

# Advisor

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018

## Featuring

How to talk to my kids about fostering

5 Things you need to survive as a foster parent

Get kids off screens this summer

Rules you must never break when dealing with addiction

Pets can help children accept the challenges of foster care

Plus

Being a flexible foster parent

Get your kids playing outside again

Distress Tolerance

Best foods to pack for the beach

Nature Scavenger Hunt



SASKATCHEWAN  
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## Inside

- 2 Meaning of Family
- 3 Chairman of the Board's Message
- 4 Executive Director's Message
- 4 Reminder to be photo sensitive
- 5 The importance of keeping formal documentation
- 6 Being a flexible foster parent
- 6 Share your story
- 7 How to talk to my kids about fostering
- 8 5 Things you need to survive as a foster parent
- 9 Respite
- 10 Get kids off screens this summer
- 12 Get your kids playing outside again
- 13 Distress Tolerance
- 14 Pets can help children accept the challenges of foster care
- 16 Recipe's from Petty's Kitchen
- 16 Rules you must never break when dealing with addiction
- 17 Best foods to pack for the beach
- 18 Ways to respond to your child's negative self talk
- 18 Heat Waves
- 19 Nature Scavenger Hunt
- 20 Book corner

## Meaning of Family

'FAMILY' IS A SINGLE WORD, WITH MANY DIFFERENT MEANINGS. People have many ways of defining a family and what being a part of a family means to them. Families differ in terms of economic, cultural, social, and many other facets, but what every family has in common is that the people who call it a family are making clear that those people are important in some way to the person calling them his family.

### Definition of Family

The dictionary defines family in several ways. One definition is "a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children." While this definition is a good starting point, there are several modern family structures that are excluded by this definition, such as childless couples or other variations on the family unit. Another definition is "Two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another and reside usually in the same dwelling."

### Redefining Family

Rather than simply defining family by a dictionary definition, each individual should look to define a family by his own standards, enriching the dictionary's definition. You can have several families in your lifetime, even several families at once if you choose. Regardless of how you choose to define your family unit, whether it is traditional or unique, your definition is of the family unit that works for you. As the saying goes, "Family is what you make it." Whether made of blood relatives, friends, or pets, or a combination of these, your family can offer you the support you need to thrive.



Source: [family.lovetoknow.com](http://family.lovetoknow.com)

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233 4th Ave South  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7K 1N1

Phone: (306) 975-1580  
Fax: (306) 975-1581  
Toll Free: 1-888-276-2880  
E-mail: [sffa@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:sffa@sffa.sk.ca)  
Website: [www.saskfosterfamilies.ca](http://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca)

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*We need  
your  
email*

We are now sending e-mails to our foster parents on a monthly basis. To be added to our list and receive the latest news, please send your e-mail address to [kendra@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:kendra@sffa.sk.ca)

**THANK-YOU!**

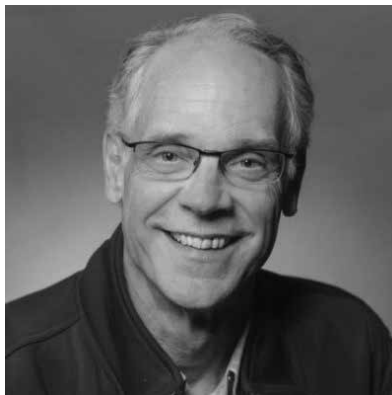
# Message from the Chairman of the Board

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the SFFA staff who support our families across the province. They work tirelessly under the direction of Deb Davies for you, our Foster Families.

The Board of Directors along with myself have worked alongside the SFFA Provincial Staff to update the strategic plan in hopes of continuing our work for all foster parents in strengthening relationships with Ministry on many avenues including communication, education, compensation and the timeliness of reimbursements. We are pleased with the committed engagement between Ministry Management and Directors, SFFA Staff and Foster Parents at Fireside Chats in the regions across the province to openly discuss ongoing concerns families have.

Some of the highlights of the past year was my attendance at the *What Matters Most Conference* and the *Atamiskākēwak National Gathering* that was held in Moose Jaw. This gathering was created by Kallie Wood and Chris McKee of Converging Pathways to unify Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people to provide education of how to take action from the Truth and Reconciliation's 94 Calls to Action report. During the opening day of the celebration, a hundred (100) guests participated in discussing the first five (5) call to action items of the Truth and Reconciliation Report that pertained to the child welfare system which was lead by the SFFA and the CFFA.

The event was a great opportunity for agencies and participants to network and



become educated on key topics of discussion. The event featured speakers from across the country from many sectors including Child Welfare, Education, Language and Culture, Church Education for Reconciliation and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Many interactive events were held including a Takoza Tipi Camp, Treaty 4 National Tipi Display, Atamiskākēwak Competition Pow Wow, Cultural Teachings from Elders and agencies, Indigenous Art Displays and Artisan Fair and a presentation from Robb Nash.

Reconciliation advocate, Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, gave a powerful speech talking about "re-envisioning" and "re-creating" Canada through Reconciliation. He stated that for Reconciliation to happen, that it must be a collective effort. He marveled at the event's turnout which saw thousands in attendance.

*"It's such an honor to be at a conference of this sort that reminds me that there are good people everywhere that care about each other and are interested in finding resolution to a complex relationship that we've had over the years. As we move into this new era of Reconciliation, we should always think about educating Canadians*

*about who we are. It is not up to others to remake us into their own image or to be like them. We should embrace people for who they are and what they stand for. We should embrace and celebrate diversity and I am moved by this conference that has drawn all of us here who want better things for our children. I think this journey of Reconciliation, partly, is a way in which we will re-determine our common humanity."* Chief Dr. Robert Joseph

At the *What Matters Most Conference* I had an opportunity to network with individuals from Israel, Italy, Russia, Belarus, and Canada to meet and talk about developments in our respective regions. The key theme in most discussions was focused on vulnerable children in our regions and efforts being done to ensure every child has a place to call home. Much discussion was also had regarding struggles in corresponding child welfare systems and how increased collaboration across borders would be beneficial.

