

Advisor

**PROVIDING
STRUCTURE FOR
YOUR FOSTER KIDS**

**TEACHING KIDS
NOT TO BULLY**

**HOW TO SAY
GOODBYE TO A
FOSTER CHILD**

**CHANGES TO
PRIDE LEVEL
PAYMENTS**

**ABOUT
EMOTIONAL
INVESTMENT**

**FOSTER CARE'S
4 MOST COMMON
STRUGGLES**

**WHEN YOU LOVE
TO COOK, BUT
ALSO HAVE KIDS**

**TEACHING
KIDS HOW TO
MANAGE
THEIR TIME**



Advisor

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OUR MISSION

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association exists to support and encourage Foster families through education and advocacy, helping create healthy homes, positive environments, and brighter futures for children and youth across the province.

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Supporting you on your journey as a Foster Parent

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association is a non-profit, community-based organization created to support foster parents in their role as caregivers.

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA) is committed to making a difference by connecting with families and listening not only to the positive stories, but the struggles and challenges of fostering.

The right support to you as a foster parent can make all the difference. Education, advocacy and a place to turn for advice helps you provide the support and healthy home that foster children need. Our association offers training for foster parents to help develop a deeper understanding of the children they are caring for, how to manage stress and how to build effective relationships.

The foster care system can be challenging to navigate without support. Our association is here to guide parents through reimbursement issues, struggles with case planning, foster home investigations, the conflict resolution process or assist with damages caused to your property by a foster child. All of these supports can be accessed by contacting our Foster Family Advocate.

Foster Parents should feel secure when communicating and working with the Ministry of Social Services. This can be assured by our association through support, policy clarification, support through investigations and appeals, attending meetings and conflict resolution. It is our goal to have the Foster Parent and the Ministry of Social Services working together efficiently while maintaining a harmonious relationship.

The In Home Support Program supports families who not only exceed the maximum number of children that can be cared for in policy, but those who require increased supports in maintaining placement of a child. This can be offered through domestic services, supervision of children, meal preparation or help with homework. As well, services can be offered as a “one to one” to a child or youth in need of mentorship or increased supports for safety.

At the SFFA, we have leadership committees across the province

that exist to help foster parents connect with each other in their communities. No one knows what a foster parent goes through like other foster parents and it's important to find support, mentorship, and create relationships with other foster parents. We believe the best way to network is through fun, social events in which all members of your family can participate in. As a member, you will receive emails about these events as they happen in your area!

Members of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA), are provided a membership card. This includes a membership number to register for conferences and trainings directly on our website. This card allows members to receive a discount at participating businesses when shown with a piece of personal identification. A complete list of participating businesses can be found on our website at <http://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/resources-for-foster-parents/discounts-for-foster-parents>.

*“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”*

- African Proverb



Kindness – Thank you



*For sharing my every happiness
Or wiping away my tears
For showing me
It's okay to be scared*

*For all the love you've shown
When others may have walked away
For the times
You sat and listened
To all I have to say*

*For boosting my self confidence
By always supporting me
For allowing me
To grow and become
The me I want to be*

*For giving me the room to breathe
Through all the joys and sorrows too
For the strength
Within your kindness
And just for being you.*

Written by SB, a young person in foster care.

Our office has moved!



WE ARE NOW LOCATED AT:

231 Robin Crescent
Saskatoon, SK
S7L 6M8



OCTOBER IS ALL ABOUT APPRECIATING FOSTER FAMILIES

During National Foster Family Month, Foster parents are recognized for their commitment to the children and youth living under their care. Each year events take place all across the country. Check with your region or contact the SFFA office if you would like to know what's happening in your community.



SEND US YOUR EMAIL

We are now sending out e-mails to our foster parents. To be added to our contact list and receive the latest news, please send your e-mail address to kendra@sffa.sk.ca

What Foster Parents Should Know About *Emotional Investment*

by Jamie Nestrick, *Foster Care Advocate, step/foster/adoptive Mom of (at least) six,*
Writer at StarfishConfidential.com and FosterMomCFL.com

As foster parents, we have to walk a fine line between being 100% emotionally invested in the kids in our care, but not at all attached to any particular outcome.



When I started writing this article, it was titled, “The Dangers of Optimism in Foster Parenting.” As I began to write, though, I realized the problem isn’t optimism—which is a good thing, because I am impractically optimistic and I’ve been failing miserably in my attempts to suppress that. The problem is getting emotionally invested in one specific ending.

Let me give you a couple of examples: When it was determined that my now-adopted son, Squish, was going to go to his birth father, SuperDad and I were so excited for him. We were sad he was leaving and we knew we would miss him, but we truly believed this was the best

possible outcome for him. As far as we were concerned, he’d hit the jackpot—at least as far as child welfare cases go. Three months later, he came back into care. While we didn’t hesitate to take him back and were thrilled to have him, it was very upsetting that the outcome we had been so emotionally invested in didn’t work out.

At the other end of the spectrum, it’s so easy to envision this child you love being a part of your family forever. When a relative comes forward or the birth mom gets accepted into a mother-child rehab facility after you’ve emotionally invested in the idea of adoption, the grief of saying good-bye to a foster child will be magnified by the pain of letting go of your hopes.

Uncertainty is the very nature of foster care. There’s a reason roller coaster imagery is widely used to describe foster parenting. And yet, you can’t hold yourself back emotionally from the kids; they deserve nothing less than 100%. You have to be emotionally committed to the children in your care. If you’re not fully invested in them, and if your heart doesn’t break when they leave, you’re doing it wrong. Some placements are more difficult than others, and some kids are harder to love, but if you never grieve when a child leaves your home, you have no business being a foster parent.

Being emotionally invested in the kids doesn’t mean you have to be emotionally invested in a certain outcome. If you can find the line between the two, you’re still going to grieve when they leave, it’s still going to hurt, and yes, your heart will still break. But if you are able to fully love a child without getting attached to a particular outcome—then maybe when you learn that your desired outcome isn’t going to happen—maybe it won’t be such a devastating blow.

