

# Advisor

Families

Helping

Families

## Outdoor Winter Activities

### Studio Solace

8 - week art therapy open studio

### Foster Parent College Sessions

### Caring for Foster Kids During the Holidays

### Fun & Festive Christmas Breakfast

### Making Ice Lanterns

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Frequently Asked Questions

Leaving Children Home Alone

A Foster Kid's Holiday Survival  
Ideas

What you should know about  
Child Car Seats



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# 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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# Message from the Executive Director

**Merry Christmas and happy holiday wishes to all Saskatchewan Foster Families.**

As we reflect on the past year, I want to express my sincere gratitude for your commitment, compassion, and resilience. Each of you play a vital role in creating safe, nurturing, and stable homes for children and youth, and your dedication continues to strengthen our fostering community across the province.

Throughout the year, we have witnessed remarkable examples of patience, advocacy, and kindness from Foster Families who go above and beyond to support children through challenging moments and important milestones.



Your willingness to open your hearts and homes makes a profound difference, and the Saskatchewan Foster Families is honoured to stand beside you, providing support, resources, and partnership along the way.

Thank you for everything you do, your efforts truly change lives.

From all of us at the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association, I wish you a happy, fun filled festive season and a peaceful, healthy, and prosperous New Year. We look forward to continuing our important work together in the year ahead.

With warmest wishes and deepest gratitude from the Board of Directors and staff of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association.

*Deb Davies*

**Deb Davies**  
Executive Director





# Foster Parent College Sessions:

**JANUARY**

## **"Anger Pie"**

This course examines the ABCs of behavior as a tool parents can use to understand their child's anger:

- antecedents
- bias/behavior
- positive and negative consequences
- healthy anger

**FEBRUARY**

## **"Could it be FASD"**

This class explores parenting children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), including:

- signs and symptoms
- evaluation and making a diagnosis
- learning and behavioral issues
- parenting strategies

**MARCH**

## **Escalating Behaviour Unwrapped**

This class explores escalation and de-escalation, including:

- the "thinking brain" vs. the "survival brain"
- the escalation cycle
- de-escalation strategies

*Please watch your emails to register for the above courses being offered to members.  
For more information, please contact Tessa at 306-975-1528.*



## **Let's stay connected...**

We regularly send 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 **keanna@sffa.sk.ca**

January to March  
Join us for

# Studio Solace

Join master's student Stefanie Munro with Kutenai Art Therapy Institute, for an 8-week art therapy open studio.

**What is an art therapy open studio?** It's a group-based approach that emphasizes the therapeutic process of creating art. The main focus is on the experience of creating art, not on making a "good" final product. No prior art experience is required.

This **online** group will provide a supportive environment for individuals managing burnout, stress, or overwhelm. Through creative expression, participants can build resilience and learn practical tools for future self-care. In this group, you'll find a safe space to pause, create, and breathe again. Mental health resources will be shared, and through artmaking, you'll discover gentle ways to ease burnout, soothe stress, and bring healing into your everyday life. You can attend all or 1 session, you do not need to attend all 8 weeks.

Come as you are and leave with new tools, fresh perspectives, and a renewed sense of community. Simple art materials that you probably already have at home can be used or pick up a few from a dollar store. Consider bringing a journal or sketchbook to hold your thoughts, art, and insights together in one place.

## About the facilitator

After more than a decade as an elementary and music teacher, Stefanie transitioned to studying art therapy. She is continually inspired by how art therapy transforms creativity into a pathway for healing, allowing individuals to explore emotions, share their stories, and cultivate self-awareness through every brushstroke, shape, and color. Understanding that depression and seasonal affective disorder can impact mood, energy, and daily life, Stefanie is specializing in supporting those navigating these challenges. She is passionate about helping people discover creative ways to cope, restore balance, and nurture their overall well-being.

