

# Children's Bridge

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION CONSULTANTS



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## JOURNEY HOME TOUR July 29 - August 11, 2017

### THE MAYO FAMILY

It was a great privilege for us to be part of this summer's 'Journey Home' tour to China with 5 other families. We had completed a Homeland trip to Thailand two years ago with our son, Rohan and had promised the same for our daughter, Anjali.

Our journey began in the lobby of the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Beijing, on the morning of July 30th where our group of 9 kids and 9 adults assembled to be met by the 'Journey Home' representative Mary. She introduced us to our Beijing guide, Lisa. Lisa was to take care of our every need for the next four days as we got over jet lag and accustomed ourselves to the summer heat of China!

The childrens' ages ranged from 9 to 19. There were two boys amongst us - our son Rohan aged 17 and another boy from South Korea aged nearly 15.



At the Beihai Park, Beijing



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on Homeland Visits!

South Korea

China

Vietnam



We started off gently on our first full day touring Beihai and Jingshan Parks. The latter gave us a lovely birds-eye view of the Forbidden City. We were then treated to a bicycle rickshaw ride which took us through the narrow, winding streets of Old Beijing. You could almost touch the houses on either side, the lanes were so narrow. In a little courtyard, we were told about the life in a traditional 'Hutong' and

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invited to look into the doorways off the courtyard. At first, this felt a little awkward as the residents were going about their daily business, but as we were to experience many times in the next two weeks, the concept of personal space has a different meaning in China and the residents didn't seem to take notice of us as we peered into their living spaces and observed them preparing lunch in a minute kitchen or watched an artisan painting in his studio. We were then invited into a family's home for lunch that had been especially prepared for us. I think this was the meal I would remember best as it was simple, wholesome and served lovingly to us in a home environment.

The next day we went to the Great Wall. We had all been there before, but this would be the time that all the children would remember! We were taken to the Mutianyu section and chair lifted up. After a very hot hour of walking on the wall we took a slide down! Richard (my husband) and I conveniently ignored the age restriction for the slide and happily glided down on our little trolley. Thank goodness there was a hand brake attached!

On day three we explored the gardens of the Summer Palace and listened to the intriguing stories of the Dragon Lady, then on to the Temple of Heaven. We were reminded of our initial trip to China in July 2004 to meet Anjali and the sizzling temperature then. Thank goodness our guides provided us with bottles of drinking water every day! A neighbour of ours from Hong Kong had given us each electronic hand held fans to take away with us. I can assure you, mine was in constant use! Our last stop that day was in the famous Pearl Market where haggling over prices is the norm. Rohan and Anjali both wanted running shoes and I was chosen as the family member



*With our guide, Lisa at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Beijing*

