

Advisor

Ministry issues vouchers

Keeping children safe while learning remotely

Pets help children accept challenges of foster care

The science of self-care

Water safety

Keep calm and foster on

4 things a foster child wants

Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan

Healthy day trip snacks

Self-esteem & positive racial identity

Advisor

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231 Robin Crescent
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7L 6M8

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

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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Message from the Executive Director

As I reflect over the challenges we have faced over the past year, I remain focused on the good that has come from our new way of doing business. Our world has changed since the onset of the pandemic, we are more aware of our health, staying safe, cherishing our loved ones and missing our normal contacts with family and friends.

Foster Parents have become educators, helping with online classes and schoolwork. The added stress and fear that we all have encountered has created challenging behaviours and even more so with children who were unable to visit in person with family. I am truly thankful for all our Foster families have sacrificed to ensure their families and the children they care for felt supported through this challenging time.

Our provincial In-Home Support team has continued to support caregivers throughout the province, assisting families in caring for children. They have had to adapt to new protocols, ensuring their safety and the health of the families that they support.

In adapting to working from home, our Provincial Office Team has found many efficiencies that will



outlive the pandemic. You have likely noticed increased contact from our Provincial Office Team, this has been valuable in planning for what is to come when life returns to our new normal and to ensure we are responding to concerns and able to support Foster Families in their role as caregivers.

We have also learned the value of online community. To continue support to our newer Foster homes in the absence of in person meetings, virtual sessions have been held to introduce families to what processes and supports are available for things such as eligible expenses, babysitting and respite support and accessing the damage compensation program. As time progresses, we hope to include further informational sessions for all Foster Parents virtually but remain

optimistic we can soon kick start our in-person gatherings as soon as it is safe to do so.

This past year we have welcomed fifty-five (55) new Foster homes across the province, and we look forward to supporting them in their journey of fostering. We continue to advocate for additional supports and educational opportunities to equip our families with the tools they need for success. The recent announcement in the provincial budget on April 6th was the approval of PRIDE Levels of Pay, Phase Two (2). Phase two (2) will provide further educational and financial support for those families caring for children and youth with complex medical and behavioural needs. Watch for more updates in the coming months.

No matter what challenges continue to come our way, I know we are stronger together. I am blessed to be able to continue to lead our organization in partnership with our Provincial Board of Directors, Foster Parents, In-Home Support team and the Provincial office staff. We all work together to ensure children have safe, loving homes, it is all about families helping families! Thank you again for your commitment to children and families.

Sincerely,
Deb Davies

A • N • N • O • U • N • C • E • M • E • N • T



AGM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The SFFA's upcoming AGM will be held on June 12th, 2021. Please watch for further details.

Ministry issues VOUCHERS

...to help with the purchase of goods & services

The Ministry of Social Services issues Requisitions for Goods and Services vouchers to citizens to help with the purchase of goods and services. Foster families may receive requisition forms (vouchers) for immediate purchases children or youth need when coming into or while in their care. Required items may include clothing, diapers, formula, car seats or other special needs requests that are approved by the child's Caseworker.

Things to remember when using a Requisition (voucher):

- Must have photo identification to match the name on the requisition otherwise it will not be accepted
- The amount purchased (including tax) must not exceed the amount indicated on the requisition
- Purchases are not subject to the Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- The requisition is not valid for payment after six months from date of issue
- Refunds covering the cost of a returned item must be made to the Ministry of Social Services
- No cash back will be given to the purchaser

Estevan:

- Sobeys
- Canadian Tire
- Sport Chek

Humboldt:

- Sobeys
- Canadian Tire
- Co-op

Lloydminster:

- Giant Tiger
- Winners
- Superstore
- Canadian Tire
- Save-On-Foods

Martinsville:

- Canadian Tire
- Co-op

Meadow Lake:

- Co-op
- Extra Foods

Melfort:

- Canadian Tire
- Cindy's Independent grocer
- Co-op

Moose Jaw:

- Winners
- Giant Tiger
- Sport Chek
- Safeway
- Canadian Tire

North Battleford:

- Sobeys
- Canadian Tire
- Giant Tiger
- Co-op

Prince Albert:

- Winners
- Canadian Tire
- Safeway
- Co-op
- Sport Chek
- Giant Tiger
- Superstore
- Save-On-Foods

Regina:

- Winners
- Sobeys
- Canadian Tire
- Sport Chek
- Co-op
- Save-On-Foods
- Superstore
- Once Upon A Child
- Kids Clothing Cottage
- Children's Place
- Toys R Us

Saskatoon:

- Winners
- Sobeys
- Canadian Tire
- Sport Chek
- Co-op
- Save-On-Foods
- Superstore
- Giant Tiger
- Once Upon a Child
- Toys R Us
- Children's Place

Swift Current:

- Canadian Tire
- Giant Tiger
- Safeway

Warman:

- Co-op
- Buy-low Foods

Weyburn:

- Canadian Tire
- Co-op

Yorkton:

- Winners
- Canadian Tire
- Superstore
- Sport Chek
- Giant Tiger
- Co-op
- Save-On-Foods



Keeping Children Safe while Learning Remotely

The advent of virtual classrooms, while effective in mitigating exposure to COVID-19 during this pandemic, serves to blur the line between a child's online and offline world in a way that has never before been experienced.

While growing up in today's world means some exposure to online risk factors, our need to pivot to an online-first method of delivery in many education systems shines a bright light on the risks associated with the online experience.

As part of the learning process, children are being given access to tools that require logging in using a username and password. This information should be guarded very closely and is not to be shared with anyone. At a time where so many are reliant on online access, cybercriminals are very aware of this fact and unsecured accounts make for easy targets.

To share links to resources, documents and downloads, e-mail is frequently the method of choice. It's important to look at where a link is taking you before clicking. Does the tracking information that shows up when you hover over the link match up with the URL address you're being told? If not, be wary — this could be a spoofed login page or a phishing attempt.

“At a time where so many are reliant on online access, cybercriminals are very aware of this fact.”