I am humbled by the great and awesome work being done across the world to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children. These perspectives matter a lot to the SFFA such that in partnership with all provinces and territories, the CFFA, the Child Welfare League of Canada, McGill University and many others, the CFFA has put forth a proposal to host the International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) in Montreal in 2020.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Harris".

# Message from the Executive Director

This past year has been one of both reflection on our past accomplishments and renewing our vision as we look to the future. As foster care evolves, we must respond with new initiatives and strategies to strengthen the fostering community.

As I think back to the years when I fostered, the struggles our families are faced with in dealing with addiction, mental health and developmental cognitive delays have increased the level of care children require tremendously. The education and training foster parents need to be successful in meeting these needs must be on-going to ensure they have the skills and confidence in dealing with the challenging behaviors of the children they are providing care to. We have been working on developing a training curriculum to compliment the need and current training content.

We have been hard at work planning the 2018 National Conference Facing the Future... Together that will be held in Saskatoon on June 15th to 17th, 2018. New this year we will be offering Training which will coincide with the Canadian Foster Families Association Meetings to provide an in-depth



training in Becoming a Trauma Competent Caregiver and Caring for Aboriginal Children.

We continue our work in strengthening our partnerships with CBO agencies, faith-based organizations and the community through the education of the need for Foster Homes in the province. Through networking with both Forever Families and Hands at Work, we have developed initiatives to bring awareness of the need of not only foster parents but respite providers and babysitters.

Our recruitment initiatives have also been successful with the approval of fifty-four (54) new homes during the 2017/2018 fiscal year. We continue to develop and support families as part of the professional team through the PRIDE model of practice. With the curriculum

now being delivered online, the in-classroom sessions have focused on assisting new foster parents to understand the impact of trauma and its effects on a child's development. In providing approaches to working with children who have been exposed to a traumatic event such as abuse or neglect, families can minimize these effects without causing the child additional trauma.

We have and will continue to advocate for increased supports in providing care to children with complex needs, ensuring the consistency of services and policy to families in all areas of the province and improved communication between the Ministry, our association and community partners.

I have been blessed to be part of this organization for the past fourteen (14) years and want to ensure I create positive outcomes for families who step forward to provide a home to children in need. I look forward to facing the future together with a unified vision with our Board of Directors, our Provincial Office and In-Home Support Staff and most importantly our Foster Parents from across the province.

Sincerely,  
Deb Davies



## Important Reminder to be “Photo Sensitive”...

*Protecting the privacy of foster children is a contractual expectation of foster parents. With the summer season upon us you will likely be taking pictures. We would like to remind all foster parents that the foster children in your care are entitled to privacy. You are expected to refrain from posting any identifying information regarding children in care through social media. Please ensure that all well-meaning friends, neighbors and family are aware that pictures of your foster children are not to be posted and your children are not to be in any other way identified. Be mindful that this can have an undesirable impact for children in foster care, their families and their foster caregivers.*

# The importance of keeping formal documentation as a Foster Parent

## Documentation—what does that mean?

Dictionary definition: *“The paper that furnishes information, proof, or support of something else.”*

**W**hen you document, you are establishing a method of proving/documenting any events/incidents that take place in or outside of our homes. Documentation is a record.

### Why is it important?

- Recording what happens on a daily basis
- You may see a pattern forming
- A record helps with getting support and services for both the foster child and the foster family as a whole

### Is it really necessary?

Studies show that writing helps you remember more. It works to store information into long-term memory.

*And don't put it off—DO IT NOW!*

If you keep telling yourself that you'll do it later, you'll either:

- not get to it
- forget pertinent facts or details which could make a huge difference

Always keep it safe and out-of-sight from others!

### Documentation is your BEST line of defense!

- Documentation offers you protection in the case of allegations.
- It may not make the allegation disappear, but it can help the investigation.
- It can offer you peace of mind and self-protection.

### How should I document?

Having these tools will help you:

- a notebook or 3-ring binder

- a calendar
- forms provided to you from the SFFA
- reward charts
- e-mails (by printing out correspondence, you have an instant record of the date and time and can slip it into your binder)

### Use the “who, what, where, how” when a child arrives...

- Name/Age
- Date/Time of Arrival
- Condition of the child
- Who brought the child
- Possessions
- Note any marks on the child's body
- How the child settled in


### Use the “who, what, where, when, how” for incident reports...

- Who: Who was involved or present when the incident occurred?
- What: What happened? Who said what? What led up to the event?
- When: When did it occur?
- Where: Where did it occur?
- How: How was the situation handled? What did you say or do and how was that received?

### Remember:

- Stick to the facts

*\*By keeping records of what is happening in your home, we are better able to help you when you call for support and this can help to secure additional services, supports and resources you may need!*



*Biology is the least of what makes someone a mother.*

~ Unknown

# Top 3 Tips for Being a Flexible Foster Parent

No one individual will ever know all the ups and downs of fostering, but here are three pieces of foster care wisdom that we'd like to share:

## 1) Don't try to control everything.

If you're a control freak, learn not to be. If you're going through a particularly hard time, definitely look for any counseling/support that's provided. Reach out to the foster parent community.

When you foster, you've got paperwork, meetings, caseworkers, bio family and a variety of other people and events that can make your role complicated. It's an unconventional parenting situation. There's a lot of people involved, but try to keep your focus on the child. If you want the children in your home to have the brightest possible future, you've got to make sure you can handle your own stress in a way that is productive.

## 2) Don't speculate!

It's really important not to speculate about the case, don't speculate about the birth parents—it'll get into your head and you'll start thinking about what could happen... so if you just release all that and focus on the kids, you'll just be in a better place. Not speculating about your foster child's case and their future in your home is critical because you really don't have control over it. There are a lot of people who are trying to provide a positive outcome for your foster child. It's better not to try and guess what's going on with any of those other people involved in your child's life because, ultimately, it'll just lead you to stress.

