

THE DISTRESS OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS: WHAT ADOPTIVE PARENTS WANT COUNSELORS TO KNOW ABOUT PARENTING CHILDREN WITH TRAUMA

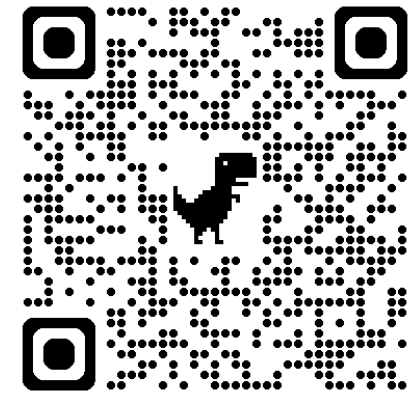
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Purpose of Study

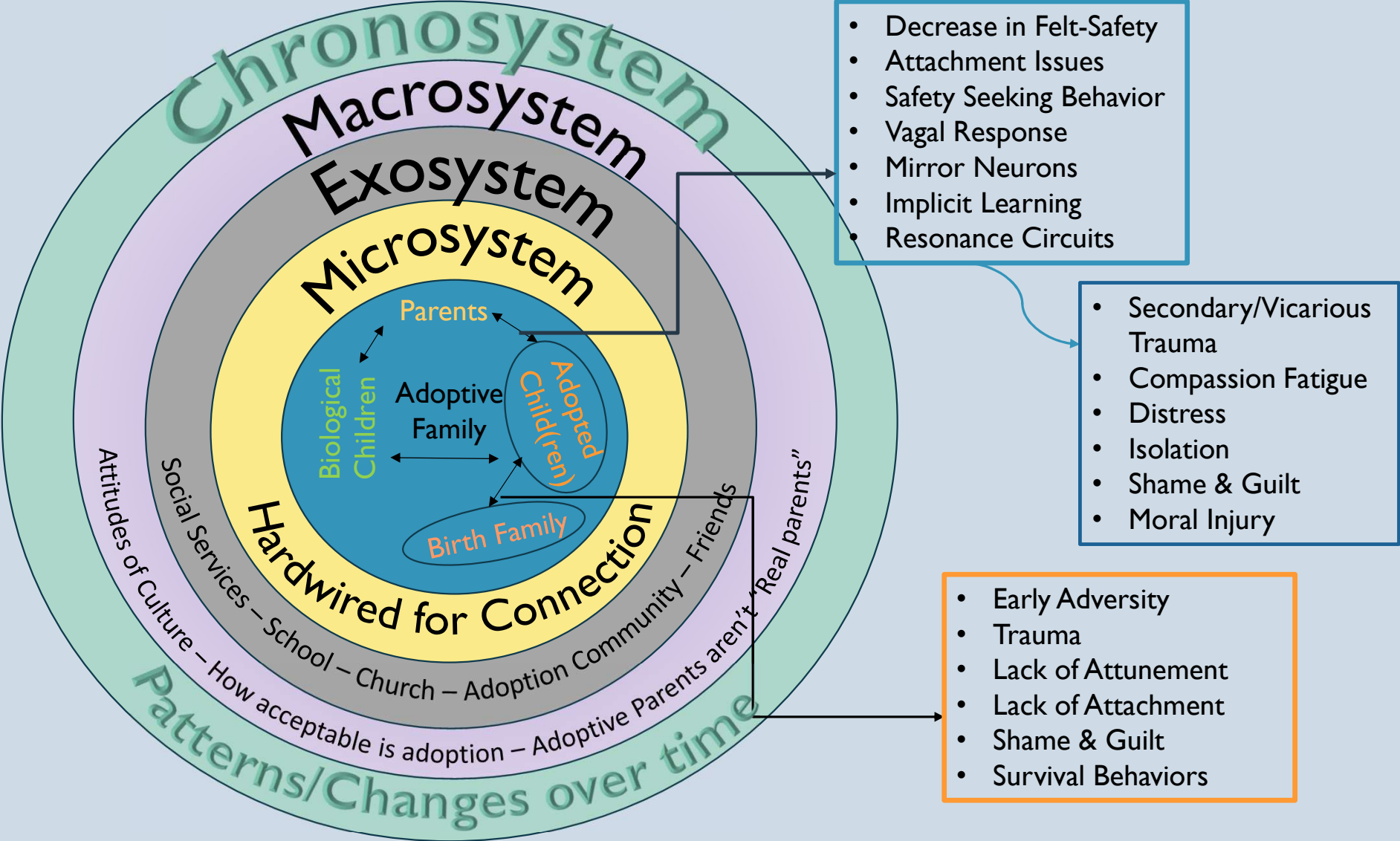
- ❑ explore the lived experiences of distress in parents who have adopted older children transnationally
- ❑ explore the lived experience of sharing adoption stories with a group of other distressed parents





Understanding the nature of bi-directional trauma impact in adoptive families compels counselors to be aware of the need to help adoptive parents work through the issues created by parenting children with trauma. This study looked at the lived experiences of distress for adoptive parents and used a narrative therapy group approach to both identify areas of distress and provide a platform for parents to interact and share their stories.