Carelessness can creep into your habits in a hurry, and that's exactly the kind of habit being preyed upon by cybercriminals.

Social aspects of the education system are important, which is why teachers across Canada are

doing what they can to foster positive relationships between their students. However, the Internet can also become a major liability if cyberbullying enters into the equation. Parents should be vigilant in ensuring their child is not being victimized.

In the context of online learning, voice and type chat continue to be the main vehicles being used. Make sure your children understand that these should not serve as windows into their whole lives and that some information should not be given out online — even to friends.

Online learning is a new phenomenon in the lives of many Canadians. It's only through patience, empathy, understanding and willingness to work together that we'll generate as positive an experience as possible for young learners across the country.

Source: Canada Safety Council



Pets can help children accept the challenges of foster care

Stable, 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 before, 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 dead kind to him all the time.

Pete's foster mother described how he would constantly scrutinize 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.

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.

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

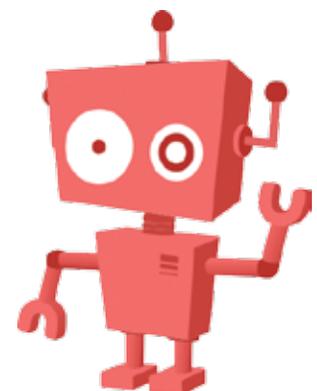
Have you checked out **Kiddle?**

Dear Parents,

When your children use the Internet to search for images for projects or anything related to school work, please encourage them to use “Kiddle” instead of Google.

Kiddle is a child-specific search engine supported by Google, which prevents the appearance of things that are not suitable for them.

www.kiddle.co



THE *self-care* SCIENCE OF

HOW TINY HABITS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

If it feels like your “get up and go” got up and went some time ago, it may be because your energy has been poured into taking care of others and you’ve forgotten to take care of yourself too.

If you haven’t got self-care routines and rituals in place, advice to “make time for self-care” can feel like just one more thing on your endless to-do list. Here’s the good news: self-care doesn’t have to be complex, time-consuming, or expensive. It doesn’t require special equipment or a guru to tell you what to do.

But what does “self-care” mean anyway?

It’s tempting to say that self-care is anything that makes you feel good, but as we all know, what feels good isn’t always good for us. Pouring another glass of wine, opening another bag of chips, or binge-watching through all the seasons of your favourite series might be fun once in a while, but it’s unhealthy to make these things daily habits. Likewise, self-care isn’t just taking a spa day now and then or going on a vacation (though these things are lovely!). The key to self-care is learning what simple but meaningful actions you can take on a daily basis that will help you thrive.

Self-care activates the four “happiness chemicals” in healthy ways

Well-being is influenced by many things: healthy diet, time outside in nature, loving and being loved, accomplishing goals, feeling recognized and appreciated by others, and much more.

The good feelings we experience when we hug our children, eat a great meal, or score a goal on the soccer field are linked to four brain chemicals. Knowing what they are can offer some clues to identify activities for meaningful self-care.

Each of these “happiness chemicals” are connected with specific feelings and actions. Here are just a few to think about:

- Dopamine is linked to motivation and reward when you complete a task, eat good food, or achieve a goal.
- Oxytocin flows when we feel love and friendship and spend time with people we care about.
- Serotonin is connected to pride, loyalty, and recognition. You feel it when you perform acts of kindness, or simply notice and take pride in the good things you and your loved ones do.
- Endorphins are released through persistence and feats of strength when you engage in vigorous physical activity, push your limits, or experience intense sensations.



If you notice you’re spending too much time addictively scrolling through social media, drinking or eating too much, or watching too much TV it could be because your brain is looking for ways to trigger the good feelings produced by these chemicals.

This is why self-care is so important: it triggers these important feelings in ways that build you up instead of breaking you down.

How to create simple and meaningful “tiny habits” for self-care

When you put self-care on the backburner for too long, it can lead to burnout. Trying to change this all at once with one big dose of “self-care” is like brushing your teeth for a full hour once a week. It sounds like a huge task, but it’s not enough to prevent decay. It’s much healthier to brush for two minutes, twice a day, every day. Likewise, you’ll feel happier if you develop small daily habits of self-care.

One powerful way to practice self-care is through physical activity. Not only is it good for your body, but it's one of the most effective ways to give your mood a boost.

You can reap the benefits even if you don't consider yourself a "sporty" person. Researchers have found that just walking around the block, taking the stairs, or pacing while folding laundry had a measurable benefit when it comes to mood.

How to amp up the good vibes

The reason why physical activity has such a big impact on mood is that exercise releases dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin. But you can amp up the good vibes even more by incorporating other things that trigger the release of happiness chemicals too:

- Get active with a buddy: Spending time with the people you care about releases oxytocin and serotonin. Plus, when you create a routine such as a daily family walk, or a weekly hike with a family member or friend, you'll get a dopamine reward for following through on your plans.
- Spend time outside: Researchers have found that the mental health benefits of physical activity are even stronger in natural settings.
- Look for ways to be kind: Doing something kind for someone else will give you a serotonin boost. Shovel your neighbour's walkway, cycle to the mailbox to send a letter or postcard to a friend, go "plogging" and pick up trash while on neighbourhood walks, or participate in a backyard bird count or shoreline cleanup.
- Enjoy active, silly play with your child: For many parents, much of the time they spend with their kids is during caretaking: cooking and cleaning, driving them around, helping with homework. Amid all the busyness, we sometimes forget how good it feels to just have fun with them too. Plus: big belly laughs also release endorphins!

- Add your favourite music: Researchers have found listening to music you enjoy will make your brain produce more dopamine.
- Mark an X on the calendar each day you follow your new routine: It's not easy to start a new habit, so you deserve to celebrate it! Crossing off a calendar is an easy and visual way to recognize your achievements, and triggers a dopamine reward for making progress on your goal.

Self-care isn't just something to turn to when times are stressful, of course—though it can certainly make tough times easier to bear. Whether you're feeling stressed out, or feel like you've got it all under control, if you haven't yet developed habits of self-care, there's no better time to start than now.