## SESSION DATES & TIMES:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. January 22, 7pm-9pm  | Understanding Stress & Burnout                               |
| 2. January 29, 1pm-3pm  | The Science of Stress: How the Body and Brain Respond        |
| 3. February 5, 7pm-9pm  | Boundaries, Workload, and Energy Management                  |
| 4. February 12, 1pm-3pm | Reducing Overload: Prioritization & Sustainable Productivity |
| 5. February 26, 7pm-9pm | Interrupting Burnout Patterns                                |
| 6. March 5, 1pm-3pm     | Resilience Micro-Practices                                   |
| 7. March 12, 7pm-9pm    | Rebuilding Engagement & Meaning                              |
| 8. March 19, 1pm-3pm    | Creating an Anti-Burnout Plan                                |

\*Full session descriptions available on the SFFA website [saskfosterfamilies.ca](https://saskfosterfamilies.ca)



# Caring for Foster Kids During the Holidays:

## Bringing Joy and Stability to Their Lives

As a caregiver, fostering a sense of joy, comfort, and security during the holidays can make a world of difference.

**T**he holiday season is often associated with warmth, love, and togetherness, but for foster children, it can also bring a sense of uncertainty, loneliness, and loss.

Many children in foster care have experienced trauma, disrupted family ties, and instability in their lives. For these kids, the holidays can feel especially overwhelming as they navigate a world where traditions, family, and routines are unfamiliar.

You can explore meaningful ways to care for foster children during this special time of year and offer them the love, care, and stability they need to feel safe and valued.

### **1** Consider Their Cultural or Religious Background

It's essential to respect and honor the cultural or religious background of your foster child, especially during holidays. They may come from a different faith, background, or tradition, and recognizing their unique perspective will help them feel seen and valued.

Talk to the child (or their social worker) about any particular cultural or religious traditions they may follow, and include them in discussions about how they would like to celebrate the holidays. If they don't celebrate Christmas, consider incorporating their traditions into your holiday celebrations or celebrating in ways that make them feel understood and included.



It is essential to respect and honor the cultural, spiritual, and traditional background of Indigenous children in your care, especially during the holidays. Indigenous cultures often hold unique ways of marking this time of year that may differ significantly from mainstream celebrations. Recognizing and embracing their traditions will help them feel seen, valued, and connected to their identity.

Take the time to learn about the child's specific cultural background, as Indigenous traditions vary widely between Nations. Engage in conversations with the child (or their family, community, or social worker) to understand any practices, stories, or ceremonies that hold meaning for them during this season. For example, many Indigenous communities emphasize the importance of storytelling, connection to nature, and giving thanks. You might incorporate these traditions by sharing Indigenous stories, spending time outdoors, or hosting a gathering to express gratitude.

If the child doesn't celebrate Christmas, create space for their traditions to be honored. Incorporate culturally appropriate elements into your holiday activities or adjust your approach to ensure they feel included and respected. Collaborating with the child and, where possible, their community, will provide a meaningful way to honor their heritage while creating a supportive and nurturing environment.

## **2 Create a Welcoming and Safe Environment**

The holidays are about togetherness, and for children who have faced instability, creating a safe and welcoming environment is key. Ensure your home is a place where your foster child feels comfortable, respected, and cared for. Establishing traditions, no matter how simple, can help bring consistency to a child's life and create a sense of stability.

## **3 Understand and Acknowledge Their Emotions**

For many foster children, the holidays may stir up feelings of grief, sadness, or anger, particularly if they are separated from their birth families. Some children may miss the traditions or family gatherings they once had, and the festive season can amplify feelings of loss. Acknowledge that this may be a tough time for them and give them space to express their emotions. If your foster child has a history of trauma, it's important to be patient and supportive. Encourage

open conversations and be sensitive to the fact that they might not fully understand their emotions.

## **4 Involve Them in Holiday Traditions**

Holidays are about creating memories, and for many foster children, they may have never had a chance to experience certain holiday traditions. Involving them in meaningful rituals can help create a sense of belonging and normalcy. For example, if you celebrate Christmas, consider letting them help decorate the tree, put out stockings, or choose a holiday gift. If your family celebrates other holidays, incorporate activities like light displays, gift-giving, or special meals. Children love having a sense of ownership over the festivities, so giving them a role in the preparations will help them feel included and part of the celebration.

## **5 Focus on Consistency and Routine**

While the holidays are a time for fun and celebration, foster children may feel unsettled by too much change, especially if they're already adjusting to a new family dynamic. While it's important to celebrate, maintaining a routine can help them feel more secure. Keep regular bedtimes, mealtimes, and other daily routines to provide stability during the festive period.