Maybe. I don’t know. But I’m going to try it.

Source: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-foster-parents-should_b_9064994



Providing Structure for Your Foster Kids

ADVICE FOR FIRST-TIME FOSTER PARENTS

Becoming a parent for the first time can be an anxiety-inducing process. For the majority of soon-to-be parents, there is a plethora of resources to help reduce the anxiety. Information abounds on making birth plans, choosing the right baby name, cloth diapers vs. disposable, baby-proofing your house, and many other baby-related subjects.

But when I became a parent, I was not having a baby. I was planning to become a parent in a radically different way.

We had always talked about growing our family through foster care, and when we decided to take the plunge, we looked at the areas of greatest need, considered our situation, and gave our preferences based on that. This meant that we were “expecting” a sibling group of two or three children, same gender, between the ages of 4-9.

Resources to reduce my anxiety were scarce-to-none.

Initial training helped us learn about all the paperwork and appointments we were going to face, and a little about how to support the children who may come to live in our home, but the day we drove to meet our two oldest boys I had more unanswered questions than helpful resources. Three in particular were burning in my mind.

- 1. How do you parent traumatized children?**
- 2. How do you build trust with 8- and 9-year-old children who have never been given any reasons to trust anyone?**
- 3. And what do you do when they decide not to listen to the strangers who have suddenly become Mom and Dad?**

Well, it's been one year since our older two boys moved in with us (their little brother, age three, joined our family five months later), and the answers have been slow in coming, mostly found through trial-and-error.

We're still figuring out some of the answers, but interestingly enough, those questions all seem to have the same answer: Structure.

How do you parent traumatized children?

Provide structure. Children who have experienced trauma, which the majority of foster children have, feel as though their lives are out of control all the time. A structured environment is predictable; it reduces the chaos that has defined a trauma-filled life. Create clear, simple rules and boundaries and stick to them. Explain expectations and appropriate consequences and rewards, and then follow through. Every time. No one likes consequences, but once children begin to see continuity they start to feel secure. Which brings me to the next question.

How do you build trust with children who have never been given any reasons to trust anyone?

Provide Structure. Be consistent with expectations, consequences, rewards and schedules. When you're consistent you become predictable. Being predictable is the first step on the road to building trust. A large contributor to the chaos that defines a foster child's life is the unpredictability of people and situations. Sticking to the same hour-long bedtime routine may be difficult, but it becomes a comfort when our boys know exactly what's coming next.

We do what we can to keep a consistent and predictable schedule, but things inevitably happen

that disrupt our schedule, which often disrupts our boys' sense of safety and comfort. It is in those moments of perceived psychological danger when our boys' behavior tends to spiral out of control.

What do you do when they don't listen?

I'm not talking about normal kid stuff. I'm talking about intense, 2-hour, toddler-like tantrums from a nine-year-old. But the answer is still, Provide Structure.

Respond the same way every time. Be predictable, and don't add to the chaos that has filled their brain. Try to remain calm, because your demeanor will affect theirs. We always tell our boys that we want to talk about what they are feeling, but we will not do it when they are disrespecting other people's feelings or throwing a fit. We choose to ignore negative attention-seeking behavior, and give verbal encouragement as soon as our boys adjust their behavior and calm down.

We address any behavior that was inappropriate or against the rules, and give suggestions for other ways to handle the overwhelming feelings they may be experiencing.

We have established a predictable routine for how we will respond to that kind of behavior. That doesn't mean that our kids' behavior doesn't escalate, but it does mean that they know what's going to happen every time it does, which provides some comfort even when they're feeling out of control for other reasons.

It's difficult to be a first-time parent no matter how you come to it. All I know is my own experience, and it felt extremely difficult trying to figure it out without many resources or friends to turn to with similar experiences.

Trial-and-error is still the name of the game in our house, but the most important thing we've learned in our first year of parenting is that children need structure to feel safe. Kids who have lived in foster care, especially, need predictably to reduce the chaos that has defined their lives. And that's the best advice I can give to anyone anxiously awaiting becoming a first time foster parent.

<https://adoption.com/providing-structure-for-your-foster-kids/>



Questions to ask your kids after school

WHAT DID [NAME] SAY TODAY?

This forces your kids to answer with more than one word, and you will get to hear with their friend, teacher, coach or principal had to say throughout the day.

WHAT MADE YOU LAUGH TODAY?



Who was a good friend to you today? HOW were they a good friend?

Were you a good friend to anyone?



Who did you sit with at lunch today?

WHAT COLOR WERE YOUR TEACHER'S SHOES TODAY?

ARE ANY OF YOUR CLASSMATES HAVING A HARD TIME?

You can brainstorm ways to help or offer support.



If you were in charge of the entire school (or your classroom), what are 2 things you would keep the same and 2 things you would do differently? Why?

Did anything make you sad today or scare you?



Who did you play with at recess today?

TELL ME A FUNNY JOKE!

TALK ABOUT THE LITTLE THINGS...

Asking these small questions can get your kids into the habit of talking to you about their lives. Sharing the little things now, will make your kids more likely to share the big things later.



FOUNDATION FOR
ADVANCING ALCOHOL
RESPONSIBILITY.ORG

Visit Responsibility.org for more conversation starters to use with your kids.

HOW TO SAY GOODBYE TO A FOSTER CHILD

Saying goodbye to a Foster Child? Is there really any right, or, even, easier way to do it?

Saying goodbye to a loved one is hard. In our lives people come and go; some losses we are able to quickly move on from, while others remain in our minds, never to ease. When it comes to the foster children we have given so much love to for only a short time, that hurt will exist.