Pick one super simple thing that fills your cup, and a time when you can do it every single day: walk around the block after dinner, dance with your kids or partner (or alone!) when you do your daily clutter pickup, do a five-minute stretch when you wake up, or just find a quiet place where you can breathe deep for a 60-second time period after the kids go to bed.

Keep it simple. You'll be surprised at what a difference a tiny habit can make.

Source: <https://activeforlife.com/self-care-tiny-habits/>



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



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®
The Lifeguarding Experts

STAYING SAFE IN, ON, AND AROUND THE WATER

It is a sunny summer day and you have the day off work. You have decided to take the kids to the beach. After parking the car, you and the kids head down to the beach to look for the “perfect spot” to enjoy the day. “Stay close, kids!”, you say, as you take a blanket out of your beach bag to lay on the sand. At the same time, you hear a text notification on your cell phone. It’s your spouse asking if they should order pizza for supper. “Yes, great idea. No pineapple on mine, please” you text back in response. You then turn and look up to see one of your children adjusting their goggles and waiting for you to finish preparing your “spot” so that you can all go in the water. You take a quick look around, but don’t see your second child. Your look up toward the path leading to the car thinking that maybe they forgotten something. You then look toward the public bathrooms but still see no sign of your child. Then, with a sense of dread, you look towards the water...



This is a nightmare scenario for any parent, guardian, or care giver. It only takes seconds for the worst to happen. However, becoming educated on the dangers of water and, what to do to stay safe around water, can prevent this scenario from occurring.

The Lifesaving Society’s latest drowning report shows that most age categories in Saskatchewan, the most common risk factors in a drowning are not wearing a PFD or lifejacket, following by alcohol

consumption. For the 6 and under age category, lack of adult supervision accounts for 100% of the drowning fatalities. Lack of supervision could be as a result of several scenarios: losing track of the child at the beach, leaving the child in or near the bathtub for a moment to answer the phone or grab a towel, the child wandering out of the yard toward the dugout, the child deciding to jump into the pool or hot tub alone, etc.

The following public education messages from the Lifesaving Society will assist you in keeping you and your children safe in, on, or around the water this summer.

Stay Within Arm’s Reach: If you’re not within arm’s reach of your preschooler, you’ve gone too far. Maintaining a close distance to your children so that you can reach out and grab them if they fall under water is vital is drowning prevention. For older children, maintain vigilant and continuous supervision and keep them within site.

Stay Alert: It is easy to become distracted by phone notifications, other children, other adults, pets, and more. When around water with your children, it is important to remain alert and vigilant. To assist in this, be sure you are staying hydrated, wearing a hat, and wearing good sunglasses to limit fatigue on your body which can reduce your ability to be vigilant.

Always Wear a PFD or Lifejacket: Anyone can drown, even good swimmers, which is why it is so important to wear a PFD or Lifejacket approved by Transport Canada. A small child wearing a PFD is much safer than one wearing inflatable water wings. A pfd provides a bit more support for the child in the water but do remember that the child still needs to be within arm’s reach and within site.

If you’re planning to visit one of the provincial parks this summer and you’ve forgotten your lifejackets/pfds at home or simply don’t own any, you can borrow one (or more) for the day at the Lifejacket Loaner Station. In partnership with the Lifesaving Society, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Sport, Culture, and Recreation have installed Lifejacket Loaner Stations at many of the provincial parks.

Each Lifejacket Loaner Station contains various sizes of lifejackets for members of the public to borrow completely free of charge! Anyone can borrow the lifejackets for any aquatic activity such as swimming or boating, and then return it to the station when they are finished.

Lifejacket Loaner Stations can be found at the following Provincial Parks:

- Regina Beach Recreational Site
- Echo Valley Provincial Park
- Great Blue Heron Provincial Park
- Pike Lake Provincial Park
- Katepwa Point Provincial Park
- Danielson Provincial Park
- The Battlefords Provincial Park
- Moose Mountain Provincial Park
- Buffalo Pound Provincial Park
- Good Spirit Lake Provincial Park

Swim with a Buddy: A major risk factor for drowning is being alone in or around water. You should always have someone with you to either help or seek help in a situation.

Learn to Swim: The Lifesaving Society believes that swimming is an essential skill, and everyone can and should learn how to swim. Check with your local pool to find out more about swimming lesson options for you and your children.

Check the Ice: Winter offers many ways to experience our beautiful waterways in Saskatchewan. The danger is that the ice maybe not as safe as you had originally thought. All thicknesses for safe activity are based on new clear ice and later in the season even though the ice maybe thick it is not nearly as strong. Springs and current can also change the strength of the ice in different parts. Always check the ice before you head out by asking others such as on a Facebook group and then checking it again once you get out.

Swim to Survive Standard: The Swim to Survive Standard is a set of three essential skills that the Lifesaving Society has identified as the minimum level of swimming ability everyone should possess.

If your child was to fall into the water unexpectedly, could they survive?