Incorporating familiar rituals into your holiday celebrations, like reading a bedtime story, following your regular weekly schedule, or making time for relaxation, can provide much-needed balance. Familiarity is key for children who may struggle with sudden changes in their environment, and maintaining structure helps foster kids feel safe and grounded.

## **6 Provide Emotional Support and Counseling (if Necessary)**

For many foster children, the holidays can trigger unresolved trauma or difficult memories. Emotional support is vital, and if necessary, access to counseling or therapy can help.

Work with the child's social worker, therapist, or counselor to ensure they have access to the support they need. Therapy can provide a safe space for them to express their emotions and cope with their trauma. Foster parents should also be ready to provide extra emotional comfort and support, especially during moments of heightened stress or sadness.

*... continued on next page*



## 7 Gift-Giving with Sensitivity

Gift-giving is often a central part of holiday celebrations, but for foster children, the experience can be complicated. Some kids may feel uncomfortable receiving gifts, especially if they have been through many transitions or have never experienced a traditional holiday celebration. It's important to approach gift-giving with sensitivity.

Rather than focusing on expensive or extravagant gifts, consider giving thoughtful and meaningful presents that reflect the child's personality and needs. A simple toy, a book, or a personal item can go a long way. Ask the child's caseworker if there are any specific wishes or needs that the child has. It's also helpful to give the child the opportunity to give something back to others, teaching the value of sharing and generosity.

## 8 Stay Connected with Their Birth Family (if Possible)

Whenever possible, maintaining some connection with a foster child's birth family can help them feel less isolated during the holidays. This can be difficult, depending on the circumstances, but it's important to honor and respect the child's desire to stay in touch with family members, even if they are in foster care.

If safe and appropriate, facilitate communication through phone calls, video chats, or letters. Even if the child can't be with their birth family during the holidays, keeping in touch may help ease some feelings of loss. Always involve caseworkers and follow protocols regarding contact with birth families.

## 9 Self-Care for Foster Parents

Caring for foster children, especially during the holiday season, can be emotionally demanding. It's important for foster parents to practice self-care so they can provide the best care for the child. This might mean taking breaks when needed, seeking support from fellow foster parents, or even talking to a counselor yourself.

The holiday season can be an emotional rollercoaster for everyone involved, so take time to recharge and ensure you're in a good place to support the child. You can't pour from an empty cup, so make sure to nurture yourself, too.

### Conclusion

The holidays are a time for love, connection, and joy, but for children in foster care, they can also bring feelings of fear, sadness, and loneliness. As foster parents, you have the unique opportunity to create a warm, loving environment where children can feel safe, included, and valued. By establishing traditions, providing emotional support, and respecting their individual needs, you can make this holiday season one of healing, growth, and joy. Every effort you make to bring comfort and stability will create lasting memories that can positively shape their future.

**Remember:** the greatest gift you can give a foster child is not just a present, but the gift of love, care, and stability. This holiday season let's make sure no child feels alone—especially the ones who need it most.

Source: <https://alignab.ca/resource/caring-for-foster-kids-during-the-holidays-bringing-joy-and-stability-to-their-lives/>



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## What kinds of people can be foster parents?

Married, single, same-sex, or common-law, with or without children, are all welcome to apply to be foster parents. You must be able to pass a criminal record check (including all adults in the home), child protection screening, and be experienced with, or willing to learn about children with some special needs.

## What are the required physical aspects of a foster home?

Foster homes can be owned or rented, but they must be clean, adequately furnished, in good repair, and free from health and fire hazards. The home must be equipped with a smoke detector on each floor. Medications, alcohol, hazardous chemicals, firearms and ammunition must be kept in a secure location. Children in foster care may have a bedroom of their own or they can also share a room with a child of the same gender and compatible age. A home safety check is completed as part of the approval process and at each subsequent annual review of the foster home.

## Is there training to become foster parents?

Yes, as part of the family assessment home study process, prospective foster parents participate in PRIDE (Parenting Resources Information Development Education) Pre-service Training. Topics focus on understanding the foster care system, including the role that foster families play in supporting the families of the children in care, the role of the caseworker, and the impact on the foster family and the children in care. Prospective foster families participate in exercises and activities, in order to prepare them to work with children and families before a child is placed in their home. All-in-all this training takes about 30 hours to complete.