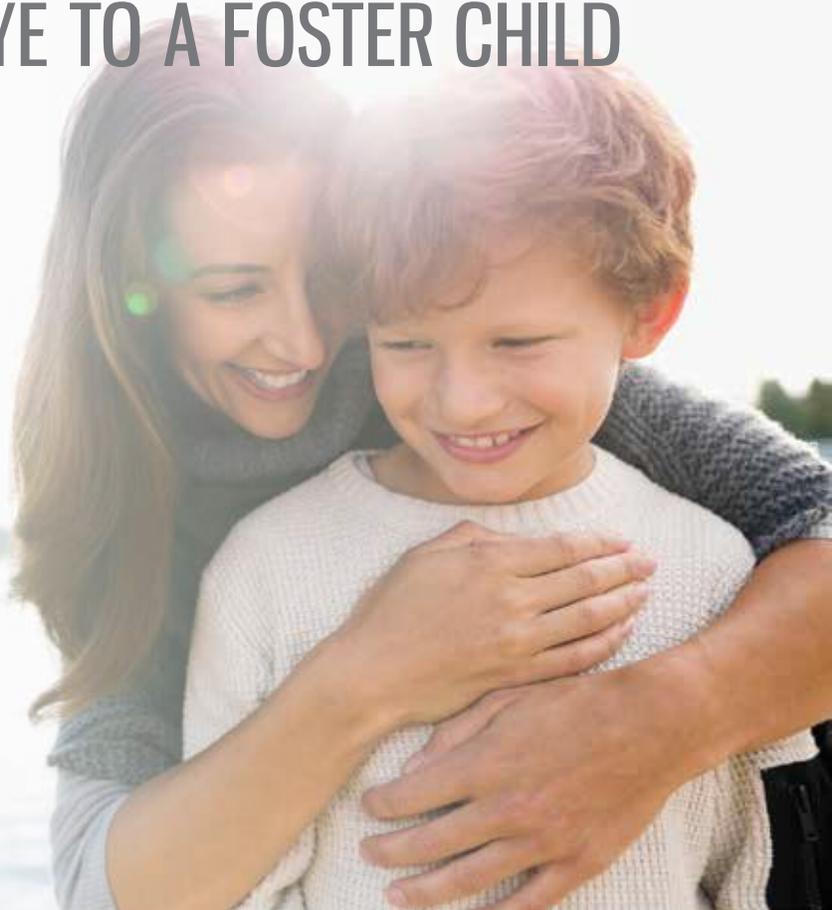
I want to focus this post more on **“you”**, the foster parent, rather than just another step by step, bulleted approach to physically saying goodbye. For **you**, who braved the fear of attachment that keeps so many away and now face that moment where heartbreak is inevitable.

When I worked as a caseworker several years ago, one of the first foster families on my caseload had three foster children. The youngest was a two year old boy placed with them the previous year. The attachment and bond to this child for them was very real. When he reunited with his biological mother a year later, I could **feel** their hurt; my heart broke too.

Supporting reunification is always the best approach; we want stronger families staying together. Being the person, however, who saw the first steps, heard the first words, walked them to their first day of school, cheered in the stands, or, even, taught how to drive, is something special.

When they leave, even under the best of circumstances, there is a void left. Watching a child grow, make so much progress and, finally achieve big, *and little*, milestones is endearing. Hearing those laughs, wiping the tears, embracing them during the good and bad times, was your job, but, it is always so much more.

How do you say goodbye to a foster child? You don't. You may or may not see them again, but, they will always have a special place in your heart. For one brief moment in time, you were the most important person they had in their life. You gave them not only food, clothes, and shelter, but, hope. Hope, that someone in this world does care about them. Hope, that they can be better and do better. Hope, that they are worthy of love.



“ You may or may not see them again, but, they will always have a special place in your heart.”

So, how do you say goodbye to your foster child?

You weep, you laugh, you mourn, you dance.

For a season, they were meant to be with you and you were meant to be with them. Your grief will be real, but, the joy of the relationship will endure forever.

Go on knowing that you made a difference in each others lives. You took their pain, a perfect stranger, in order to bring fulfillment and meaning to their lives.

When they leave, take a break, regroup, and continue on; there are so many more children who need your love.

Source: <http://thefosterparentassistant.com/2018/01/31/say-goodbye-foster-child/>

Foster Care Pay Structure Changes

The Ministry of Social Services and the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA) are very pleased to announce a new PRIDE Levels of Pay which will be implemented in the fall of 2019. This new payment structure follows the announcement made during the Government's 2019/20 budget on March 20th.

The new PRIDE Levels of Pay of \$500/month/child will be payable upon completion of all mandatory training and replace the existing Skill Development Fee and Fee for Service payments currently in place. All other existing foster care payments, including basic maintenance, special needs, respite and expense re-imburements (such as for travel) will remain unchanged.

This is seen as a positive response for Foster Families as we move forward with a new payment structure, training and professionalizing fostering in our province. In order to offer additional information and clarification of these changes we have provided a "Question & Answer" section. If you have further questions you may contact your Resource Worker.

Q: Why is the Ministry changing foster care payments?

A: Implementing the PRIDE level payment system has been an integral part of the Ministry's long term plan in implementing the PRIDE program. All PRIDE training modules are now available to foster families online and other required training is available through the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA), therefore the time is right to proceed with implementation of PRIDE level payments.

Q: What is the amount of the new payment?

A: The new PRIDE level payment will be \$500/month/child.

Q: How will the foster care payment structure change?

A: The new PRIDE level payment will replace Skill Development Fee and Fee for Service. Foster families will receive \$500/month/child in addition to basic maintenance once they have completed all required training, including PRIDE Preservice and Core



modules, First-Aid/CPR certification, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, Aboriginal Culture and Trauma Competent Care training.

Q: Will foster families receive more money than they currently receive?