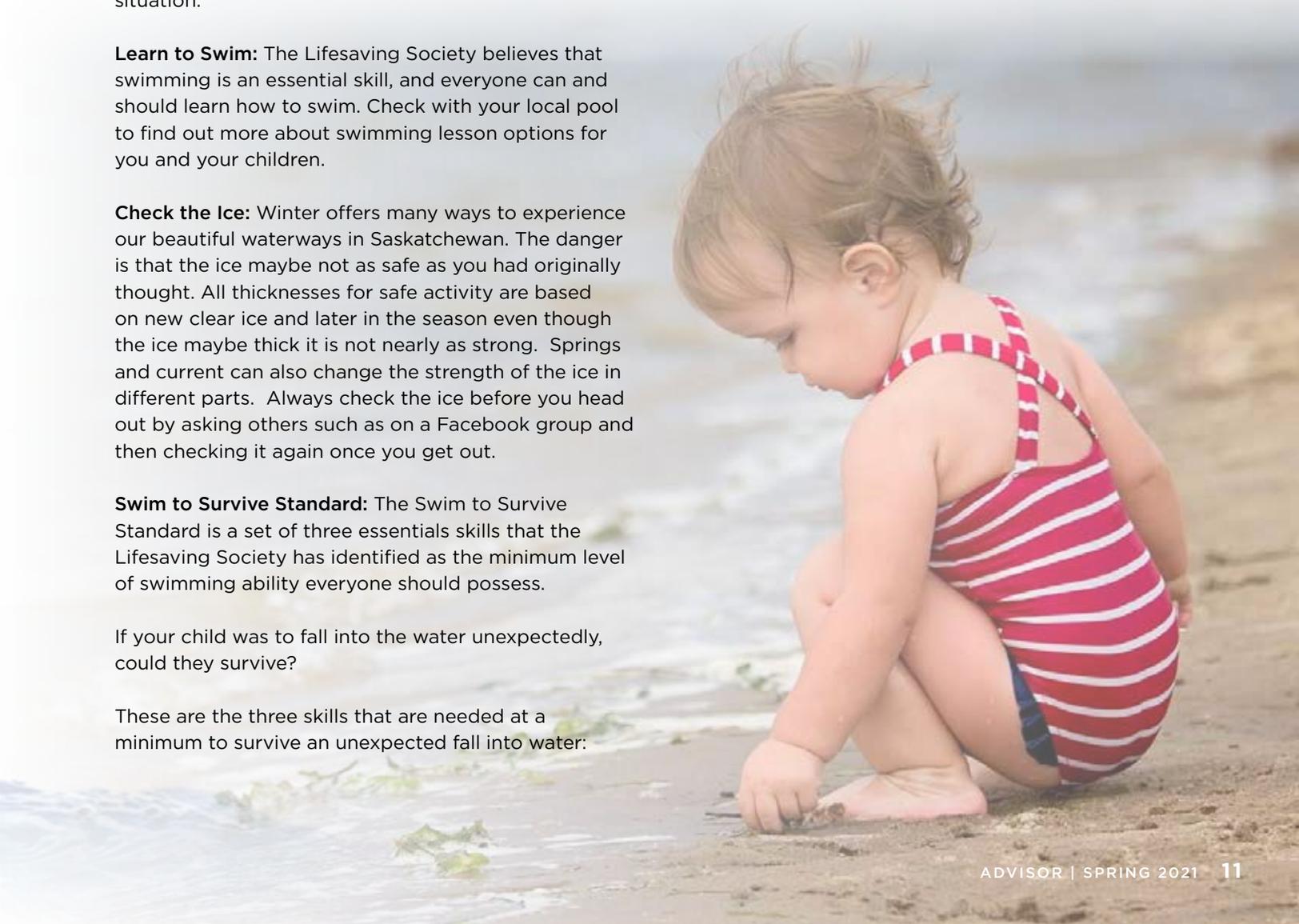
These are the three skills that are needed at a minimum to survive an unexpected fall into water:

Roll into deep water: You roll into the water from the edge to simulate the experience of an unexpected fall into water such as from a backyard pool side. This shows you can right yourself in the water.

Tread Water or Surface Support for 1 Minute: Being able to tread water and/or support one's self at the surface to orientate and catch your breath before swimming to safety.

Swim 50 Meters: The majority of victims drown within 50 metres or less of safety. Having the ability to swim a distance of 50 metres by any means necessary (dog paddle, floating on back, etc.) to a point of safety is an important goal for survival.

How to learn the Swim to Survive Standard: The swim to survive standard is blended into traditional swimming lessons. In addition, some pools and camps offer a shorter lesson version that focuses only on the swim to survive standard. Ask you local pool about options.





Fostering. Unknown. Broken system. Court delays. Financial burden. Social Workers. Resource parent. Birth parent. Attachment. Reunification. Qualifications. Paperwork. Home Study. Foster siblings. Babies. Teens. Behavioral issues. Developmental delays. Abuse. Neglect. Trauma. Therapy.

Chances are you've heard one or more of these terms, and possibly countless other phrases or words related to foster care. The myths about fostering abound and, like most myths, there may be a little or a lot of truth contained in them. But there is also a much bigger, redemptive and breathtaking picture that often isn't revealed or fully appreciated until those moments in time – days, weeks, months, years – are completed by the master artist.

Turning now to non-myths, the dictionary definition of FOSTER as a verb is to:

- 1) encourage or promote the development of (something, typically regarded as good);
- 2) bring up (a child that is not one's own by birth).

This isn't an either/or definition – foster parenting wholeheartedly embraces both of these! Nor is fostering a modern idea, not by a long shot. In fact, the Old Testament and the Talmud contain some of the first known documentation

KEEP CALM AND FOSTER ON

of children being cared for in foster homes.

Moving all the way from ancient times to the year 1636, Benjamin Eaton became the first foster child in the Americas, less than 30 years after Jamestown Colony was founded. And in 1853, a minister and director of the New York Children's Aid Society, Charles Loring Brace, became the founder of the free foster home movement in response to his concern over the large number of immigrant children sleeping in the streets of New York. Without going further and conveying endless facts and the extensive national and global history of foster care—the need for stable, safe and loving homes is not new or novel.

Yet here we are in 2021, with a year behind us that many of us would like to fast-forward through or borrow a time-travel machine to skip altogether for many reasons. One reason might be the vast uncertainty about most everything. This reinforces our lack of control over circumstances and leaves us in an uncomfortable place to dwell. And now imagine a foster child removed from his or her family, forced to be separated from their siblings, their friends, their school, their neighbors, their bed, most of their possessions and so much more. Oh, and placed by a stranger with complete strangers in a strange home in a strange bed in a strange neighborhood. Talk about uncertainty, lack of control and feelings of powerlessness.

It is consistently amazing and humbling to witness the resilience of these children. Even when their spark is dimmed or buried 10,000 leagues under the sea deep as a means of self-protection and self-preservation, against all odds it is not extinguished ... and with time and patience and sacrifice and perseverance and selfless love, you might just witness a priceless miracle as that spark becomes a flame which illuminates the beautiful picture of restorative grace.