## Do foster parents choose the children who come into their home?

Yes, foster parents choose their "range of acceptance" which is the number, age, gender, and level of needs for the kids they would be willing to take into their home. This can be changed at any time and the Ministry of Social Services will work with you to try and match suitable children to your home based on their individual needs.

## Is there a limit on the number of children that can be in one foster home?

The Ministry of Social Services policy states that there can be no more than four foster children in a foster home, but allows for exceptions in the following circumstances: emergency placements, placement of large sibling groups, or placement of children who have previously lived in the same foster home.

## Who are the children in need of homes?

Children in foster care come from a diversity of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Many have experienced unimaginable trauma, or survived neglect or abuse. As a result, these children may struggle with emotional or behavioural issues. It is not uncommon for children in foster care to require special guidance and care. For the most part, these children need safety, security, attention and support.

## How long does a child stay in care?

A child may remain in foster care for one day, a few weeks, several months or even years. Many complex factors determine the length of the child's stay, and each child has a caseworker who works with foster parents, regarding case planning and the individual needs of the child.

Source: <https://www.sffa.sk.ca/becoming-a-foster-parent/frequently-asked-questions>



# Everything you need to know about Child Car Seats

**T**he right car seat for your child is the one that fits their size, weight, age and height. The seat must be used correctly every time they ride in a vehicle. The car seat manufacturer's instructions will tell you:

- if the seat is right for your child
- how to place it in the correct position
- what equipment you need
- how to properly install it

Correct installation is important for your child's safety. Children should stay in each stage until they reach the maximum weight/car seat requirements for the stage they're in.

## REAR-FACING

This is the first stage and what is used for a baby. Recommended weight of 1.8 to 16 kg (4 to 35 lb.):

- car seat faces rear of vehicle
- secured by locking seatbelt OR Universal Anchorage System (UAS). Do not use both unless your specific car seat allows that method of installation.
- harness straps snug - no pinchable webbing between strap and child's collarbone
- chest clip at level of armpit
- carrier handle in the position required by manufacturer while in the vehicle
- harness strap slots being used must be at or slightly below baby's shoulder

- baby's head is at least 1 inch below top of seat
- Install the infant car seat at the proper angle, based on the child's weight and age. Angle allowances will be marked on the car seat.

A newborn's head will flop forward making it difficult to breathe. Place a rolled towel or a length of swimming noodle under the front of the car seat to tip the seat back for a better angle (about 45 degrees).

There are 2 types of rear-facing car seat: an infant carrier which can only be used one way or a convertible seat which can be used both forward and rear facing. If you're installing a convertible car seat rear facing, follow all rear-facing car seat guidelines listed above.

## FORWARD-FACING

The seat can face forward when the child meets all the requirements:

- are at least 1 year of age
- weigh 9 to 30 kg (22 to 65 lb.), and can walk unassisted.
- car seat secured by locking seatbelt or Universal Anchorage System (UAS). Please note that UAS cannot be used in situations where the car seat and child total more than 65 lb. If your child is over 40 lb. the car seat must be installed with a locking seatbelt.

- follow the weight and height guidelines for your car seat
- harness straps snug - no pinchable webbing between strap and child's collarbone
- chest clip at level of armpit
- harness strap slots being used must be at or slightly above the toddler's shoulders
- when forward facing, the car seat must have the top of the seat secured with the tether strap. If you do not use this tether the driver can receive a fine and lose 3 SDR points.

Keep in mind, there's no reason to rush your child into a forward-facing seat. Your child can stay in that seat until they are the maximum weight recommended by the manufacturer.

## INSTALLATION GUIDELINES

### Before installing:

- Check your manufacturer's instructions to make sure the car seat will accommodate your child's weight and height.
- Check the vehicle owner's manual for information about where to place your car seat and where the tether anchors are.

### During installation:

- Before using your car seat, always read your specific manual to ensure proper installation.



- Always place children 12 years and under in the back seat and never in seats with a front air bag.
- Children sitting too close to a deploying air bag can be seriously injured or killed.
- Try to place children in the middle of the back seat if you can.
- Push the child car seat down while you tighten the belt or Universal Anchorage System (UAS).
- The chest clip should be at the child's armpit level. Ensure harness straps lie flat (not twisted) and the strap's slots are at or above the child's shoulder.
- Use the proper seatbelt path depending on rear-facing or forward-facing car seat.
- Install the infant car seat in the appropriate angle for the age and weight of that child. A newborn's head will flop forward making it difficult to breathe. Place a rolled towel or a length of swimming noodle under the front of the car seat to tip the seat back for a better angle (about 45 degrees).