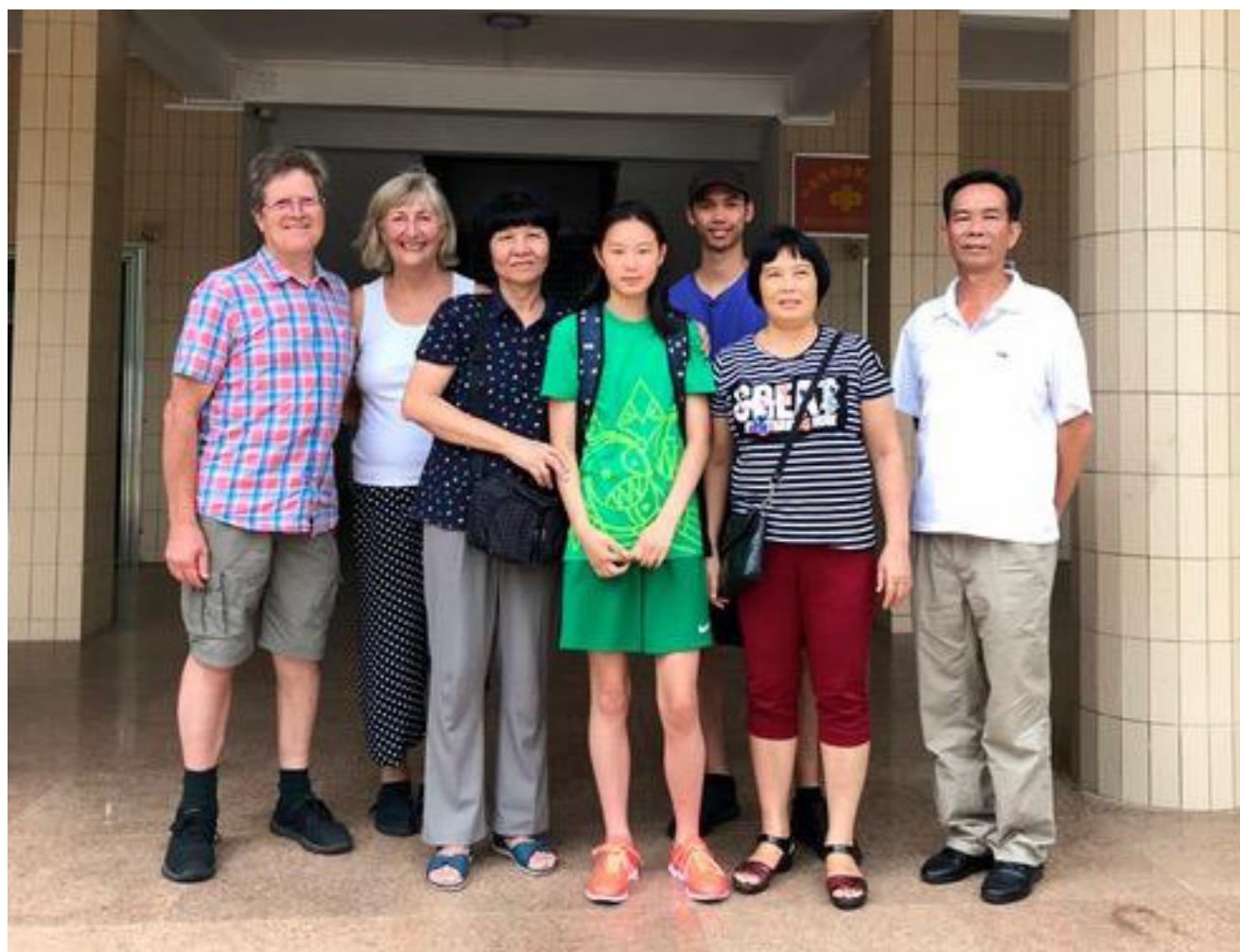
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to 'get the bargain'. After walking away a couple of times from the lady merchant , she called to me 'Where's your husband? Let me talk to your husband!" In the end the children got what they wanted, we spent a fair price and the merchant was smiling, so we were all happy!

The following day was the day we had all been waiting for - the flights to our daughters' birth cities. Our flight was to Zhanjiang in Guangdong Province on the South China Sea. Anjali's birthplace was an hour's drive to Leizhou City known for its Thunder, Lightning and Typhoons! 'Jim' was waiting at the airport to take us to our hotel in Leizhou. After freshening up we decided to try one of the restaurants in the hotel for dinner . . . the Yummy Café. We had thought by the name it might be a snack bar of sorts where we could just point to the food items on a display board. When we arrived, however we found it to be a large, bustling sit-down restaurant. We were not surprised to find that we were a family of interest. Unfortunately we had not sorted our 'translate' app on our phone and it didn't take long to discover that ordering our food was not going to be a straightforward task! The children almost

got up to leave after my 'chicken' impersonation. I guess it wasn't very good as it failed to bring a cooked version to our table. Anyway, the assembled group of four or five waitresses tried very hard to please us and actually brought an Indian cook over to our table who had a little English, but not good enough to understand what we wanted. In a good will gesture he brought over a plate of banana pancakes which he had made and offered them to us free of charge. What an experience!•

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*Mayo Family with Anjali's 'ayi' in dark blouse and other staff at the Liezhou Social Welfare Institute*

We realized how lost we would have been on this trip without our guides. Our Leizhou guide was Aosa and we met her the next morning in the lobby of our hotel. She was youthful and very friendly and spoke excellent English! Since we were unable to use our credit card or exchange American dollars in Leizhou we had to borrow some money from her to purchase some items for the orphanage. (We were able to pay Aosa back the next morning as we received our deposit from the front desk after checking out). They had requested disposable diapers and milk which we purchased at a local supermarket. We saw an ingenious way of preventing shoplifting there. Everyone was required to put their handbags and backpacks into large ziplock bags which were then locked. Then after the shopping had been paid for the locked bags were opened and our personal bags were returned to us!