A: Most foster families will receive an increase in their monthly payment under the new compensation structure. For those families who might receive less funding under the new payment structure, the Ministry is developing policy and processes that will address individual situations based on the needs of the children in the care of these families.

Q: What about foster families who do not complete the required training?

A: All foster families are required to complete certain mandatory training,

as indicated above. Exceptional situations may be considered on a case by case basis.

Q: When will this change take effect?

A: The change will come into effect in the fall of 2019. Information sessions for foster families will be held this spring. A schedule of information sessions at locations throughout the province is currently being developed and will be posted on the SFFA website.

Q: Will this change impact special needs payments, DLSA, re-imburement of expenses such as travel expenses or any other payments?

A: No, there will be no change to any other payments at this time. Planning for implementation of additional PRIDE level payments which will eventually replace DLSA, Therapeutic Foster Care, and Exceptional Fee for Service including payments to specialized foster homes such as medical homes will be considered in the future.

This might be a bold statement, but I'm going to go with it. There are four things that every foster care situation struggles with. Regardless of the details of the situation, the reason for removal or the present circumstances of the child...these struggles will be present in the home.

1. **Sleeping**
2. **Eating**
3. **Triggers**
4. **Visits**

Let me just break each one down real quick. I wanted to do this for several reasons. First, I want those of you who do not foster to have a little window into the world of foster care. Secondly, I want to prepare those who do plan to foster in the future. And thirdly, I want to encourage other foster parents who are out there struggling with one of those things right now. You are not alone.

***Just for reference, when I refer to "trauma", I specifically mean being taken from the home that they know and put into a new home. This in itself is traumatic to a child.*

First up, **sleeping**.

A child can struggle to sleep for many reasons, even in a safe, nurturing environment. In a foster care situation, the child has been taken from the familiar and placed into the unfamiliar. Not only is bedtime hard, but falling asleep, staying asleep and enjoying sleep are extremely difficult for children who have been through trauma. They are in an unfamiliar place, with unfamiliar lighting and sounds and unfamiliar people that they do not always feel comfortable going to for comfort. Once they finally fall asleep, the nightmares come. I have seen this in babies and older children as well. Sleeping is hard when trauma is involved.

Or perhaps the child will take on the opposite problem: they cannot stop sleeping. Instead of thinking about or dealing with the situation, all they can manage is to shut it out by sleeping.

Second, **eating**.

Food and eating can be a huge difficulty in any child, but especially in one who is going through foster care. Many children who have been through any type of trauma simply don't have an appetite. They don't feel like eating and therefore they can't.

Foster Care's

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MOST COMMON STRUGGLES

by suzanne hines

Food can also be a control issue for many children. We may be able to take them from their homes, make them live with us and make them get dressed everyday, but by golly we CANNOT make them eat. They are in control of that, and many kids latch onto anything they can be in control of because they feel so out of control. As a side note here...we tend to do this with food even as healthy, stable adults!

Another huge food issue is that they are not used to the food that is put in front of them. The child may come from a different culture and simply miss the food they had at their house before. They may have never been told to eat their vegetables or never been served a freshly cooked egg. They may be used to eating ravioli out of a can every single night for dinner...and therefore they miss canned ravioli.

Which can also lead to the opposite problem in children of foster care. Many of them come from homes where food was not readily available, and they were often very hungry. Once they enter into a safe foster home with a stocked fridge and pantry, they want to eat it all. And keep eating. And eating. Its a ravenous instinct and they are fearful that if they don't eat it NOW that it will disappear and they will once again go hungry. This can lead to hoarding and overeating, as well as a greedy need for seconds and thirds even after they are full.

As you can see, no matter how you approach it... food can be challenging.

Thirdly, **triggers**.

I think to some extent, we all have triggers. Some



of us are just more emotionally stable and able to handle them more easily.

As parents, we can often foresee our children's triggers and know when and where to avoid them. But as foster parents, we are handed a child that is a complete stranger. We don't know their past, we barely know them in the present. And one day, out of nowhere, our foster kid has an epic meltdown. And we are left dazed and confused. Months later it clicks...she saw a man in the store with a beard. Beards are triggers. Or that woman at the restaurant was pouring a bottle of wine. Bottles of wine are triggers. Or we INSISTED that she wear her leggings but we didn't realize that those leggings are the very same ones that she was wearing the day she was taken from her Mom. Or the song on the radio brings back memories that they just can't deal with.

Triggers. They are everywhere and we don't even know it. They show up when we are not expecting it and oftentimes, the child isn't even fully aware of the big feelings that they are feeling.

And lastly...**visits.**

Visitation is a necessary evil in foster care. It's absolutely necessary for the goal of reunification. But it's the absolute most challenging thing I have ever dealt with as a foster parent.

The child either dreads visits or looks forward to visits. Dreading visits leads to emotions and behaviors that are extremely hard to handle. Looking forward to visits leads to heightened emotions and off the wall behavior (think: children on Christmas Eve/Christmas morning). Then, the time for the visit arrives. This precious child with all

these pent-up emotions arrives at the visit and the parent doesn't show. They don't show. The child is CRUSHED.

Or, the parent shows and the visit goes well! They love seeing their parent and they enjoy the time together. And then the end of the visit arrives and the child has to say goodbye to their parent...again. And again and again week after week.

The emotions after visits (or missed visits) are always sky-high. Attitudes are on overdrive, tears are quick to come, tensions are high.

The foster child just doesn't want to be in foster care anymore. Even if they love the foster home, they feel torn between two worlds, and they just don't want to be in between two worlds. Nothing brings this tension into focus more than visitation.

Now, many of you may think that as I write out these four things, they must only apply to older children. Surely babies don't go through the same types of difficulties as those children who are old enough to process emotions? You would be wrong in assuming that. Even babies have a harder time sleeping and eating. They are processing different types of triggers even as they adjust to the world that they were just born into.