## 3) Be open-minded.

Your foster child may have other siblings in care. Don't let the circumstances surrounding his/her sibling(s) get in the way. Similarly, you may find that fostering will introduce you to situations or experiences you have never imagined. It's important that you stay patient, open and focused on the child.

Source: <http://foster-adoptive-kinship-family-services-nj.org/top-3-tips-flexible-foster-parent/>



## share your story.

If you have a fostering story to share with our readers, please send it in!

We accept stories/articles about:

- Personal stories and reflections about being a foster parent
- Great resources for foster parents that you'd like to share
- Long term connection with past foster children
- Challenges you've experienced and creative solutions
- How your extended family or children have responded to your fostering lifestyle
- Foster-related book reviews
- Foster-related movie reviews
- Foster placements resulting in a family growing through adoption
- Fostering tips and tricks
- Notable foster related experiences

Please submit your articles by email to: [kendra@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:kendra@sffa.sk.ca)

# How to talk to *My Kids* about Fostering



“ You can use this moment as a learning experience for your older children by talking to them about why you want to foster and the need for others to become foster parents.”

Explaining to your family and friends what foster care is, and why you want to open your home to a child can be both challenging and intimidating. You're never sure how open they'll be to your plan, what kind of support they'll offer or what "horror story" they'll tell you from someone they know who fostered.

If you thought explaining all of that to a group of adults was difficult, you will have an entirely new challenge waiting at home when you try telling your own children. Unless your kids have a friend who's in foster care, you'll be introducing them to an entirely new and complex world.

When talking to children about foster care do it in an age appropriate way. For younger kids, describe it using words that they're familiar with so they can relate it to things they've experienced.

It can still put scary thoughts into your child's head even when you describe foster care in child friendly terms. Remind your biological children that they aren't in foster care and that they will always live with you. Still, they may not like the idea of having to share attention with a new kid in the house. You might have to explain that you don't love them any less simply because you're also paying attention to your foster child. Explain that you just want to make them feel at home and that your kids can help you with this by being friendly as well.

With older children you can be more upfront when explaining how the foster care system works. You can use this moment as a learning experience for your older children by talking to them about why you want to foster and the need for others to become foster parents. Being part of a foster family can have a

big impact on who your children grow up to be.

However, the learning isn't limited to just your older children. While talking to your younger kids about foster care, you can instill and reinforce the importance of compassion at an early age. The lesson may not be as intellectually deep, but it's just as valuable.

Trying to explain foster care to your children isn't easy, but if you can find a way to relate it to their own experiences you can set them at ease and teach them compassion. Speak from your heart with love. Validate any feelings a child expresses. Walk through the hard feelings and remember the happy times and closeness.

<http://foster-adoptive-kinship-family-services-nj.org/talking-to-children-about-foster-care/>



# 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO SURVIVE AS A FOSTER PARENT

by Dr. John DeGarmo

It isn't always easy. Taking care of kids, that is. As a father of three biological children, and three children from adoption, there are those days when I am a little worn out.

Know what's even harder? Taking care of children in foster care. As a foster parent of over 45 children from foster care, there are those days when I am a whole lot worn out! That includes the 10 children in my home right now. Now, don't get me wrong, it is the most important "job" I have ever done, and it has made me a better person.

In truth though, taking in children from foster care into your house can certainly be a challenge. Behavioral issues, learning disabilities, emotional trials; all can be exhausting and trying for a foster parent. Yet, what many foster parents often overlook is the risk factor that goes along

with taking a foster child into a home. As a foster parent, you become vulnerable to many possibilities, and it is important that you protect yourself and your family from the possible implications and investigations. Just as important is making sure you do not become overly exhausted and even burned out.

## 1. HANDLING BURNOUT

One of the keys to preventing burnout is awareness. Once you are aware that you are truly exhausted and facing burnout, you can then take steps to better care for yourself. If you are feeling exhausted, run down, depressed, unmotivated, hopeless or powerless, or even feel like running away, you may be experiencing burnout. Changes need to be made, otherwise you will not only suffer, but your marriage, your family, your children, and even your job will suffer, as well.



There are a number of other ways to help reduce stress and burnout, including lifestyle changes, diet, exercise, support groups, and even respite care. If burnout is left untreated or ignored, there can be serious complications for not only the foster parent, but for the foster child, as well. After all, if you are too exhausted and feeling burn out, you will have a difficult time giving the love and support a foster child sorely needs.

## 2. TIME FOR YOURSELF

As a foster parent, this will be difficult, as you will be required to take care of a child full time. Along with this, you may also need to care for your own children, as well as your spouse. You may have a full-time job that requires a great deal of your energy, plus there are those other commitments you have, such as church, volunteering, and other organizations you might be involved in. Finding time for you will not be easy, but it is very essential. Make time to do something you enjoy, and that you find relaxing. Spend time with some friends, perhaps over lunch or dinner. Do not neglect your own personal health; make sure you get plenty of exercise regularly and eat healthy.

## 3. YOUR MARRIAGE

Sadly, many marriages suffer during the foster process. When you are putting much of your energies and time into your foster child, you may be so drained and exhausted that you soon neglect your spouse. Further complication to this, some foster children are skilled at pitting one parent against the other, bringing some heated and very unproductive arguments to your home. Make sure that you and your spouse are on the same page with your parenting, and ensure that the two of you are consistent when it comes to all decision making with your foster child. Finally, do not neglect the needs and concerns of your spouse. Instead, make your marriage the cornerstone of your home, and work to make it a productive and happy one.