My heart was thumping as we entered the courtyard of the Leizhou Social Welfare Institute. We could see a few staff members milling about outside and as Anjali emerged from the van a couple of ladies ran over to her and started hugging her and stroking her hair and pulling her into the entrance way. I had previously warned Anjali that this might happen to prepare her, but I wasn't expecting my response and I almost immediately broke down. Our reception was extremely warm. We were invited to sit down in the reception room where platters of fruit were placed before us - dragon fruit, dragons' eyes (smooth skinned lychees - smaller, but sweeter than lychees), huge grapes and watermelon. Anjali's Orphanage File was produced and Aosa read through it with me. We asked questions and the Care Staff asked us questions too. Unfortunately, the Director of the SWI was away on a business trip, but the Deputy Director was there and he remembered Anjali too. Anjali's 'ayi' who had handed her to me 13 years ago was there and hardly left her side for our whole visit. She asked if Anjali could speak Chinese and told us many stories from her time with them. We were then taken out to lunch with the orphanage staff and our guide and we were later told that we were the best foreign family they had dined with as apparently we were very good eaters. The Leizhou Social Welfare Institute looked after about 90 babies when Anjali lived there and now it looks after about 60 disabled children. We were the first family from our group of 2004 (Group 186) who had returned.

During the meal there was a tropical downpour so our driver brought the vehicle to the door. We said goodbye amidst many hugs and kisses and a renewed promise to keep in touch with annual letters and

photographs, but this time to be sent to the Director's email address.

With the orphanage visit over Aosa asked us how we'd like to spend the rest of the afternoon and we requested a drive into the local countryside. We were taken to a small rural village, almost deserted, for a walk around. My head was filled with visions of the place where Anjali began her life - the sounds, the smells, the impressions making up her first 2 years.

As we rejoined the other families after a flight to Chongqing the next day we began to recount our orphanage visit stories. Some had greeted their returning daughters with much fanfare, some had directed the family to the local foster family who had nurtured their child for their first year and some had made no fuss at all. We felt so lucky that Anjali was remembered and loved so much.

Our time in Chongqing got off to a slightly disrupted start as unsettled weather to the night before had delayed all our flights there. We were to have arrived around 3 pm in the afternoon but instead got there at 9.30 pm.

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Another family didn't arrive until 3 am ! Our new guide 'Richard' had to use his organization skills to the fullest in getting us all safely transported to the Hilton Chongqing that night. While one family slept in the next morning, the rest of us were taken to the Museum of the Three Gorges. We then picked up that family at the hotel at 12 noon, proceeded to lunch, then had a lucky viewing of the pandas at the zoo lazily chewing away on their bamboo shoots. Richard was keen that we have a good view of Chongqing (it was his hometown) so he arranged for the bus to take us to a lookout site high above the city. Chongqing city and district is home to 33,000,000 inhabitants. It was the first time we were to view the tremendous density of the high rise towers being thrown up all over the country. And sitting at the top of this hill was an artist with his paintbrushes and paint churning out - "in one minute!" - posters of people's names in beautiful pictorial letter shapes, dragons, butterflies, mountains and so on. Of course we all had to have one or two made and , voila, a laminating machine was also available to preserve them!

That afternoon we boarded our cruise boat (the Victoria Line) for our three day trip down the Yangtze through the 3 Gorges to the largest dam in the world. This part of our tour proved to be the most relaxing as we had all our meals on board, would attend talks on various subjects such as Chinese medicine or 'snuff bottle' painting or the 'Three Gorges of the Yangtze River' in the mornings, go on shore excursions in the afternoon and be entertained in the evenings in the Banquet Room.

Our first shore excursion took us across a wide, slightly swinging high bridge to Shi Baozhai temple. I chose to wait at the bottom while the others from our group climbed to the top. This was the day that the temperature reached 40 degrees Celsius! The stone bench that I chose to sit on was so hot that I had to sit on my backpack so as not to scald myself! Richard told us that if the temperature reached 40 degrees or above the people got the day off work. Curiously the state run meteorological service rarely reported temperatures higher than 39 degrees even during the hottest summer! We were always so relieved to return to our air conditioned hotels at the end of our outings.

Our excursion the next day was more fun as we travelled down a tributary of the Yangtze on a small motorized boat. Our tiny guide on this boat was very

sweet as she asked us 'Will you remember me?' She also sang a couple of songs to us as we glided along into the Lesser Gorges.

My favourite memory of the Yangtze cruise was lying on my bed with the pillows piled high at the foot end, opening the curtains and watching the world sail by at 'river speed'. It was so relaxing. On the day we disembarked we were driven to the Three Gorges Dam site. It was damp, atmospheric day with low hanging clouds over the hilltops. Such is the concern over security we were unable to get very close to the dam but were able to view it from the 'busier' side with the five locks carrying larger vessels and a lift which transports smaller boats complete with many hundreds of litres of water!