Source: <https://iscarolinas.net/2020/07/06/keep-calm-and-foster-on/>

“Foster” ...a documentary film

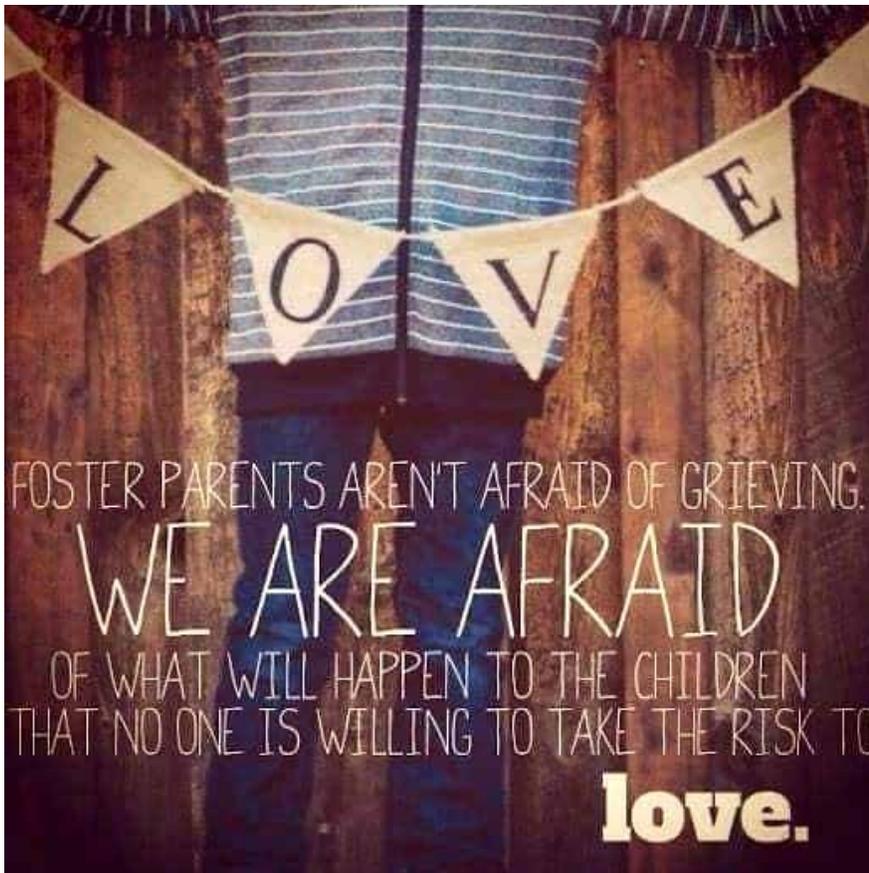
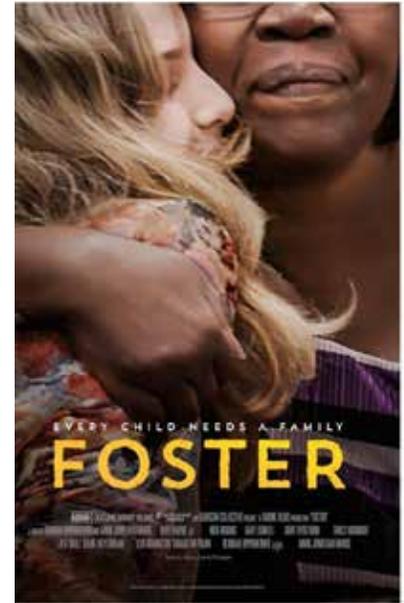
This documentary takes a look at the Los Angeles, California foster care system, and follows the touching stories of foster kids and the people who care for them.

Jessica, the story of a former foster youth who is now a social worker: Jessica takes us on her heartbreaking and inspiring journey as a young girl who navigated many challenges including juvenile hall and a teen pregnancy. She carried a deep hatred for the system she grew up in. However, life truly works in mysterious ways and through hard work and resilience, Jessica now has her master’s degree and has been a social worker for five years. She believes that allies make a big difference: “Only allies can really disrupt the cycle and intervene. The people who are in it, living in it and surviving, they aren’t able to disrupt. I hope the larger society takes a closer look at who we are as people and maybe see the potential.”

Full of compassion, humanity and hope, “Foster” gives a face, voice and identity to people within the system.

Far from the lights of Hollywood that Los Angeles is known for, the film shows us that we can do so much more for both the children in care and the caring adults who give their all to help vulnerable children. It is evident that the problems in and around the foster care system reveal larger issues that society has not addressed, such as poverty, substance use and abuse, homelessness, mental health issues and racism. Each story tells us that there are systemic issues that must be acknowledged and addressed.

The documentary is available to watch on CraveTV (www.crave.ca) and Amazon Prime.





4 THINGS a Foster Child Wants from His/Her Foster Parents

By John Ginzo

Foster parenting can be challenging in many ways. You will definitely be called on to do things many parents don't have to deal with. For one, you are taking children into your home that you just don't know. You won't know what they like to eat, what they like to do, or what they have been through. In addition, you will be expected to help with visitation. These visits can be very traumatic for them as they struggle to understand their new normal. You will have to work with case workers and court officials to help move the case along to either reunification with the biological family, adoption, or some other permanent placement. I won't tell you it is easy. But your foster child will be depending on you to get them through this difficult time. Here are some of the essential things your foster child will expect from you.

SAFETY

I remember when my oldest came to us. She was 2 1/2 years old. The first time the doorbell rang in our house, she ran to me, grabbing on to my leg for dear life. She was terrified. I speculated that in her prior living arrangement, people appearing at the door was not usually a good thing. The same thing happened when our case worker paid her first visit. Again, she grabbed me and wouldn't let go. We realized she thought the case worker was going to take her away.

Foster kids, above anything else, need to feel safe. These children come from difficult situations, where safety is not guaranteed.