And visits? Our foster daughter Abigail was 5 weeks old when she went to her first visitation. She screamed for 8 hours afterwards. This happened every time she had visitation. She was so confused. To be reunited with her mother, whose smell and voice she knew, and then to be taken from it again and again week after week? Trust me...she struggled.

I am aware that this article is not all sunshine and roses. It is focusing on the difficult aspects of foster care. Children in foster care are going through some major things that most adults wouldn't even know how to deal with. Sometimes being a foster parent is overwhelming and exhausting because we feel like we are literally holding the children together by all these shattered pieces. Foster care is not all challenges and struggles, and I don't want to come across as complaining about the hard pieces. But I do want to bring awareness to some of the hardest parts of this journey that we go through.

Source: <http://www.suzannehines.org/2017/10/05/the-4-most-common-struggles-in-foster-care/>

My First Three Days in Foster Care

I spent 3 days wearing the same clothes to school. At least my old, worn jeans were appropriate for the weather, but I didn't have my jacket. I'd left my jacket at home, and I couldn't go back to get it. I guess that would teach me to be unprepared.

January in the high desert can be cold, but at least it wasn't snowing. I had my backpack, my longsleeved shirt, one pair of underwear, my jeans, and my tennis shoes. I never minded wearing the same jeans over again, but I felt so dirty having to wear the same underwear for 3 days. It felt like that was the worst part of the whole deal, a punishment for my crimes.

When I met my foster mom, I thought she was nice. She was pregnant and had a few other kids in the house. I was the only girl and the only kid old enough to be in middle school. I was the oldest at my house, too. So, I didn't mind not having other kids my age around. None of the other kids talked to me, and neither did my foster parents, really.

The whole thing was kind of surreal. I walked around my school with my head down for three days, hoping that even my close friends would just not notice me until I could change my clothes. No one mentioned it to me, but I was sure they knew. They had to know. Everyone paid attention to what you were wearing; it was a key part of 6th grade culture.

When the weekend came, my grandma and my aunts came to pick me up for a visit. I got a new jacket, some clothes, and

& 4 WAYS TO MAKE IT MORE BEARABLE

by Jenna Thornberg



It was as if my old world had disappeared into my past and this new world was trying to prove some point by acting super normal.”

most importantly, underwear. We didn't talk about the reason I was in foster care. In fact, neither did my foster mom and I; it felt like the elephant in the room. There I was, a kid in a new world, and everyone just acted like I was where I belonged. It was as if my old world had disappeared into my past and this new world was trying to prove some point by acting super normal.

It didn't start to feel normal for another 10 years.

I wish I could say that when I went back to live with my family after months in foster care that it was normal again, but I can't.

I wish I could say that when my mom lost custody and I moved in with my aunt and uncle that it was normal, but I can't. The truth is, I lived in 6 places in just 4 years, and I graduated high school a year early just so I could escape.

I was a gypsy who never learned how to stay in one place with one set of people, because that just wasn't my life.

Fast forward 16 years, and there I was, a foster mom. My husband and I took the classes, met with like-minded people, shared stories, and had high hopes to make a difference: to be the change we wanted to see.

Drawing directly on my own experiences, I vowed to do certain things differently. Here are a few things I recommend to make the first few days more bearable for kids in your care:

1. Leave an open line of communication.

This can be as simple as, "If you want to talk about anything, I want to listen." or "How are you feeling?" or "Do you need anything?" Even if you don't get an answer, the intent is there. You never know when they will take you up on your offer.

2. Don't expect anything.

Laying down your family's lifestyle and rules is important, but don't expect any child to mold to what you expect in 3 days, 3 weeks, or 3 months. You don't know what they've been through. Some things are easy to change, and some seem insurmountable.

3. Take care of the basics.

Underwear, socks, school

supplies, personal care items, clothes. Food they will eat falls into this category too. I always asked if they had a preference for toothpaste, shampoo, a toothbrush, deodorant, and snacks. This gives them a little control over their new world and can provide a small slice of normalcy when everything else is different.

4. Take care of you.

A new person in your home can feel overwhelming on both sides. Making sure you have a support system in place where you can ask for help or advice is important. If you are overwhelmed, how are you going to help a child? Pray, take deep breaths, read a book, take a walk, write, or do something

that helps you clear your mind and focus.

I got into quilting as a foster parent. Something about the humming of my machine and the intense focus on something outside of myself just soothes my soul. I spent a lot of time praying at my sewing machine. I wish these things were covered more when we took our foster parent training classes.

I was told that our agency was there to support our family, but in reality, we had to find our own support.

Our agency didn't always have our family's best interests in mind. CPS certainly didn't have our family's best interests in

mind. The therapists we worked with didn't have my family in mind.

Being a foster parent can feel like you've stepped into a crazy world, one where you have no idea what the best move is at every turn. Everyone helping a child in need is a hero in my book, and I hope that together we can learn more and do better all the way around.

About Jenna Thornberg:

I am a former foster kid who grew up to be a relatively normal, fairly balanced, ferociously protective momma bear of four sweeties who stole my heart the instant I laid eyes on them. My husband and I were foster parents for a year, took some time off to have our fourth child, and plan on adopting in the near future.

FOSTER PARENT ENGAGEMENT

No one knows what a Foster Parent's life is all about, other than that of another Foster Family. It's important to find supports, mentorship, and relationships with other Foster Parents. At the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association, we have Leadership Committees throughout the province that exists to help connect Foster Parents and provide a community of peer engagement. Through a combination of social events, meetings, educational sessions, families can share their ideas or struggles, and network with other families in their areas.

On April 11th foster families from the Estevan and Weyburn regions got together for a night



of bowling and pizza! It was a great evening of fun, as the kids and foster parents were able to mingle and meet other kids and parents from around their local. Connections were made and memories were shared!

This event was put on by the SFFA, and will hopefully continue around to the different regions of the province if enough interest is generated.