### Safety tips

- Nothing bulky should be between your child and their car seat straps, including snowsuits, or aftermarket car seat and strap covers. Dress your baby/child in lightweight, warm clothing in colder seasons and cover them with a blanket after they're buckled.
- Household booster seats can't be used in your vehicle. They aren't designed for transportation purposes.
- Try to eliminate the number of aftermarket products being used in your vehicle and minimize the amount of unrestrained items; they can become projectiles.

### Check your installation

After installation, have your child car seat checked by a trained technician:

- visit a scheduled car seat clinic in your area
- book an appointment with a car seat technician

### SECOND-HAND CAR SEATS

It's best to buy a new car seat. If you look at a used car seat make sure it:

- comes with the manual
- has never been in a severe crash
- hasn't expired or is past the manufacturer's date
- is in good shape with no ripped or torn fabric, or the harness or tether straps aren't missing or frayed
- displays a sticker on it that says it meets the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS)
- has metal parts that aren't rusted
- hasn't been recalled by Transport Canada

### EXPIRED CAR SEATS AND DISPOSAL

When a car seat expires, it's no longer safe for use. Over time car seats get worn out from installation, regular use by kids, and temperature changes (both hot and cold weather can impact the plastic). This stress ends up weakening the car seat, and that means the seat won't be as safe as it once was.

### How to check the expiry date and for recalls

Car seats have different lifespans before they expire, typically ranging from 6 to 12 years depending on the manufacturer. You can find the expiry date in the instruction manual or somewhere on the back or bottom of the seat. To ensure your child is safe, it's important to

follow the expiry date. Using an expired car seat is illegal and can result in a ticket in Saskatchewan. You can also check for safety alerts and car seat recalls.

### How to dispose of expired seats

Unfortunately, there's no designated car seat recycling program in Saskatchewan. This is how to dispose of your expired car seat:

1. Cut the harnesses and fabric, making the seat as unusable and undesirable as possible.
2. Place the hard shell and fabric in two separate non-transparent garbage bags so they can't be easily identified as a car seat.
3. Place both bags into your local garbage bin or take them to your community's waste facility.
4. You do not need to bring your seat to an SGI centre or fire station for proper disposal. This can be done at your own house.

### FINES

If your child is under 7 and isn't in an appropriate car seat or a booster seat, you'll be fined \$175.