## 4. YOUR OWN CHILDREN

If you have children of your own, you may find that you are not giving them the attention and love they need. Instead, your attention is many times on the needs and behavior of your foster child. As a result, your relationship with your biological children will suffer. Make sure you spend one on one time with each of your own children. Go out on a "date" with them, take them for a drive, have a picnic. During this time alone, allow them to talk to you about how they are feeling about the foster child in your home. If they are frustrated, encourage them to tell you about how they feel. Listening to your child is important to your relationship. After all, they may be worn out and exhausted, too, just like you might be.

## 5. FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS

There are a number of foster parent support groups and associations across the nation. A few of these organizations may be national ones, while many others are, comprised of foster parent, like you. Either way, you will benefit by being in a support organization, as they will provide you with not only support, but information, fellowship, and important insight that will help you be a better foster parent.

*"My friend, I am thankful for what you do each day. I am thankful that you are making sacrifices in your life in order to care for children in need, children in foster care. I am thankful that you have opened up your home and your family to children who need help, who need stability, and who need love. You are making a difference. Now, take care of yourself, as well!"*

Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 13 years and he and his wife have had over 45 children come through their home. He is a speaker and trainer, the author of several books and writes for several publications. He can be contacted at [drjohndegarmo@gmail.com](mailto:drjohndegarmo@gmail.com), through his Facebook page, or at his website, <http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>.

## Respite

*Respite is a planned block of time to provide the foster family with temporary relief from the day to day responsibilities of foster care. Respite is meant to provide an extended break in order to reduce potential for "burnout." Families are encouraged to take respite but are not obligated. All foster families at the intern and practitioner level are eligible for ten days of respite per year. It is recommended that the ten days be taken all at once (as the objective is to provide a break for foster parents), but this is not mandatory.*

*Foster parents must plan their respite days with their caseworker in advance. The plan must address the needs of the foster family and the needs of the individual children in the home. Foster parents are responsible for making their own respite arrangements in conjunction with their caseworker, who must approve the respite provider. Other foster families may also be respite providers.*

**I**t's summer, school's out, and the days are long. Lots of children get through the days with extra helpings of screens and tech. Children are tech-bound for up to eight hours a day, and teenagers more than 11 hours a day. The only activity they're actually found to be spending more time on is sleeping! Summer is a fantastic opportunity to give your kid's brains a break from screens, then keep it going.

Excessive use of screens can impact on children's attention-spans. Video-games especially, can reinforce the notion of immediate gratification, reducing the amount of time children are willing to spend earning satisfaction from real-life endeavors, and learning. Too much screen time leads to a lack of real-world interaction, which can impact on mood, difficulties with behavior, impulse control problems, lack of self-confidence, and difficulties regulating relationships with others.

Screen time is certainly not evil, and it alone is not going to destroy your child's life. It can actually be a great tool for enhancing your children's interests. The internet is a great place for homework and project research, it can be a great way to get a first exposure to foreign cultures, and learn new things. There are some video games that can teach the body co-ordination and fine motor skills.

In a way, screen time is a bit like sugar – you can allow some, but you don't want your children getting too high a dose. Your role is to recognize when they're getting too much and to set rules that will restrict their screen-time diet, and here's how to do it:

### **Set a good example.**

Get off your own screens Mum and Dad. Do something fun and exciting and irresistible to catch your children's interest. Take them outside for playtime (children should be getting at least 60 minutes of activity a day), get the whole family outside. If you're getting bored of the same playground, venture out a little further, find your five favorites, and rotate them, take a picnic, tennis rackets, play dodge-ball, anything!

# **How to Get Your Kids Off Screens this Summer**

*by Dr. Kirren Schnack, Clinical Psychologist*

### **Be the parent.**

You should model behavior that you want your children to follow. If your children constantly see you on your phone checking for Facebook updates, don't expect them to behave any differently. In most homes where children are overusing screens so are their parents, monitor the amount of time you are on screens and make sure you are setting a good example.

### **Don't do what others do.**

Remember you're the one in charge of your child, not other parents, and certainly not other children. If your child's best friend is allowed to watch clips of horrific real world violence this does not in any way mean you're obliged to allow your child to do the same. You set the rules for your home and what is or isn't appropriate without measuring yourself against others.

### **Set screen-time limits.**

Many parents struggle with setting clear boundaries on screen time. Having time limits can really help, not only you, but it also helps children learn and respond to limit-setting which is an essential life skill. I'd suggest having some alternative activities in mind though unless you want to hear sighs for hours on end. It may be helpful to have a conversation with your children, to let them know there will soon be rules about screens, meaning they will get less time, tell them why excessive screen time is not good for them. Involve your children in conversation and in making decisions, negotiating with them appropriately can help get their cooperation. Also, get them to brainstorm alternative activities they'd like to try.





**Have screen free time periods.**

Set up scheduled time every day when no screens are to be used (including parents), this might be after school until bedtime, or in the mornings, or from dinner for two hours. Allowing more screen time at weekends shouldn't mean a free reign, instead let your children know exactly how long they have, maybe split it into two sessions over the course of the day, then get them doing something else, and pre-plan the other activities.

**Keep the computer in an open area.**

This will help you monitor your children's social media behavior. Having the computer in the main room will also make sure that your kids are sleeping at night instead of sneaking in more screen-time (no TVs in

“ Too much screen time leads to a lack of real-world interaction.”

the bedrooms!). If they are old enough to have phones of their own, ask them leave their phones on the dining room table at the cut off time you have agreed.

**Turn off background screens.**

Don't leave TVs etc. on in the background at dinner time or when you want your children to focus on something else, it can be deadly for study-time concentration. A flickering screen will always be a distraction, even if the sound is down and at the other side of the room. If your children get used to growing up with the noise or distraction of a TV that is on all the time, they will be more likely to grow up

developing similar habits. If your children have been watching TV, when the program is over, turn the TV off and encourage other activities.

**No screens at meal time.**

Turn your TV off, and put aside all tablets and phones during dinner, that includes your own phones Mum and Dad. Getting your kids to talk has a host of benefits, research has repeatedly shown that families who have dinner and conversation together regularly are closer, more engaged in each other's lives, and have better relationships. Help your children learn to listen, read body language, how to hold a conversation, let them vent their problems to you (giving you the opportunity to be the one to help solve these problems instead of the internet).