They were just pulled away from the only family they knew. Many of these children have a hard time trusting adults. After all, adults have let them down, so why trust them? It will be your job to be that one place that they can consider safe. Be that safe place for them to lay their heads, and you will have done a wonderful thing for them.

LOVE

While this one can seem obvious, it does need some discussion. Love is an action word. It requires action on your part. The people who are supposed to love these kids the most are no longer around. So, don't be fooled into thinking that saying I love you is enough. They have heard it before, and yet here they are in a strange place, with people they don't know. It will take time. You will need to build trust, and they will test you. They are going to want to be sure that your actions are real, that the love they see in your home is not some phony love that will disappear, only to crush them once again.

UNDERSTANDING

When our oldest first came into our lives, she was terrified of the dark. For the first three weeks, I sang the song "You Revive me" by Christy Nokes, while I laid down on the floor next to her bed, holding her hand until she was asleep. Our youngest came to us at 11 months and would often cry for long periods of time. We would rock her in our arms as she arched her back against us, until finally she accepted our hugs. Foster kids are coming to you from very difficult situations. Be ready for

this. You will need to step out of your comfort zone. You may have to deal with behaviors you have never seen before. It will take great understanding on your part. They desperately want you to just "get" them, and you will need to meet them where they are, with a nurturing and loving heart.

PERSISTENCE

This is such an important one. I didn't realize the fight I was in until the day I became a foster dad, and now an adoptive dad. Foster kids have lost their family. They have lost their mom and their dad. Think about when you were young. Remember how much you looked to your mom and dad for everything? Yeah, these kids don't have that. But they do have you. And you will have to be persistent. You will need to be their fiercest advocate. When they need to see their biological family, you will persist to make sure it happens. When they need to see a doctor, and no one can find their medical records, you will persist to make it happen. When the courts say something, or are looking to make a decision you know is not right, you will stand up and persist to make sure these kids are well represented.

I hope my words help. I can tell you, everything I write here are things I have lived through. I cannot tell you that being a foster and adoptive parent is easy. But I shudder to think what would have happened if I had not answered the call. Where would my kids be today? I can thank God that I don't have to answer that question.



Did you know that Saskatchewan has a large Adoption Community as well as a Provincial Adoption Support Centre?

The Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan (ASCS) has been committed to providing education around the importance of permanency for children to the people of our province for over 30 years! Permanency includes adoption, kinship care, persons of sufficient interest (PSI), legal guardianship, long term care and is of paramount importance for children. This past year has provided us the opportunity to move and grow in many exciting ways! We have added to our office space and worked with Arcana Creative to create and introduce a new logo and website.

In the fall of 2019, we worked with The Adoption Council of Canada and our veteran Youth Speak Out (YSO) members to educate and prepare a new group of young people on how to share their experiences within child protection services and build our YSO team. We have appreciated the knowledge and support that Elder Nora Cummings has provided to the members of this program. We are very excited to see this group continue and look forward to seeing where it will go in the future. It has facilitated positive change in child protection and permanency planning, and other social, justice and education systems within Saskatchewan. We have been proud to see the YSO members self-confidence grow. The year before last, YSO had the opportunity to present to the Hon. Paul Merriman, Minister of Social Services, the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office, the Ministry

of Social Services, the Saskatoon Police Service, Emergency Room Doctors (in Saskatoon and Regina), Social Work students, Regina Ministry of Social Service case workers, Supervisors & Managers. All that have heard these youth speak appreciate them sharing often difficult life circumstances, and comment on their bravery and honesty and how impactful it is hearing their life stories.

“We also respond to requests for information on international, stepparent, private, adult adoption and requests for information on search and reunification and birthparent education.”

In conjunction with the Ministry of Social Services, ASCS provides the PRIDE Review session. It is an online parent training session for adoptive applicants. Post COVID, the sessions will be held in Regina and Saskatoon. Our office continues to respond to phone calls for information, support, or to borrow books from our Carol Bothwell Resource Library. We have seen an increase in electronic communication since our new website was launched. With help from Objectified Software our new database is up and running. Those who are interested in adoption may now request e-packages of information from our website. The

Domestic Adoption Orientation (DAO) program, which is a required pre-adoption program, continues to educate and prepare those beginning the adoption process in Saskatchewan. We also respond to requests for information on international, stepparent, private, adult adoption and requests for information on search and reunification and birthparent education.

Through this unprecedented time of Covid-19 we continue to provide support to those connected through adoption. We are able to stay connected province wide through our toll-free phone number, email, Facebook, Zoom, Teams, and our new Polycom system. We can send out information, books, make connections for families through our Community Adoption Resource Database, we can connect clients with a support group or clients can register for an online workshops.

We are anticipating another exciting year, as we look at building new programs and workshops to educate and provide provincial wide outreach. During this time of reinvention and physical distancing we connected with CFS who facilitated and piloted our first online Post Adoption Support Group; *Building Healthy Families*.

If you have an interest in learning more about adoption, becoming a board member or making a donation, please be sure to check out our website www.adoptionsask.org or contact us at 306-665-7272.

HEALTHY SNACKS *Day-Trip*

IDEAS TO SAVE YOU BOTH TIME AND MONEY



So, you've packed up your gear and are ready to go... but what do you plan on eating? Although it may seem easier to pick up snacks at the gas station or stop at the nearest drive-thru, it will likely not leave you feeling your best. The good news is there are plenty of quick and easy real food snacks that you can pack ahead of time without much effort at all. So, to help get you set up for day trip success, here are 8 healthy snack ideas that the whole family is sure to love!

Veggies & Hummus

Veggies and dip is a classic combo, but hummus is a great high-protein upgrade to standard dip. Made with chickpeas and tahini, hummus is a well-balanced snack with carbohydrates, protein and fat, and when paired with fibrous vegetables it can help keep you full for hours to come. Although homemade hummus is really easy to make, it is also easy to find high-quality versions in grocery stores and it is available in a variety of different flavours.