Adoptive Family within the Bronfenbrenner Ecological System of Human Development



TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY DESIGN



- ❖ Adoption Overview
- ❖ Adoption and Distress
- ❖ Conceptual Framework
 - ❖ EMHD
 - ❖ Narrative Group
- ❖ Family System
- ❖ Significance
- ❖ Research Method
 - ❖ Phenomenology
- ❖ Bracketing/Co-Researchers
- ❖ Research Details
 - ❖ Participants
 - ❖ Process
 - ❖ Data Analysis

PARTICIPANTS: FOUR ADOPTIVE COUPLES

Names	Parent Ages	Children Age at Adoption	Region
Austin & Cheyenne	66 & 65	13 & 15	Eastern Europe
Bristol & Asia	50 & 48	3 ¼	Caribbean
Roman & Derry	62 & 60	16	Eastern Europe
Alaska & Carolina	47 & 45	10, 12, & 14	Western Africa

FINDINGS/THEMES

- Process of Adoption Factors
- Child Factors
- Parent Factors
- Social Factors

Process of Adoption Factors

Motivation to Adopt

“We thought we had this great family when we raised our kids and we thought we were gonna do it again and have another great family.”

Cheyenne

“I think with an international adoption really, really understanding and learning about their culture is super important and also connecting with other families that are sharing that culture was really important.”

Derry

“We probably put up \$50,000 upfront to get them over here and then there are ongoing expenses”

Austin

Cultural Context

Financial Challenges

External

Family Considerations

“Our son was very against it.” Austin
“Our daughter was looking forward to having older sisters.” Carolina
“two of my sisters have adopted kids” Derry

Internal

Expectations

Preparation

“we had a lot of training...” Carolina

“I had this idea that in America we have all these resources available to us.”

Cheyenne

Child Factors

Child Trauma

Child Reactions

Attachment Wounds

Undiagnosed Issues

Developmental Impact

Broken Relationships

Survival Behavior

Pushing Back

Control Hyperarousal

Sibling Bonds

Lies

Fear

"She wouldn't listen to anything. She just would do her own thing" Alaska

"Denver ran away from us..." Austin

"He's kind of a pathological liar...he makes up stories according to what he thinks you want to hear." Austin