# 5

## Ways to *Get Your Kids Playing Outside* Again

Playtime is serious business according to most pediatricians. They have linked the importance of hands-on, unstructured and social play to build language, cognitive and social-emotional skills. But between tablets, phones, video games, computers and televisions, how to you get your child away from screens and into the yard?

One piece of advice from pediatricians is to set media free times and places. Creating an interesting backyard environment is a great way to pull kids from screen time and into imagination land.

Try any of these five ways to create an enticing backyard at your home...

### 1 GO OLD SCHOOL

Fun activities that have been enjoyed through the decades are not old hat for your children. Stop at the store for inexpensive goodies that delight kids outdoors. Stock up on bubbles, sidewalk chalk, jump ropes, pick-up-sticks and a ball and jacks set.

While you're out, pick up some inexpensive sand pails, which are perfect for storing these kinds of small toys.

### 2 INCORPORATE NATURE

Give your children more than one reason to go outside. Teach them ways to enjoy nature—a lifelong gift.

- Keep a birdbath filled with water and put out a bird feeder. Let children help maintain them and record the birds they see.
- Make simple birdfeeders with pinecones, peanut butter and birdseed to hang in the trees.
- Start flower seeds in small cups and transplant them to the garden as they grow.
- Plant bright flowers to attract hummingbirds and butterflies.
- Grow herbs, fruits or vegetables that the children will enjoy, such as mint to put in their lemonade or cherry tomatoes they can eat right off the vine.

### 3 ADD A PLAYHOUSE OR TREEHOUSE

A child-sized structure is just the ticket to adventure. A playhouse isn't just for playing house—although that is certainly one option. It is also a fort in the wilderness, a ship at sea, a wagon train or a cabin for camping in the woods or jungle.



Children only need a bit of encouragement to see new potential in their play. A backpack loaded with sandwiches and bottled water can start their camping adventure. Some pirate hats and a bounty of toy money start a day of treasure hunting.

#### 4 RACE THE DAY AWAY

A great day of fun begins when you teach your kids how to make an obstacle course. Pretty soon, they will have a great time challenging each other to try the course they created.

Weaving between cones to crawling through a tunnel of opened cardboard boxes, then doing a cartwheel and ending by dribbling a ball across the driveway is full of imagination and exercise.

Tip: On a hot day, add some water to your

obstacle course. Racing through the sprinkler or underneath a hose as part of the course is a fun way to cool off.

#### 5 GET MESSY

Find a corner of the yard where it is just fine for the kids to be kids and play in the dirt. Turn a back corner of a flower bed into a construction zone. A few shovels and buckets to create roads and mountains for toy trucks and cars. Or, add a sandbox for building castles and pretend cooking.

If you want to get your child to play outdoors, seed their mind with ideas they can use outside, and then watch their interest grow.

Source: [modernparentsmessykids.com/5-ways-get-kids-off-screens-playing-outside/](http://modernparentsmessykids.com/5-ways-get-kids-off-screens-playing-outside/)

## DISTRESS TOLERANCE

by Matthew Tull, PhD

**D**istress tolerance is defined as the actual or perceived ability to withstand emotional distress. Distress tolerance is an important ability to have. Many things in life can cause distress, and the inability to tolerate this distress can lead to types of avoidance or other ineffective coping strategies. However, some people experience distress at such high levels that it becomes very difficult to tolerate. Consequently, it is not surprising that one group of people who have been found to have low distress tolerance are people with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

People with PTSD often experience very intense

negative emotions, such as shame, fear, anger, anxiety, guilt, and sadness. Intense emotions can be very difficult and frightening to experience and sit with. The stronger emotions are, the harder it is to manage them. In addition, when emotions are strong, it can be hard to identify what specific emotions you are experiencing. This can make emotions feel more frightening, unpredictable, and out of your control.

As a result, intense negative emotional experiences often lead people with PTSD to engage in unhealthy behaviors that help them get immediate relief from these emotions, such as deliberate self-harm, binge eating, substance use, or other impulsive behaviors.

Although these behaviors may bring about some immediate relief, it is short-lived and the distress often comes back even stronger, which can be even more difficult to tolerate.

Given the relevance of low distress tolerance to PTSD (as well as a number of other psychiatric disorders and unhealthy behaviors), a number of treatments specifically teach skills designed to improve distress tolerance. For example, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (or DBT) provides you with a number of different skills that are directly focused on increasing distress tolerance. In addition, interoceptive exposure has been found to be helpful in increasing tolerance of internal sensations (for example, increased heart rate, muscle tension) that are often associated with intense emotional experiences. Although these treatments were not originally designed for people with PTSD, they have been found to be helpful for people with PTSD.

# Pets can help children accept the challenges of foster care



**S**table, loving, secure family relationships are vital for child development and well-being. But many children who enter the foster care system have early experiences of neglect, suffering, hurt, and loss, and been deprived of secure parenting.

A key part of fostering is the idea that warm, nurturing relationships with foster families can help to change the developmental course of children who have suffered inadequate early care. But by the time they enter foster care, many children have already deeply internalized early experiences of neglect. This frequently means that they bring negative expectations, fear, anxiety, and resistance into potential new relationships, making the development of closeness and security with foster parents extremely challenging.

In a recent study, we explored how relationships with animals can help children navigate the challenges of settling into new long-term foster homes. Animal relationships have been shown to support psychological well-being across a range of social groups, including individuals with disabilities, older people, and psychiatric patients. They may be also be particularly helpful to children who have lost faith in adult love.

Our study involved the in-depth investigation of eight neglected, maltreated children (aged ten to 16) in the foster care system, all of whom had recently been placed with families that had pet dogs. The children had histories of severe abuse and neglect. They had been in foster care for between four and seven years, and had moved foster homes between seven and ten times. Childhood histories like theirs severely impede the development of a sense of safety, security, and trust in adult caregivers.