While driving to Yichang to catch our flight to Shanghai, Richard received information that due to stormy weather in Shanghai, our flight had been cancelled. He told us, "Don't worry, I will take care of you" and immediately got busy on his phone and informed us that we would continue on the bus for another four hours to the city of Wuhan, stay the night there and take

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an 8.20 high speed train to Shanghai the next morning. I think Richard enjoyed the challenge of getting us all out of a sticky situation. Funnily enough, I had hoped that we would be able to take a train during this trip and my wish was now about to come true! The train ride was great, very smooth and travelling at about 250 kph. At every stop we would hear an announcement that sounded like this "say-chi-man, say-chi-man . . . this is a non-smoking train. As you know, smoking is harmful to your health . . . etc.etc."

Our guide Julie met us at the Shanghai train station and we continued our tour straightaway to make up for lost time. We were taken to a traditional garden, then a marketplace, dinner and to top off the day we were treated to seats at the fabulous Shanghai Acrobatic show. For anyone who has witnessed a Chinese acrobatic performance, you will know how memorable this show is . . . . the highlight for me being the 8 motorcyclists riding zig-zag and criss-cross inside a meshed metal globe. Amazing!

The next day was our last full day in Shanghai. We were taken to the delightful watertown of Zhujiajiao. It was established 1700 years ago and resembled a little



*The Watertown Zhujiajiao outside Shanghai*

Venice with 'gondolas' everywhere, cobbled streets, small, smart shops and although very warm, it felt cooler because of the water all around. I could have stayed much longer, but our itinerary demanded we return to Shanghai to view that city from some new angles. After lunch we went to the Bund and after some photoshoots we bid farewell to our wonderful guide Richard who was taking an evening flight back to his home in Chongqing. He had begun to feel like family to all of us by the end of a week. He had taken on many challenges with us with good humour and real efficiency. Any requests from our group were handled cheerfully and quickly. We couldn't have managed a day without him! Thank you Richard!

We were taken back to our hotel later in the afternoon where we made our hasty goodbyes to the other families. We all had flights the next day - some very early in the morning and some in the afternoon. We needed to settle in for the evening and prepare for our trip home.

This pilgrimage to China will remain in our memories for ever as Anjali was reunited with her culture and country of birth. We hope she will never forget her roots and that she will feel proud of her heritage.

We remain extremely grateful to Darlene Catton in the Childrens' Bridge office for her tireless efforts at organizing us in the months prior to our departure and for making such a memorable tour possible.

*Submitted by Mary Douglas, September 4, 2017*

# Helping Children Cope with Fear and Anxiety

By Dr. Anand Prabhu, Psychologist; Team Leader - Mood and Anxiety Team, CHEO

Dylan is afraid of the dark. Tricia hates to eat in front of other people. Eric becomes sick to his stomach and throws up if he has to speak aloud in class. Fears and worries are a very normal part of life for children and adults. However, if these worries become cause for concern because they are affecting day-to-day functioning significantly, we refer to these excessive worries as anxiety.

Anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric disorder in children and adults. It is estimated that roughly 13% of children and youth suffer from anxiety disorders with more girls than boys receiving this diagnosis.

Understanding what your child is going through and being equipped to help him or her is an important part of helping children work through their anxiety. Rather than ask yourself whether or not a worry is "normal," it may be more helpful to consider whether your child is suffering excessively from his worries.

What are some of the signs that I should watch for?

Is your child showing excessive avoidance in terms of participation in activities or attending school? Is he easily upset and is his distress out of proportion to the situation? Do you spend a lot of time comforting your child and urging your child to participate in regular activities? Are you feeling that your family functioning is being disrupted by your child's fears and worries?

Physical symptoms:

Symptoms can vary quite broadly from one child to another. Some children have physical symptoms such as stomach cramps, headaches, vomiting and diarrhea in relation to their fears and anxieties. Others may complain of feeling faint, tingling in their hands or face, weak or rubbery knees, and light-headedness. The constellation of symptoms is quite different from one child to another.

Emotional and behavioural symptoms:

Fears and anxieties may also manifest themselves through sleep difficulties and nightmares. Your child may demonstrate anger, sadness, frustration, hopelessness and embarrassment, which is out of proportion to the situation. She may begin to worry about things such as hours, days and even weeks ahead of time. He may want to avoid friends, activities or situations altogether, as a way of dealing with his fear and anxiety. There may be repeated requests for reassurance or unnecessary apologizing to others.