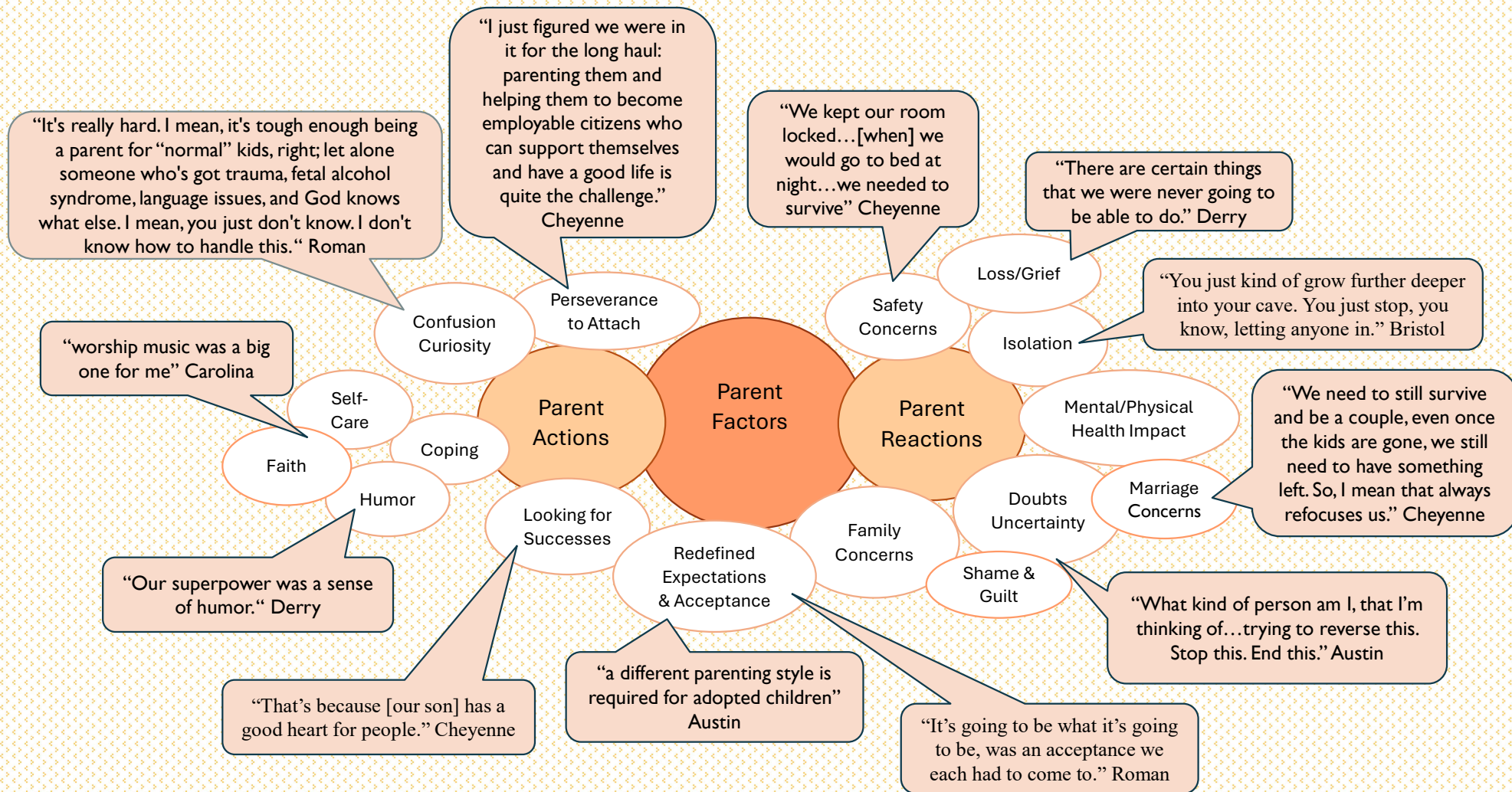
"Our son's mother was particularly cruel." Derry

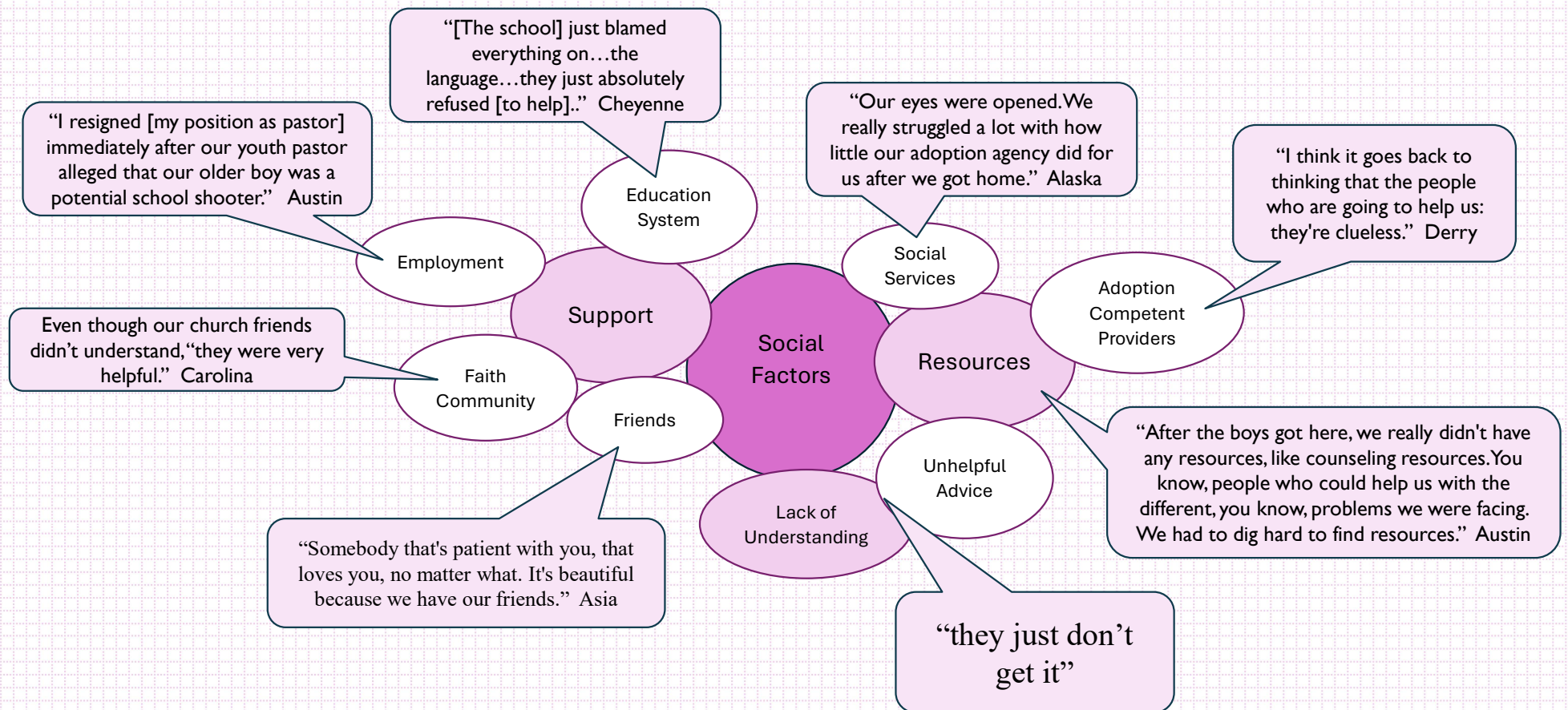
"Denver was seriously affected (with FAS)" Cheyenne

