Gaelin is wise beyond his years. His message presence and story will continue to send shockwaves through the child welfare space. Book him NOW!"

"WOW, WOW, WOW!! The resilience Mr. Gaelin had as a child and into an adult and still now... I am just amazed and so glad he was able to share his story. Thank you!!"

"I really loved the idea of belonging and connection for a child struggling in the system. He really painted the picture, with his story, of how small gestures can connect a child to community. Very helpful!"

"This is the second time I've had the pleasure to listen to Gaelin speak. He is such a wonderful speaker, and if given the chance, I will always attend his presentations."

Gaelin Elmore

I work with organizations and people who want to help children overcome trauma and unleash their potential

"When you hear Gaelin speak, you immediately realize this is a 'different' kind of presentation. He messages hope and opportunities and flips a switch that allows us to start seeing the kids and youth around us as opportunities and futures. In my twenty-five-plus years as a child welfare professional - this is what we've needed all along."



WORK WITH GAELIN FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT



The Courage to Overreact - Keynote

In "The Courage to Overreact", Gaelin reveals to the audience why he was able to defy odds and overcome his childhood trauma. Spoiler alert - the answer isn't as profound as one might think. Sometimes all it takes to change everything is to deviate from the normal. Gaelin brings the audience to pivotal moments in his life, and shows how a little courage goes a long way for a child trying to beat the odds in their own life.

This Moment - Keynote

Gaelin knows that the difference between becoming who you could be and becoming who the statistics say you should be is determined by a few moments. Gaelin was on a path to unfilled potential and shutting the world out, but thanks to a few adults showing up and valuing the moment, it changed Gaelin's life, and his family, forever.

Erase the Gap Workshop

Belonging is an innate and fundamental need for every single person. Belonging influences our potential, development, and self-esteem, so you can imagine the impact belonging has on our youth. Unfortunately, the youth who navigate the child welfare system have an especially tumultuous journey toward belonging. If we seek to best serve our youth in care, it starts with this. Erasing the gap is the key to unlocking potential