The first thing we noticed was the extent to which children mistrusted and felt suspicious of their foster parents. They felt foster parents were simply colluding with a world that they had come to believe was inherently threatening and painful. Family dogs, however, were frequently identified as a “safer” source of closeness.

One child, Jake, aged ten, said of his relationship with his foster parent, Trudi:

*I can still find it hard being really close with Trudi 'cos everyone in the past has been horrible to me and got rid of me. I guess there's still a chance Trudi might do that so I don't feel totally safe with her.*

Asked about his feelings towards Trudi's pet dog, Zak, however, he said:

*I don't mind being really close with Zak 'cos he won't get rid of me, so I feel really safe with him. He's my friend because he wants to be – and not just because he has to be.*

One of the most significant ways in which the children related to family dogs was to rely upon them in times of emotional distress (when the dogs were often preferred to foster caregivers). This often involved "contact comfort". Close skin-to-skin contact was a significant part of how animal connections helped to alleviate powerful feelings of fear, sadness, or anger.

Jane, aged 11, told us:

*I felt embarrassed crying in front of [my foster parent] Sheila but I could cry and feel safe with the dog on my bed. When I cry he wriggles into my neck and I rest my face against his belly. Then I cry more, but I feel better after I cry. Like the tears help get the worry out my head. I feel safe with him there beside me. Like he wants to help me and stop my bad thoughts.*

It was also apparent that the animals offered children a bridge through which they could begin to believe in foster parents as trustworthy and loving. If they were kind to their pets, maybe they would be kind to the children too.

### Feeling at home

Jake, (who we heard from earlier in this article), said later on:

*[Trudi] took real good care of Zak [the dog] all the time, and never got angry or fed up. She was really nice to him and always made sure that he was okay. I like Zak so much. I think I was wrong about Trudi because actually she seems nice too. Zak must love her and I know he wouldn't do that if Trudi wasn't really nice.*

Pete, ten, also grew to trust his foster mother by observing her relationship with the dog:

*She was always nice to him [the dog], so I knew that she'd be nice to me too. Even when he's bad, like barking or biting things, she doesn't hate him, or get rid of him. I liked her because she was kind to him all the time.*

Pete's foster mother described how he would constantly scrutinise her interactions with the dog:

"I felt judged. He was like a shadow for the dog. When I was with the dog he watched my every move."

We did not set out in our study to suggest that animals should be a universal part of the fostering process. Clearly, some children are frightened of animals, not all children respond positively to animals, and some children and caregivers have a history of animal abuse.

“Animal relationships have been shown to support psychological well-being across a range of social groups, including individuals with disabilities, older people, and psychiatric patients. They may be also be particularly helpful to children who have lost faith in adult love.”



However, it is critical that children who have lost faith in adult love find their way back to human relationships that support and nurture them towards psychological health. In order to allow the development of a secure base with children, foster parents must begin to "feel" friendly, caring, and approachable for children, and offer them a safe, non-threatening environment.

Animal relationships aren't a substitute for parental connection. But they can provide vital, non-threatening emotional comfort. Comfort that "holds" children while they come to terms with the anxieties and anger that can cloud their relationships with adults.

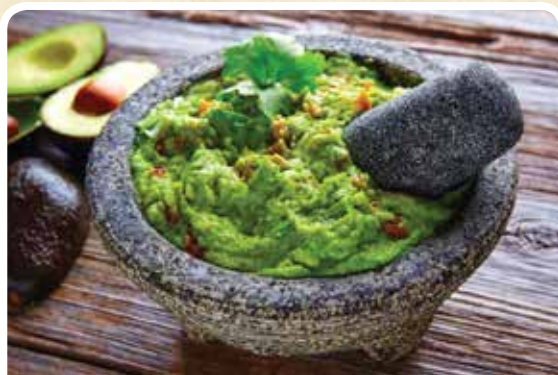
<http://theconversation.com/pets-can-help-children-accept-the-challenges-of-foster-care-78123>



RECIPES FROM

# Petty's Kitchen

by Hayley Petrow



## Fresh & Easy Guacamole

**2 ripe avocados** (I prefer only 2 avocados, but you could always add one more for a subtler flavor)

**1 tomato**, coned and cubed

**1 lemon**, juiced

**Salt & cayenne pepper** to taste

*\*Yields a small bowl's worth if using 2 avocados*

- Peel and mash avocados
- Add lemon juice and keep mashing until consistency is achieved. Be conscience of how much lemon juice you use, flavor to your own tastes. If using bottled lemon juice, start by adding 1 tsp.
- Mix in tomato and cilantro
- Season with salt and cayenne pepper to taste

## Oatmeal Cake

**3 cup oats** (quick or old fashioned)

**1/2 cup brown sugar** (packed)

**2 tsp baking powder**

2 eggs

**1 1/4 cup milk**

**1/4 cup canola oil**

**1 tsp vanilla**

*\*Optional: you can also bake in any type of fruit and top with nuts if you desire.*

- Preheat oven to 350\*
- In large bowl combine oats, brown sugar, and baking powder.
- In a small bowl whisk eggs, and add milk, oil, and vanilla. Stir into oat mixture and let stand for 5 minutes.
- If you wanted to add fruit, this is the time to add it in.
- Grease baking dish with butter (you can use a cake pan or 11x7 baking dish), and transfer mixture into it. Sprinkle in nut topping if you desire.
- Bake uncovered at 350\* for 35-40 minutes. Cake is done when it is golden brown and center is baked thoroughly.

*\*Depending on how deep the pan is it may take up to 45 minutes. Remember: If you baked cake in 2 smaller pans instead, it will be done sooner! Serve warm with milk!*



# Fourteen Rules You Must Never Break when Dealing with Addiction

When a loved one is addicted, unfortunately, one's usual patterns of thinking and behaving may not see one through to success. Dealing with a person's addiction requires a different attitude that does not come naturally to many people. Addicted persons take advantage of this to manipulate family members so they can continue drug use without interference.