"Then there's control. They don't have it so they're going to take it where they can." Asia

"When you start attaching or getting a relationship with one of them, it can make them go against each other...and try to undermine your progress." Carolina

"He had no idea how to do simple math and it became very clear to him that the education he had over there was woefully inadequate." Roman







A photograph of a group of people in a meeting room, viewed through a glass wall. The room has a wooden wall and a whiteboard. Several people are seated around a table, and one person is standing near the whiteboard. The image is dimly lit, with the text overlaid in the center.

NARRATIVE GROUP EXPERIENCE

- Each Parent Couple given One Hour to Share their Story and allow others to Comment on that Story, then React to those Comments.
- Started as Group of strangers, ended as Friends

IMPLICATIONS

Adoptive (Kinship & Foster) Parents

- Build Community and Connections
- Decrease Isolation, Shame, and Guilt

Counselors

- Understand Developmental Trauma
- Recognize Complexity of Adoptive (Kinship and Foster) Families

Counselor Educators

- Expose Counselors in Training to Realities of Adoption, (Including Kinship, and Foster Care)
- Include Transcultural Adoption as a Multicultural Competency
- Recognize Impact on Development

Supervisors

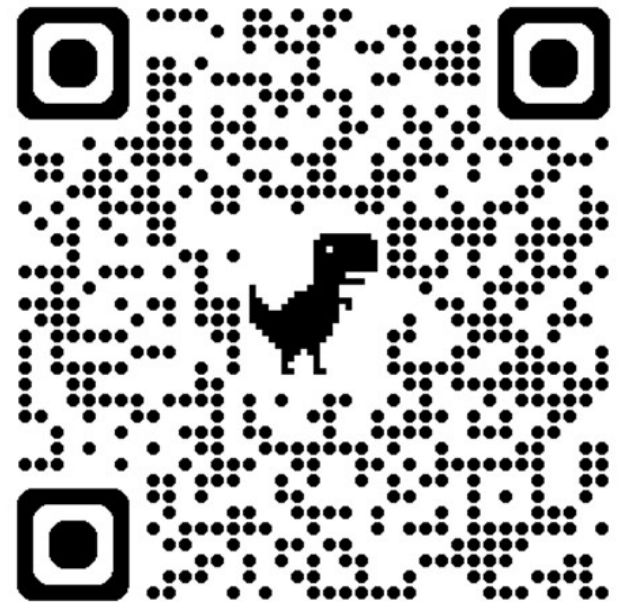
- Reflect Need for Competency with Families Impacted by Adoption, Kinship, and Foster Care

FINAL THOUGHTS

All participants strongly conveyed that they felt called to adopt and none of them regret the adoption. Their regrets mostly involved their parenting choices and behaviors, but their faith in God was what kept them going.

“I would do it again. Yeah, but you know, it's hard as hell.
But you know, if that's what you're supposed to do, you should do it.” Bristol

“I have to trust like God's gonna take care of the outcome... that this will all... somehow they'll get to where they need to go.” Roman



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