Teaching Kids Not to



It can be shocking and upsetting to learn that your child has gotten in trouble for picking on others or been labeled a bully.

As difficult as it may be to process this news, it's important to deal with it right away.

Whether the bullying is physical or verbal, if it's not stopped it can lead to more aggressive antisocial behavior and interfere with your child's success in school and ability to form and sustain friendships.

Understanding Bullying Behavior

Kids bully for many reasons. Some bully because they feel insecure. Picking on someone who seems emotionally or physically weaker provides a feeling of being more important, popular, or in control. In other cases, kids bully because they simply don't know that it's unacceptable to pick on kids who are different because of size, looks, race, or religion.

In some cases bullying is a part of an ongoing pattern of defiant or aggressive behavior. These kids are likely to need help learning to manage anger and hurt, frustration, or other strong emotions. They may not have the skills they need to cooperate with others. Professional counseling often can help them learn to deal with their feelings, curb their bullying, and improve their social skills.

Some kids who bully at school and in settings with their peers are copying behavior that they see at home. Kids who are exposed to aggressive and unkind interactions in the family often learn to treat others the same way. And kids who are on the receiving end of taunting learn that bullying can translate into control over children they perceive as weak.

Helping Kids Stop Bullying

Let your child know that bullying is unacceptable and that there will be serious consequences at home, school, and in the community if it continues.

Try to understand the reasons behind your child's behavior. In some cases, kids bully because they have trouble managing strong emotions like anger, frustration, or insecurity. In other cases, kids haven't learned cooperative ways to work out conflicts and understand differences.

Tactics to Try

Be sure to:

- **Take bullying seriously.** Make sure your kids

understand that you will not tolerate bullying at home or anywhere else. Establish rules about bullying and stick to them. If you punish your child by taking away privileges, be sure it's meaningful. For example, if your child bullies other kids via email, text messages, or a social networking site, dock phone or computer privileges for a period of time. If your child acts aggressively at home, with siblings or others, put a stop to it. Teach more appropriate (and nonviolent) ways to react, like walking away.

- **Teach kids to treat others with respect and kindness.** Teach your child that it is wrong to ridicule differences (e.g., race, religion, appearance, special needs, gender, economic status) and try to instill a sense of empathy for those who are different. Consider getting involved together in a community group where your child can interact with kids who are different.

- **Learn about your child's social life.** Look for insight into the factors that may be influencing your child's behavior in the school environment (or wherever the bullying is occurring). Talk with parents of your child's friends and peers, teachers, guidance counselors, and the school principal. Do other kids bully? What about your child's friends? What kinds of pressures do the kids face at school? Talk to your kids about those relationships and about the pressures to fit in. Get them involved in activities outside of school so that they meet and develop friendships with other kids.

Starting at Home

When looking for the influences on your child's behavior, look first at what's happening at home. Kids who live with yelling, name-calling, putdowns, harsh criticism, or physical anger from a sibling or parent/caregiver may act that out in other settings.

It's natural — and common — for kids to fight with their siblings at home. And unless there's a risk of physical violence it's wise not to get involved. But monitor the name-calling and any physical altercations and be sure to talk to each child regularly about what's acceptable and what's not.

Getting Help

To help a child stop bullying, talk with teachers, guidance counselors, and other school officials who can help you identify situations that lead to bullying and provide assistance. Your doctor also might be able to help. If your child has a history of arguing, defiance, and trouble controlling anger, consider an evaluation with a therapist or behavioral health professional.

As difficult and frustrating as it can be to help kids stop bullying, remember that bad behavior won't just stop on its own. Think about the success and happiness you want your kids to find in school, work, and relationships throughout life, and know that curbing bullying now is progress toward those goals.

Source: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/no-bullying.html>

“ In some cases, kids bully because they have trouble managing strong emotions like anger, frustration, or insecurity.”

- **Encourage good behavior.** Positive reinforcement can be more powerful than negative discipline. Catch your kids being good — and when they handle situations in ways that are constructive or positive, take notice and praise them for it.
- **Set a good example.** Think carefully about how you talk around your kids and how you handle conflict and problems. If you behave aggressively — toward or in front of your kids — chances are they'll follow your example. Instead, point out positives in others, rather than negatives. And when conflicts arise in your own life, be open about the frustrations you have and how you cope with your feelings.

It's important to keep your own behavior in check too. Watch how you talk to your kids, and how you react to your own strong emotions when they're around. There will be situations that warrant discipline and constructive criticism. But take care not to let that slip into name-calling and accusations. If you're not pleased with your child's behavior, stress that it's the behavior that you'd like your child to change, and you have confidence that he or she can do it.

If your family is going through a stressful life event that you feel may have contributed to your child's behavior, reach out for help from the resources at school and in your community. Guidance counselors, pastors, therapists, and your doctor can help.

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When You *Love to Cook* but Also Have Kids

by Christine Cyr Clisset

Even cooking experts relax their standards once they have kids. We talked to five cooking pros to get tips on how to get dinner on the table while parenting.

I'll never forget when I realized that I was cooking dinner all wrong. My hungry preschooler had just thrown a "category 5 meltdown" while I was making burritos — which took me about 30 minutes, using a half-dozen pots and dishes. When my husband came home later, he dumped the cold beans, rice, and cheese on a tortilla, microwaved it, and peacefully sat down to eat — all within two minutes. Why hadn't I thought of the microwave? This, I realized, was how to do burrito night!

As a former cookbook editor and kitchen-equipment reviewer, I pride myself on being a good cook. But since having kids, I've learned to simplify my approach, which allows me to spend quality time with my daughters.

For many families, the job of making dinner falls on one parent, and it's hard work figuring out what to make every night, let alone what kids will want to eat.

Food blog proliferation has pushed forward this idea even more that this is all kind of fun for everybody, and that it's relatively easy to come up with something easy to eat, when it's not.