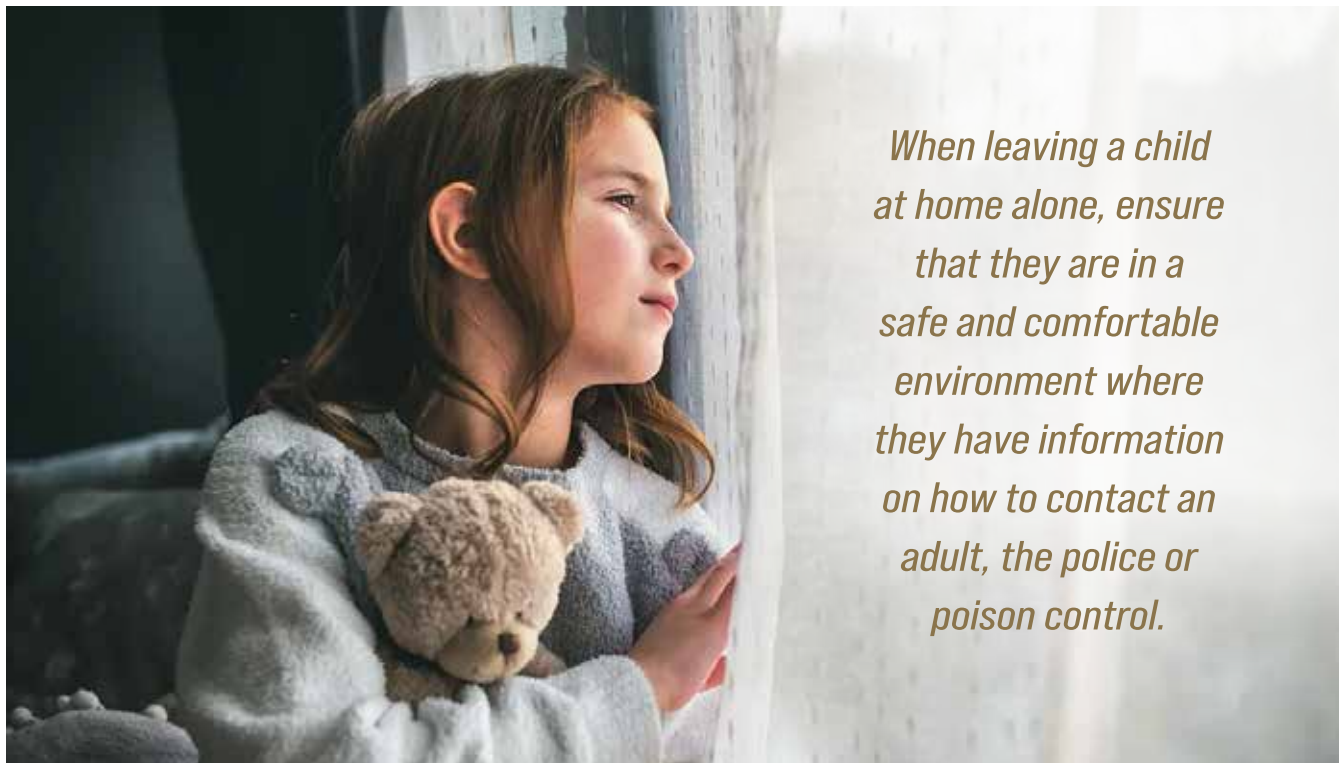
If fined, you'll lose 3 points under the Safe Driver Recognition program. Depending where you sit on the Safety Rating Scale, you may also owe a penalty or lose some of your insurance discounts.

Effective Dec. 16, 2020, parents and legal guardians are responsible for ensuring that children under the age of 16 are properly restrained while riding in taxis, rideshares, or any other form of transport/vehicle-for-hire service where passenger restraints are required.

Source: <https://sgi.sk.ca/carseats>



# Leaving Children Home Alone



*When leaving a child at home alone, ensure that they are in a safe and comfortable environment where they have information on how to contact an adult, the police or poison control.*

## WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO LEAVE A CHILD AT HOME ALONE?

The Canada Safety Council (CSC) recommends a minimum age of 10 years old with consideration given to the child's temperament, if they feel prepared and to the level of preparation to which the guardian/parent has prepared the child. When it comes to watching siblings or other people's children, the CSC recommends a babysitter be a minimum age of 12 years old.

### QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS TO ASK

1. Does the child feel comfortable about being home alone?
2. Do you feel comfortable about the child being home alone?
3. Can you trust the child to follow directions and does he/she understand and remember instructions whether written or oral?
4. Can the child handle normal and unexpected situations?
5. Are you able to communicate readily with him or her when you are not at home?
6. Can the child always reach someone to help in case of an emergency?

### IF YOU DECIDE TO LEAVE A CHILD HOME ALONE

- Prepare the child to deal with situations that may arise, such as what to do if someone comes to the door.
- Specify how his or her time is to be spent.
- Set firm rules with clear do's and don'ts.
- Keep in touch – make sure you are reachable by cell phone.
- Make sure the home is safe and secure.
- Limit the time the child is left home alone.
- Remember, a child who may be ready to care for him/herself for a short period of time may not be able to care

INFORMATION GATHERED FROM: <https://canadasafetycouncil.org/preparation-and-communication-the-key-for-children-home-alone>



# A foster kid's holiday survival ideas

A holiday message from an aged out of care foster child

When I aged out of care there was one day a year I loathed, and it's called Christmas. One day a year I was reminded about family private. While all my friends were excited about their mom's cooking, presents, and seeing their favourite uncle, I was trying to figure out how I could sleep for 24 hours and skip the day. I wasn't going to have any of the fun, and I was too ashamed to let anyone know I didn't have anywhere to go on Christmas day.

Unfortunately, this isn't a unique experience for us ex-foster kids. So here is how I survived the dreaded Christmas day...