DIY Trail Mix

Trail mix and mixed nuts are easy to find in grocery stores and gas stations, but they often contain vegetable oils and added sugars making them less than ideal. Fortunately, making trail mix at home is simple and cheaper to create than pre-made versions. Simply combine your favourite nuts, seeds, and dried fruit of your choice for an energy-packed mix 'n match trail mix that is sure to satisfy.

Apple & Peanut Butter

Much like hummus, peanut butter is a source of fat and protein, which can help to balance your blood sugar and minimize cravings while on the road, and when paired with an apple it can help to satisfy sweet and salty cravings at the same time. However, if peanut butter is not your thing, feel free to opt for almond butter, cashew butter, sunflower butter or tahini instead.



Energy Bites

Just as the name implies, energy bites are sure to give you the boost of energy that you need to make it to your destination. Not only can they easily be made at home, like these Carrot Cake Energy Bites, but it's easy to find healthy-store bought versions in bite or bar form. Plus, since they are packed full of fun flavours they are sure to be kid-approved.

Deli Roll-Ups

Essentially a sandwich without the bun, deli roll-ups are a great way to get a serving of veggies and protein without any crumbs. Simply wrap the deli meat of your choice (be sure to read the ingredients) around some lettuce and veggies, add a dollop of mustard and/or mayo, and you'll have a healthy road trip snack that's ready to go.

Yogurt & Berries

Protein, check! Fat, check! Fibre, check! Top some high-quality yogurt with your favourite summer berries and you've got a quick and easy road trip snack that will keep for hours to come. If you want to go the extra step, you can also add rolled oats, granola, nuts and/or seeds to create a hearty yogurt parfait, but sometimes just keeping it simple does the trick.

Popcorn

Nothing says road trip snacks like a salty treat and although chips might be the fan favourite, popcorn is a much healthier way to go! Pop some popcorn ahead of time and top it with butter and salt for a savoury treat, or go the extra step and create funky flavours with a mix of herbs and spices like this dill pickle popcorn recipe.

Cheese & Grapes

A cheeseboard to go? Don't mind if I do! Pair your favourite type of cheese with some grapes for a well-balanced snack with carbohydrates, protein and fat. Alternatively, feel free to go the extra mile and whip together a complete charcuterie bistro box that is sure to have you craving a glass of wine by the time you reach your destination.



Backyard Pools

Backyard pools can provide many hours of summer fun, but they can also be dangerous. Owning a backyard pool or hot tub comes with the responsibility of ensuring its safe use. Most often, children who drown do so in a pool when a caregiver is not paying attention, if only for a second. These drownings primarily involve young children who gain access to a pool without a self-closing and self-latching gate.

There are simple steps that families can follow to keep their backyard pools safe.

- Build a fence (recommended at least 1.2 m in height, with gaps no larger than 10 cm) that has a self-closing and self-latching gate; keep the gate closed with restricted access at all times. Refer to your municipal bylaws for fencing requirements.
- Establish pool rules. These can include: swim with a buddy, children must have an adult with them at all times, and no glass containers around the pool.
- Few backyard pools are safe for diving - swimmers should always enter the water feet-first.
- Have readily accessible reaching or throwing assists, a working phone and first aid kit.
- Have an Action Plan including adult supervision, an emergency signal, safety equipment and emergency procedures.
- Keep the deck clear of toys and debris.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs in or around the pool.
- Small on-ground portable or kiddie pools should be emptied when not in use. Above-ground pools should have the ladder or steps removed when not in use.

- Hot tubs should not exceed 104° F or 40° C and are not recommended for pregnant women, toddlers or infants.

Active adult supervision is of the utmost importance —never leave your child unattended, not even for a second.

- Lifejackets or Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) should be worn by weak or non-swimmers, but they are not substitutes for supervision by an adult with good swimming skills, or a lifeguard.
- Enroll your children in Red Cross swimming lessons.
- Improve your swimming skills and learn how to prevent drownings and how to make safe rescues by taking a Red Cross Swim Course.
- Learn what to do in case of emergency—take a Red Cross First Aid Course and encourage youth to take a Red Cross Lifeguard Course.
- Take your children with you if you have to leave the pool for any reason.

Pick the best time of the day to swim. Avoid swimming at night and in stormy weather.

- The best time to swim is during the daytime. If there is thunder or lightning, stay out of the pool.
- Use sunscreen with a minimum SPF 15 even on cloudy days, and reapply every 3-4 hours.
- Wear a wide-brim hat, sunglasses, and light clothing to cover your skin whenever possible.

Source: Canadian Red Cross

Self-Esteem & Positive Racial Identity

Robert O'Connor, adult transracial adoptee, therapist and trainer has said, "if you are the only one, you are alone." If you are the only one who doesn't look like the others, you are alone. Feeling different from others can create low self-esteem, especially if a child views "different" as "bad".

What is Self-Esteem?

Self-esteem is a person's feeling of self-worth or a feeling of being of value—in their family, in their circle of friends, in the world.

High self-esteem creates a foundation to go out into the world with confidence and resiliency; with a willingness to take necessary risks and persevere through challenges. Self-esteem is built through repeated small successes, through a sense of belonging and feeling safe at home, and through being valued within the family and in broader society.

Low self-esteem robs a person of the courage to step out into the world with confidence. A child with low self-esteem might struggle with the ability to take necessary risks or form new relationships, or go after a dream. Low self-esteem also sets a child up to lack resilience to stress and can set him or her up to be vulnerable to others. This can play itself out in situations of peer pressure, or an inability to defend oneself against bullies or perpetrators, or many other possible scenarios. People with low self-esteem don't always have the ability to stay in touch with who they are on the inside, and instead they are susceptible to yield to what is around them—including unhealthy people or circumstances. Additionally, when a person suffers from low self-esteem, it can be very difficult to try new things, work toward goals, persevere through chal-



"Small successes provide the foundation for building self-esteem in children."

lenges, or learn new skills. They have an intense fear of failure, and a generalized belief that they ARE a failure as a person. The good news is that self-esteem can be taught.

