

JIT Book Talking Points

- Statistics show that the current Child Welfare/Foster Care System fails to work in the best interest of those who experience it, however it is working as it was originally designed.
- Our current system is based on a pre-Civil War premise that led to the use of “orphan trains” to remove “broken children for broken families” from the streets of cities like New York and deliver them to midwestern communities where they would be put “up for adoption” to work on farms and have the benefit of being placed with families with upstanding values.
- Although the Orphan Trains were eventually discontinued, the mental model it represents persists to this day in the form of a child welfare/foster care system that produces consistently negative results in every category of self-sufficiency, emotional health and personal empowerment.
- At its core, the book is more “why do” conversation than “how to” implementation. It supports the premise that we must *think* differently before we can *do* differently.
- Life Changing Choices is written to challenge the Orphan Train mindset and offer a clear alternative that has demonstrated measurable positive impact for the past 20 years of implementation in the Just in Time for Foster Youth community.
- We must first recognize that the System is NOT broken. It operates as it was designed so the solution is to build an alternative solution that better serves you.
- The alternative is presented in the book through the contrast of seven essential Choices that determine what we believe, what we intend, what we build, how we act, how we evaluate and improve our efforts, and the impact we can expect.
- The foundation of the proposed shift is based on support for Empowerment, Connection and Community.
- The solutions proposed are also grounded in having the young people impacted by child welfare/foster care as key drivers for finding the answers that are needed.
- With that paradigm in mind, five of seven co-authors have experienced foster care and the book contains many stories to illustrate their perspective on what best serves this population.
- Our hope is that the book to start crucial conversations nationwide so we all make the Choice to replace historically negative outcomes with lasting positive Empowerment.