To find better strategies, I did some research on home cooks and cookbook authors — who are also parents — and gained

their real-world tips on making meals simpler and family time more relaxed.



Invest in time saving tools

As I came to learn after burrito-gate, there's probably no better friend to time-strapped parents than a microwave.

Electric pressure cookers and slow cookers both require little attention — just dump in the ingredients and push a button. If you have a little time before dinner, go with an electric pressure cooker, which cooks something in half the time (sometimes less) it would take in the oven or on the stove.

If you prefer to let food cook overnight or while you're at work, choose a slow cooker. Slow cookers were something I totally turned my nose up at in my more chef-y career days, and I now think are genius.

Another no-attention-required appliance is the rice cooker, which you can use to cook more than just what its namesake suggests. I throw on the rice cooker with rice or quinoa or a mix of whole grains, to get a blank slate going for dinner.

I regularly use a rice cooker and an Instant Pot in tandem, setting both to cook before I pick my kids up so that dinner is ready when we get home.

Try using an upright blender to make quick puréed soups. They come together lightning fast in a blender, especially one with a cook function. The rest of dinner might be grilled cheese sandwiches, but there's a homemade, hearty soup to accompany, and I feel like that's a win.

Sheet pans can also do double duty for baking and making easy dinners. I love my sheet pans: It's a way to make delicious dinners with minimal cleanup.



Maximize your freezer

On nights that you're cooking something special, take advantage of the effort by making extra to freeze. I always try to make a double batch of Bolognese, meatballs, or falafel, or simply cooked beans in their broth. Quinoa, pasta, and grains also hold well in the freezer. I'll roast a second chicken, or plan on extra when braising or grilling meats and vegetables that freeze or keep well.

Frozen dinners certainly extend past meals you've made. I love frozen or pre-prepared dumplings or tamales bought, wrapped, and frozen. These are two things I serve about once a month—each that feels like a complete night off. And freezing specialty items you love can help elevate even the simplest meals.



Collect a few back-pocket dinners

For those times when you don't have a dinner plan, try to learn a few dishes that you can always fall back on. That could even mean hot dogs wrapped and baked in Pillsbury crescent rolls, served with ketchup and mustard, along with frozen veggies or a spinach salad on the side. Might I suggest spaghetti or your choice of

pasta mixed with garlic sautéed in olive oil — combined with whatever vegetables you have on hand. When necessary fall back on a breakfast classic. My now-and-forever easy dinner is scrambled eggs with toast. It's one of my favorite foods, and I can always make it, no matter how tired I am.

And dinner doesn't always need to be cooked. I rely on grazing, platter-style meals at least once a week, and much more in the summer. This lets me get away with serving all the things — meats, cheeses, crackers, vegetables, dips, olives, bread, hummus, or whatever we have on any given day — in new and inventive ways that always end up to be a please-all meal.

On the nights when you really don't have energy — maybe a child is sick, or you're late getting home from work — it's worth budgeting for takeout, especially if it will relieve your stress level. I try to leave one day a week when we order out.

Just having the one day of a break is really nice.

Do what works for your family

I believe in the power of a family sitting down to eat together; I also know that is not possible every night.

This forgiving approach extends to rethinking what mealtime looks like for your family.

If (and when!) getting dinner on the table feels like a chore, the best advice is to keep it simple. In all aspects of parenting, my goal has been to make everything as easy and low key as I can, when I can. If I get mired in the details or stressed about hitting a goal that ultimately isn't terribly important, I just won't be my best self for my kids.

Adapted from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/14/smarter-living/wirecutter/when-you-love-to-cook-but-also-have-a-kid-embrace-the-microwave.html>.

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Foster Parents:

“Well, the Honeymoon Period is over. Our new foster child is starting to really act out. This is so hard.”

Foster Child:

“Well, the Hell Period is over. I'm starting to feel a bit safer and trust these strangers who call themselves my 'foster parents'. I think I can start letting them see how I really feel. This is so hard.”

WWW.AFOSTEREDLIFE.COM



Celebrate National Child Day and children's rights on November 20th

National Child Day is celebrated in Canada on November 20th in recognition of our country's commitment to upholding the rights of children and two historic events: the 1959 signing of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights of children with 54 articles that provide us with a solid road map of what is needed to raise healthy and happy children and youth.

#RIGHTTOBESAFE



TEACH KIDS HOW TO Manage Their Time Efficiently

Hurry up. Do you know what time it is? Let's go. What's taking you so long? Do you sometimes feel like you're raising a bunch of dawdlers with no concept of time? Even the youngest children can learn how to manage their time.

Making good use of the hours and minutes of the day requires planning, prioritizing, and sticking to a schedule. These skills don't come naturally to children.

Make Time Management Fun

Learning time management should be fun for kids. Use crayons to color your own calendars. Add stickers to mark special days. Make it a game to see who can complete simple tasks around the house that usually take up a lot of time, such as brushing their teeth, putting on their shoes or getting their backpacks ready for school tomorrow. The more fun you make time management for your kids, the easier it will be to get them to understand time's importance and how to manage that constantly ticking clock.

Show Your Kids How to Measure Time

Even children who know how to tell time don't necessarily know how to measure time. Help them out by setting a timer during a block of time when they're supposed to be completing a task. Keep a clock close by and give them a verbal countdown as the minutes tick by so they can begin getting an internal feel for these time segments.

Use an analog clock for reference. Digital clocks are easier to read, but an old-fashioned clock with

hands gives them a better sense of how swiftly time passes.

You're not trying to teach your kids to live by the clock.