How to Build Self-Esteem

Create a sense of safety for your child—physical and emotional safety. Children need a safe place to live, free of abuse, and a safe place to talk about their thoughts and feelings—ALL of their thoughts and feelings. This creates a sense of being valued, a belief that he or she has the right to exist, to think, and to feel; and the knowledge that he or she is important.

Create a sense of belonging. Children need to feel a sense of belonging in their families. Acknowledging similarities helps children feel like they belong. It is also important to acknowledge and celebrate differences as well. Let children's voices be heard and respected, so that they feel valued in the context of family.

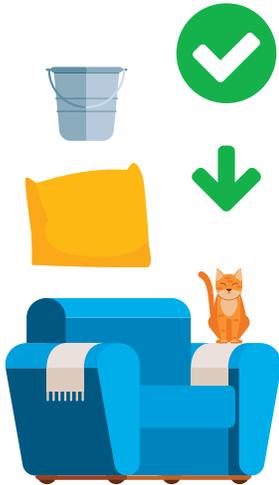
Point out your child's strengths and abilities often. As they learn new skills in a certain subject (how to multiply or divide; how to solve complicated word problems; how to play a musical instrument; how to shoot a basketball...), acknowledge these small successes. Small successes provide the foundation for building self-esteem in children.

There are many resources for parents on how to build self-esteem in children. Check out your local library, book store, or Internet for more resources on this topic.



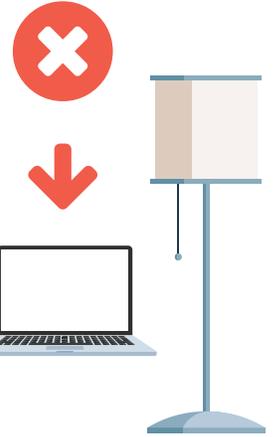
6 ACTIVE GAMES KIDS CAN PLAY WITH A PAIR OF SOCKS

When COVID-19 forces Canadian families into isolation at home, and it's extremely important for everyone's health that we do this. However, it's also important that we stay physically active during this stressful time. It's essential for the physical, mental, and emotional health of parents and children alike. It's not easy to be shut indoors, but these are some simple ways that kids can stay active and distracted. Along the way, they'll also be developing fundamental movement skills and physical literacy while hopefully letting off some stress.



1. PREPARE YOUR PLAY AREA

Remove breakable objects such as lamps, electronics, flower vases, etc. The play area can be a bedroom, living room, or anywhere there is enough space to throw, catch or kick a ball and swing a simple bat. Objects like pillows, chairs, sofas and boxes can be used as goals or targets for some games.



2. MAKE A SOCK BALL

Roll and fold a pair of socks inside each other. For larger balls, use 3-4 pairs of socks, or use heavy adult-size work socks.



SOCCER

One player: Practice shooting on a "goal" (living room sofa, door opening, laundry hamper laid on its side).

Two or more players: Play a game 1-versus-1 or 2-versus-2 (use sofas, doorways, etc. as goals).



THROW AND CATCH

Stand 3-5 metres apart and throw to each other.

Start with gentle underhand throws.

As throwing and catching improve: throw faster, throw overhand, and even try trick throws (throw from behind your back, under your legs, from behind your head, etc.).

3. GET READY TO PLAY!

BASKETBALL

One player: Practice shooting on a "basket" (laundry hamper, small cardboard box, or other container turned upright).

Two or more players: Play 1-versus-1 or 2-versus-2 in a competitive shootout challenge. Take turns shooting from different distances. No blocking allowed.



DODGE BALL

Make two or three sock balls per person.

Players are allowed to pick up balls from opponents and throw back at them.

Players are only permitted to throw from their "home base" (sofa, bed, or other designated place).

No "elimination" when you are hit—keep playing.



BOWLING

Set up 6 empty milk cartons or plastic bottles as bowling "pins."

One player: One child can play alone after a parent shows how to setup the bowling pins.

Two or more players: Play against each other in a competition.



BASEBALL BATTING

Use a cardboard tube, roll a newspaper with tape, or get a plastic vacuum cleaner pipe to use as a baseball bat.

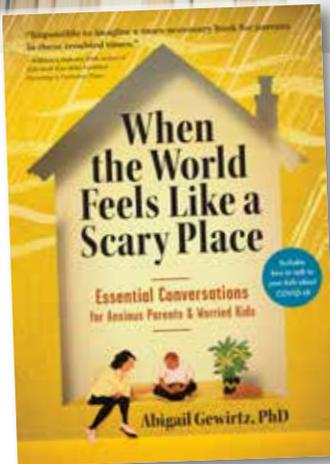
Take turns pitching and batting the sock ball

With three or more players, extra players are "fielders" who try to catch the ball after it has been hit.

After 10 hits, change batters.



goodreads



WHEN THE WORLD FEELS LIKE A SCARY PLACE: ESSENTIAL CONVERSATIONS FOR ANXIOUS PARENTS AND WORRIED KIDS

by Abigail Gewirtz PhD

(Paperback - June 9, 2020)

In a lifesaving guide for parents, Dr. Abigail Gewirtz shows how to use the most basic tool at your disposal—conversation—to give children real help in dealing with the worries, stress, and other negative emotions caused by problems in the world, from active shooter drills to climate change. Includes how to talk to your kids about COVID-19.

But it's not just how to talk to your kids, it's also what to say: The heart of *When the World Feels Like a Scary Place* is a series of conversation scripts—with actual dialogue, talking points, prompts, and insightful asides—that are each age-appropriate and centered around different issues. Along the way are tips about staying calm in an anxious world; the way children react to stress, and how parents can read the signs; and how parents can make sure that their own anxiety doesn't color the conversation. Talking and listening are essential for nurturing resilient, confident, and compassionate children. And conversation will help you manage your anxieties too, offering a path of wholeness and security for everyone in the family.

"A terrific book for parents who want to know how to talk about difficult, emotional issues with children."

- Nancy Eisenberg, Regents' Professor of Psychology, Arizona State University

"Remarkable... Compelling advice illustrated with memorable case examples."

- Ann S. Masten, PhD, Irving B. Harris Professor of Child Development, University of Minnesota

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