1. **I rented all the movies.** Back in my day (I'm about to date myself here) I would go to Rogers and pick out seven VHS (this was what they had before DVD players) movies. Seven because I knew I would be awake for at least 14 hours that day and each movie, give or take, is about two hours. I picked out all my favourites and a couple I've never seen before. Now, you can just queue up all your favourites on Netflix and settle in.
2. **I bought all the comfort food.** For me, it's basically dip and then some things to put in the dip, like chips and veggies. I would get different kinds of cheese and the softest baguettes. I would have mac'n cheese and Dr. Pepper.
3. **I worked.** If I could work that day, I did. First, you get some mad cash for working Christmas day and you're pretty much guaranteed to work that day because all the people with family privilege want the day off.
4. **I went to the movies.** Believe it or not but movie theatres are open on Christmas day and they are busy! You can easily find a seat where it looks like you're in a group.
5. **I lied.** Eventually, my friends discovered that I was alone on Christmas and invited me to family gatherings. I was ashamed to tell them I'm a foster kid, so I told them that I recently moved to Vancouver to work. I don't want to promote lying at all, but if you feel like I did, it is an option. I will tell you though, that most people care more about if they get gravy than whether you were in foster care.
6. **I walked.** The city is so quiet on Christmas day, so it kind of feels like you're in a zombie apocalypse because there is no one around.
7. **I volunteered.** There are lots of places looking for volunteers on Christmas day. This is a cool thing because you get to be with other people, and chances are you're going to get a turkey dinner.
8. And lastly, **surround yourself with other foster kids**—you know they would rather hang out than look up Grumpy Cat memes all day!

Source: <https://belongingnetwork.com/story/a-foster-kids-holiday-survival-ideas/>

In our "FOSTER CORNER" we would like to highlight anything from foster inspired stories to artwork submitted by foster parents on behalf of children in their homes. If you have a foster story, poem, artwork or some other foster related experience or information to share with our readers, please send it in! All communication or submissions for "Foster Corner" can be sent by email to [keanna@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:keanna@sffa.sk.ca)





## Outdoor Winter Activities—No Snow Required!

**L**ooking forward to experiencing all the fun outdoor winter activities... or, perhaps, you've newly resolved to try and embrace winter despite being less than enthusiastic about it? Whether you're a fan of the cold or not, outdoor play is super important for kids, even in the winter!

Here are some of our favorite fun outdoor winter activities—no snow required!

### **Play obstacle course backyard games**

This is a great idea for our list of outdoor winter activities because one of the best ways to stay warm outside is to get moving! Set up cones or natural obstacles to

zigzag around, hurdles to jump over, tunnels to crawl through, things to climb over, balance beams to cross, rocks (making sure that they are safe) to jump across, and so on.

“

*It's too easy to let cold, dreary weather keep us and our kids from spending time outside.”*

### **Build a fire**

Fires are one of the best outdoor winter activities since this is when we're the most in need of the warmth and comfort that fire provides.

Another thing I love about fires is the opportunity to tell stories! It was also a staple of times gone by when entertainment wasn't so readily available. Let's bring back the tradition of gathering around the fire and practice the art of storytelling! Reading books by the fire can also be a fun idea.

### **Have a winter picnic**

Do this in your own backyard or head to a park! Make sure to bring warm food and drink and a waterproof mat (or just wear snow pants). If you're feeling extra adventurous, try actually preparing your meal outside over a fire, on the grill, or on a camp stove. Or, if you're going for simplicity, just bring some hot chocolate and a small snack.



### **Go for a hike**

The great thing about hiking is that every season has a unique experience to offer! Winter hiking generally means no bugs and having trails primarily to yourself. If your kids are bored with hiking in general, try something new, like a sensory hike where you pay particular attention to the sounds, smells, and textures as well as the sights around you.

### **Visit an animal or nature preserve**

These are generally open year-round and offer a mix of outdoor and indoor experiences. A lot of them also have children's play areas.

### **Go to the playground**

Playgrounds don't disappear during the winter only to magically reappear in the springtime! They are in fact, still there all year!

Admittedly, these can be a little hazardous when it's icy out. But when snow and ice are absent, they're a great place to take the kids.