The tragedy is that when the drug abuse and manipulation continue for years, the family may have no resources left with which to save the addicted person's life. It's very common for tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars to be spent cleaning up the problems that result from addiction.

To prevent this tragedy from occurring, here are fourteen rules you must never break when someone you care about is addicted to drugs like alcohol, crack or powder cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, or opiates like heroin or OxyContin.

## 14 Rules in Dealing With Addiction

1. Don't Be Naïve
2. Don't Be an 'Enabler'
3. Reject the Lies and Manipulation
4. Follow the Money
5. Protect Your Valuables
6. Mysterious Problems: Consider Substance Abuse
7. Keep Responsibility Where It Belongs
8. Head Off Drug Abuse Before Teen Years
9. Choosing Rehab Program: Do Your Own Homework
10. Once In Rehab: Don't Believe Everything You Hear
11. Continue to Provide Support After Rehab
12. Realize Life Will Have Serious Triggers to Relapse
13. Don't Lose Hope of Recovery
14. Realize You Are Not Alone

To read the entire article in detail online visit: <https://www.narconon.org/drug-abuse/rules/>



# 8

## BEST FOODS to *Pack for the Beach*



Packing food for a picnic in the park is pretty easy. But when your picnic happens to be on the beach, there's a new set of rules and a few more factors to consider before filling your basket or cooler.

For starters, there's the sand. It's totally obvious, but no matter how hard you plan and how many precautions you take, it inevitably ends up everywhere. Including your sandwich. There's also the wind — the beach can be breezy, which means that sand and salt swirl around, attaching themselves to anything that's remotely sticky, wet, or, let's face it, edible.

Keep that in mind the next time you're packing up for a day at the beach, and remember that even when you have a cooler, some foods hold up better than others. Of course you can always pack the basics, like crackers, chips, nuts, and dried fruit, but it's good to have something a little more substantial.

Try any of these "8 Best Foods to Pack for a Day at the Beach":

### 1. *Wraps*

I always opt for wraps over regular sandwiches when packing lunch for a day at the beach. For one, it's just fun to coil things up in a tortilla or collard leaf. But more importantly, when the fillings are tucked away on the inside, they're better protected — plus wraps are easy to eat with one hand.

### 2. *Fried chicken*

The only thing better than hot and crispy fried chicken, is leftover cold fried chicken the next day. Especially when that "next day" happens to be at the beach. Fried chicken is a summer staple; it holds up well in a cooler, and it's pretty easy to eat without getting mouthfuls of sand.

### 3. *Skewers*

Because food on skewers is always more fun! Whether you go for fruit, veggies, or meat, kabobs make great beach fare. This is a hands-off (read, sand-free!) meal that's utensil-free and easy to eat, with even easier cleanup.

### 4. *Whole fruit*

As much as I love fresh cut-up fruit, sandy fingers diving in and out of the bowl puts a big damper on the party. Whole fruit is much more suited to a day at the beach. Peaches, nectarines, apples, and grapes all make a sweet choice.

### 5. *Couscous or pasta salad*

I've had a lot of experience with these two, and they tend to hold up well in the heat. Also, even if a few grains of sand make their way in, they'll easily get lost in a jumble of couscous; you might not even notice.

### 6. *Charcuterie*

True, cheese and salami might not be great choices if you're going to be out for hours in the heat of the mid-afternoon. But if you're eating right away or going at sunset, these bites are easy to pack, require no assembly, and can be eaten without utensils.

### 7. *Lettuce wraps*

These may seem overly complicated, but this is our suggestion in lieu of a salad. Wrap up some chopped vegetables or other components in big, oversized leaves of iceberg lettuce. Then wrap in foil, so you can just peel it back and eat.

### 8. *Cookies*

Don't forget dessert! Cookies are a simple finger food to curb your post-lunch sweet tooth. You won't hear me say this often, but it's probably best to skip anything chocolate to avoid a melty mess.

# 7 ways to respond to YOUR CHILD'S NEGATIVE SELF-TALK



## 1 ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELING, NOT THE WORDS

If you can search out what your child is feeling, and name it, you can help your child to both identify what's actually bothering him and begin to separate that problem from his own self-worth.

## 2 USE HUMOR TO HELP THEM SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Role-playing a situation, using the funniest possible circumstance. For example, if your child is worried about going to a school party, you can get dressed up in fun and silly outfits and then come back and tackle the problem as a cowboy, doctor, or puppy.



## 3 USE SPECIFIC PRAISE TO SHOW YOUR CHILD HOW GREAT THEY'RE DOING

Praising a child's efforts is one of the best ways to focus both your and your child's attention on the problem-solving tools they are using to get through a situation. By telling your child what you noticed about his efforts or attitude, you're allowing him to connect his own positivity to the situation.



## 4 TALK OPENLY ABOUT NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

Realize that negative self-talk is often a symptom of fear, and share that realization with your child. Think together about what your child might be afraid of when she says things like, "I'm dumb." By addressing the fear of being unintelligent, you can help your child to find useful strategies to deal with it.



## 5 TALK ABOUT HAVING A GROWTH MINDSET

Practice a growth mindset by being resilient and pressing forward on a long-term goal relentlessly. Let them see you make mistakes in reaching this goal while never losing sight of the end. Answer their questions about your next steps, and celebrate your successes with them.



## 6 DISCUSS YOUR "BEST FAILURES"

Ask everyone at the dinner table to share something they failed at that day. Empathize with each other openly and celebrate the combined learning that your family is achieving every day, despite setbacks and failures.



## 7 CREATE AN AFFECTIONATE, WELCOMING HOME

When you give your children a strong, warm base to return to, they're able to explore and experiment because they accept that they'll be loved no matter the results of their efforts.