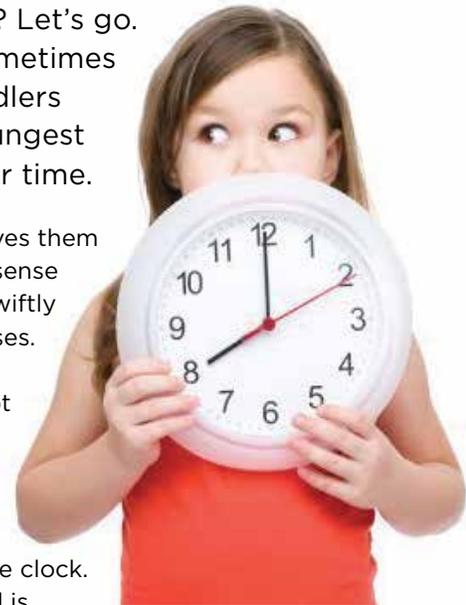
Your goal is simply to help them understand what an hour, 15 minutes or even five minutes feels like. The next time you say, "We leave in five minutes," they'll know that doesn't mean they have time to play with their toys, watch TV, and clean their room first.

Stay on Task

It's tempting to let the kids have a few more minutes of play time when they're getting along so well. Or there are those days when you want the kids to spend more time studying, even though your time management plan calls for them to start getting ready for bed at 7:00 pm.

As your kids are just beginning to learn about time management, stay on task. When time's up, move on to what's next on your schedule no matter how involved they are in that current task. Straying even a few minutes away from the schedule can throw kids off so try to stick to a schedule.

Adapted from <https://www.verywellfamily.com/how-to-teach-your-kids-time-management-skills-4126588>



DIY

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NOTEBOOK IDEAS

School is back in session! And what can be even more fun for kids than shopping for school supplies is decorating and personalizing some of them. Notebooks are the perfect canvas for colorful designs and embellishments. Here are some DIY ideas for “jazzing up” spiral bound notebooks or composition books.

STENCIL DIY NOTEBOOK

Supplies:

- Composition notebook or spiral notebook
- Stencil – similar here
- Acrylic Paint
- Sticker gems (optional)
- Circle Foam Brush



Directions:

Tape your stencil to a notebook. Using a round, circle foam brush, lightly pounce acrylic paint over the stencil. Let dry completely before removing the stencil. Add sticker gems for added decoration.



WASHI TAPE DIY NOTEBOOK

Supplies:

- Composition notebook or spiral notebook
- Washi tape (or similar)
- Cardstock
- Glue stick or Mod Podge

Directions:

Start by placing a series of different washi tapes on a piece of cardstock. Cut out a heart shape from another piece of paper. Outline the heart on top of the washi tape and cut it out. Use mod podge and a foam brush or a glue stick to adhere the washi tape heart to the notebook. For some added fun, create a matching pencil by wrapping a pencil in washi tape. You can even add a few feathers to the top by wrapping the bottoms with washi tape.



PATCH DIY NOTEBOOK

Supplies:

- Composition notebook or spiral notebook
- Iron on embroidered patches
- Acrylic Paint
- Glue stick or Mod Podge

Directions:

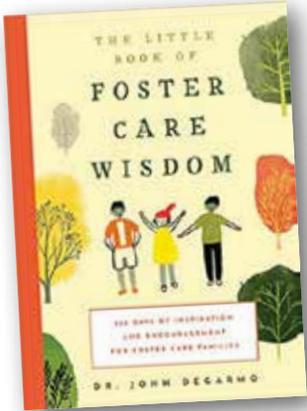
Iron on patches are such a fun and easy way to dress up your notebooks. For a cleaner look, cover the rectangle area on the notebook using a paintbrush and white acrylic paint. Pick out your favorite iron on patches and glue them on to a notebook. Add details using acrylic paint and a paintbrush like the donut themed example below.



Source: <https://colormadehappy.com/diy-notebook-ideas-back-school-supplies/>

goodreads

by Dr. John DeGarmo



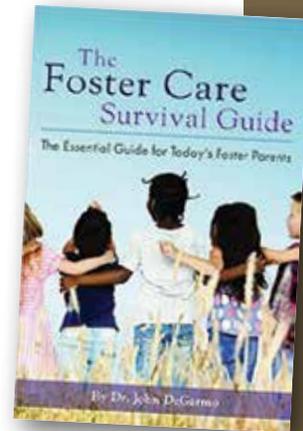
The Little Book of Foster Care Wisdom: 365 Days of Inspiration and Encouragement for Foster Care Families

Foster parenting is both a rewarding and a challenging job, a lifestyle of continuous learning and new experiences, and The Little Book of Foster Care Wisdom will be there to support you as you, in turn, support your foster children. Filled with 365 days' worth of daily tips, inspirational quotes, and motivational short stories from a foster care expert, this book is a must-read for modern child-welfare advocates, adoptive parents, and foster parents. It provides inspirational content every day, including instructions, tips, anecdotes, and more.

Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for fifteen years, and he and his wife have had more than fifty children come through their home. An international consultant to legal firms and foster care agencies, he is also a transformational speaker and trainer. The author of several books, he has also appeared on national television. You can find him on Facebook or at the Foster Care Institute.

The Foster Care Survival Guide: The Essential Guide for Today's Foster Parents

Foster parenting is often seen as a calling and a mission of love. At the same time; foster parenting can be both very difficult and exhausting. When caring for children who have suffered abuse; neglect; and traumas; foster parents face their own set of unique challenges each day. The Foster Care Survival Guide is a must have for today's foster parents. It is a guide to surviving the lifestyle of a foster parent filled with personal stories; practical tips and advice; and even humor and emotions; The Foster Care Survival Guide is an essential guide for both novice and experienced foster parents. Leading foster care expert Dr. John DeGarmo combines his own wisdom with that of fellow foster parents. Tackling issues such as helping children with disorders and anxieties; how to best manage the lifestyle of a foster parent; working with birth parents; getting the help you need; addressing your own marriage while caring for children in need; and balancing the needs of your biological children with your foster children; The Foster Care Survival Guide delivers experienced and sympathetic wisdom and advice that every foster parent; advocate; and professional needs today as they care for children in care.



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