What can parents do to help their children deal with fears and anxious feelings?

Help your child to maintain good physical health and regular routines. Ensure a balanced diet, good sleeping habits, and fitness through exercise. Set time aside for leisure and relaxation with your child.

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Be patient and reassuring. Talk to them and be positive about their ability to handle the anxiety-provoking situation. Keep the lines of communication open.

Reward your child's coping behaviour. Praise your child's "brave" behaviour and recognize and praise successes, even partial successes; the focus should be on your child's efforts in confronting and managing their worries.

Manage your own anxieties and don't allow your worries in the situation to influence your child. Be a model for your child and show him how you do everyday things without being fearful or anxious.

Instead of avoiding the issue that is causing fear or anxiety, reinforce exposure. If your child is afraid of spiders, you can start to read a book about spiders. If your child is afraid of speaking out in front of a group, perhaps he can talk about his favourite toy at the next family gathering. Give your child opportunities to work through his fear, by reinforcing exposure and allowing small victories along the way.

Teach your child positive "self-talk". Like the little engine that could, teach your child to repeat a positive phrase that will help her face her fear. "I know I can do this" or "I'm brave and I'm not afraid" can help them be strong when they are feeling afraid or anxious.

Teach your child to imagine being in relaxing or pleasant places, places where they feel safe. Distraction can work wonders when trying to deal with anxiety-provoking situations. Children can also learn how to manage anxiety by learning how to calm their breathing and how to reduce tension in their muscles; techniques for learning these are easily available through the Internet (see websites below).

Children can begin to feel insecure and anxious if there is conflict between their parents. Difficult conversations between spouses should happen when children are not present.

Where should I turn to for help if I think my child's fears and anxiety are cause for concern?

Despite your best efforts to help your child cope with his fears and anxiety, there may come a time when your child's thoughts and feelings begin to overwhelm him to such an extent that you do not feel that you can handle it on your own.

You should also think about:

Talking to your child's teacher and other adults (coaches, instructors) who are interacting with your child. There might be an issue you are not aware of.

Finding books and websites that might help everyone including you, your child and other family members to better understand what he/she is going through.

Contacting your family doctor or pediatrician. It might be time for a check up and a good time to talk about what is causing these symptoms in your child. Your physician can help you to decide if your child should see someone, such as a child psychologist, to help her deal with her fears and/or anxiety.

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References:

Chansky, Tamar. Freeing your Child from Anxiety. Broadway Books, 2004.

Webster-Stratton, Carolyn. The Incredible Years. Incredible Years, 2006.

Where can I get more information?

CHEO has a number of excellent books and other resources through its Family Resource Library, located on the first floor of the hospital. A reading list by topic can be found at Resources - Anxiety and Stress Management

You can also reach them at 613-738-3942.

Your local library may be able to get these for you if you can't make it to CHEO.

Useful Resources:

Freeing your Child from Anxiety. By Tamar Chansky. Broadway Books, 2004.

Keys to Parenting your Anxious Child. By Katharina Manassis. Barron's, 2008.

MindMasters 2. By CYHNEO and CHEO (2016). Ideal for children 4-9 years of age.

Taming Worry Dragons. By E. Jane Garland and Sandra L. Clark (2002). Ideal for children 4-17 years.



# Welcome

## CHINA Waiting Children Program

Welcome Home from China to:

**Silas from Jiangsu Province PR of China, son to Joshua and Natalie of Thunder Bay.**

Worry Taming for Teens. By E. Jane Garland and Sandra L. Clark (2002). Ideal for children 12-17 years.

Hole in One: A tale from the Iris the Dragon series. By Gayle Grass. 2008. A children's book dealing with anxiety disorder.

Websites:

The Child Anxiety Network

Anxiety Disorders Association of Ontario

National Institute of Mental Health

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

National Institutes of Health

## SOUTH KOREA

Welcome Home from South Korea to:

Levi Hanuel, born January 2, 2016, son of Justin and Simone of Chatham.

Everett Winter Rahyeong, born January 9, 2016, son of Jason and Lisa of Toronto.

Carter Ji-Hyeok, born March 18, 2016, son of Andrew and Sylvia of Toronto.

Sumin Gabriel Gim, born June 24, 2016, son of Derrek and Janelle of Kinburn.

Farley Ji-Ho, born June 4, 2016, son of Ian and Sherry of Caledon.

Nemours Foundation

Medline



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