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## Heat Waves

Do you know how to spot the difference between heat cramps, heat stroke, and heat exhaustion? Anyone can experience heat stress. The health risks are greatest for those over the age of 65, infants and young children, people with chronic illness, those who work or exercise in the heat, and those who are overweight.

### During Heat Waves:

- Drink fluids, especially water, before feeling thirsty.
- Slow down! Your body can't function as well in high temperatures.
- Cool down in cool store, public library, or community pool.
- Shade heads and faces with a loose-fitting ventilated hat or umbrella when outdoors.
- Dress appropriately in light-weight, light-coloured, and loose-fitting clothing.
- Avoid getting sunburned. It decreases the body's ability to cool.
- Never leave infants, children or pets inside a parked vehicle.

### Symptoms and treatment of hot weather illnesses:

#### HEAT CRAMPS

Symptoms include sharp pains in the muscles caused by salt imbalance resulting from the failure to replace salt lost with excessive sweat.

*Treatment: Move person to cool, shaded area to rest, and apply firm pressure to cramping muscles. Give person two glasses of salty water (mix 5 milliliters of salt to 1 liter of water) at 10 to 15 minute intervals between each glass if cramps persist.*

#### HEAT EXHAUSTION

Symptoms include heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, headache, diarrhea, muscle cramps, cold and clammy skin, low blood pressure, disorientation and possible vomiting.

*Treatment: Move patient to cool area to rest, provide salty water, and cover person if shivering. The person should rest in bed until recovered. Seek medical attention immediately.*

#### HEAT STROKE

Symptoms include a core body temperature greater than 40°C, complete or partial loss of consciousness, reduced cognitive function and cessation of sweating (hot and dry skin), dilated pupils, and elevated blood pressure. Skin may be flushed at first, later ashen or purplish.

*Treatment: Heat stroke is very serious. Call 911 immediately and while waiting for the ambulance, move the person to a cool place and sponge body with cool water.*

Source: <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/sfttps/tp201207-en.aspx>

# NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT

**A scavenger hunt is such a fun way to kick off summer. There are so many different fun scavenger hunt ideas for kids, but you can literally take any way to do a scavenger hunt and apply any variation you'd like to it!**

Here are some outdoor scavenger hunt ideas for kids:

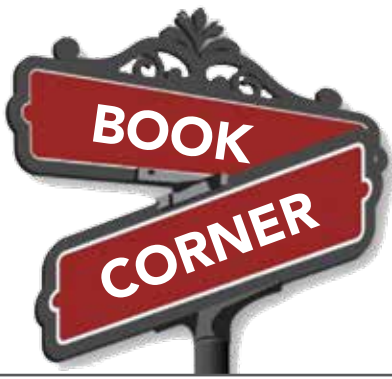
- Make a list for kids that can't read yet with clipart images of objects from outdoors.
- Print the list to hunt for right on the paper bag!
- Hide favorite toys around the yard or park.
- A printable scavenger hunt geared for a day at the zoo.
- Go on a texture scavenger hunt in your own backyard.
- Take the kids on a nature walk scavenger hunt and incorporate counting—great for preschoolers!
- Snap photos of objects around your neighborhood to do an around the town scavenger hunt!



A nature scavenger hunt is very open-ended and the items that the kids find to collect can vary depending on what they like, as long as the selection is there. Some descriptive items on a nature scavenger hunt could include: small flowers; big flowers; plants with no flowers; something that smells good; something in their favorite color; a big leaf; a leaf that has a cool shape; sticks etc.

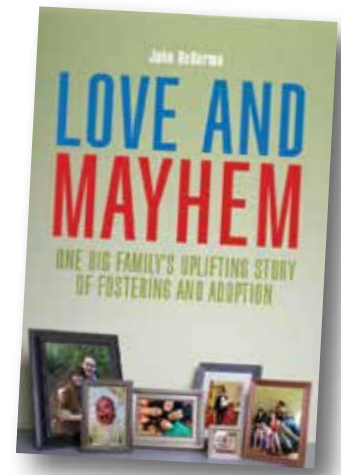


A scavenger hunt is such a refreshing and fun activity to do with kids. Getting outside and running around is a good way to burn off some energy. It might even be the perfect activity to do in the evenings during that crazy time when the kids are getting tired, but yet all wound up. The possibilities of ideas for a scavenger hunt are endless!



# Love and Mayhem: One Big Family's Uplifting Story of Fostering and Adoption – 1<sup>st</sup> Edition

by John DeGarmo



## Product Details

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Many people say being a parent is the toughest job there is. John DeGarmo, foster and adoptive parent, tells us just how tough it can be, having parented over 40 children. At times he and his wife, Kelly, have cared for up to nine children at a time, many with severe trauma and learning difficulties.

Love and Mayhem is an honest and open account of the struggles, sadness and joy that comes with the job of being a parent to a traumatized child. From the sleepless nights with babies withdrawing from drug-addiction, to the heartbreak when a child moves on to another home, and the loving chaos that comes with a large and blended family, John DeGarmo fights for the many children who have come through his home.

Ideal for foster families, general readers, fostering agencies and social workers who are looking for a true to life memoir of what it really is to be a foster parent.



"Truly inspiring- John and Kelly DeGarmo go to extraordinary lengths to love broken children into wholeness and to teach others how to do the same."

~ Rhonda Sciortino, author of *Succeed Because of What You've Been Through*

*Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 14 years, now, and he and his wife have had over 50 children come through their home. He is a consultant to legal firms and foster care agencies, as well as an international speaker and trainer on many topics about the foster care system. He is the author of several foster care books, including the highly inspirational Love and Mayhem: One Big Family's Uplifting Story of Fostering and Adoption, and writes for several publications, including Foster Focus Magazine. He can be contacted at [drjohndegarmo@gmail.com](mailto:drjohndegarmo@gmail.com), through his Facebook page, Dr. John DeGarmo, or at The Foster Care Institute.*

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