### **Go on a nature scavenger hunt**

Since winter is the time of year that everything is dead, scavenger hunts probably aren't typically considered when brainstorming outdoor winter activities. But you may be surprised that the things you find are so different!

In the winter, be on the lookout for things like berries, seedpods, acorns, evergreens, and dead flower stalks. Try and see if you can discover where bugs are hiding out. Pay attention to the bark on different types of trees and examine it closely with a magnifying glass. Give each child their own mesh collection bag

or plastic storage container and compare what everyone gathered afterward!



### **Go Ice Skating Outdoors**

Whether it's a frozen pond or a rink in your area, outdoor ice skating is one of the quintessential outdoor winter activities. You might think that if there's no snow, that also means there won't be any ice. But, there are plenty of outdoor rinks that have cooling systems and are able to maintain an ice rink through the winter regardless of temperature! It's great exercise and an even better way to spend quality time with friends or family.

### **Fly a Kite**

Who says kite flying is only for spring? On a breezy winter day, bundle up and head to an open field, park or the beach to launch a colorful kite into the crisp blue sky. Just make sure to be aware of overhead obstacles, and that you may need gloves to keep your hands warm!

### **Attend a Winter Festival**

Even without snow, winter festivals are perfect opportunities to embrace the season's magic. From

ice carving competitions to light displays, these festivals celebrate the unique beauty of winter. Check your local area for events.

### **Explore a Historic Village**

Historic villages often offer outdoor winter activities like candlelit tours, train rides, or costumed reenactments of bygone eras. Chances are there will also be fewer crowds, which is always a plus!

### **Learn Nature Photography**

Winter is just as good a time as any for budding photographers to practice. Grab a camera or smartphone and experiment with capturing the beauty of outdoor winter activities from unique angles.

### **Snuggle Up and Read in a Hammock**

Yes, hammocks are still an option in winter! String up a hammock between sturdy trees, layer it with cozy blankets, and settle in with a good book. It's a peaceful way to enjoy the quiet beauty of a winter day.

### **Play Backyard Games**

Winter is the perfect time to turn your backyard into an outdoor playground. Ladder toss, or cornhole can keep the whole family entertained. These simple yet active games are a great way to enjoy outdoor winter activities without straying far from home!

It's too easy to let cold, dreary weather keep us and our kids from spending time outside. Hopefully these ideas for outdoor winter activities gives you a little inspiration on how to make the most out of snow-less winter days!

Source: <https://ourdaysoutside.com/20-surprising-outdoor-winter-activities/>

# Christmas Breakfast

Making it Fun & Festive for Kids!



## Penguin Porridge

This little guy is easier to make than it looks. Just prepare your favorite flavor of oatmeal (try to make it a little more on the thicker side). Allow the oatmeal to cool just a bit before placing some into the center of a plate. Surround the oatmeal with fresh blueberries, adding extra on the side for penguin wings, adding extra on the side for penguin wings. Garnish with orange slices for a mouth and feet and a hat made from a strawberry and mini marshmallows (also used for snow).



## Fruit Plate

This is so easy and healthy, but also super fun. A little icing sugar makes the "snow" on the tree! Or create festive shapes, by using a cookie cutter.



## Scrambled Egg Toast

### INGREDIENTS:

- 6 slices of your choice of bread
- 6 large pasture-raised eggs
- 2 tablespoons milk or cream
- 1 tablespoon butter or olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

*Optional:* diced green onions, bell peppers, shredded cheese, or chopped tomatoes for mix-ins.

### PREPARE THE BREAD:

Use a Christmas tree and/or star-shaped cookie cutter (or any festive shape) to cut out the center of each slice of bread. Set the cutouts aside to toast as dippers or snacks.

### MAKE THE SCRAMBLED EGG MIXTURE:

In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk or cream, and a pinch of salt and pepper. For extra flavor, stir in diced green onions, bell peppers, shredded cheese, or chopped tomatoes.

### COOK THE TOAST AND EGGS:

Heat a cast iron or nonstick skillet over medium heat and melt a small amount of butter or drizzle with olive oil. Place a slice of bread (with the cutout) in the skillet. Pour enough scrambled egg mixture into the cutout to fill the shape but not overflow. Let it cook undisturbed for about 2-3 minutes until the egg starts to set. Flip the bread carefully and cook for another 1-2 minutes, ensuring the egg is fully cooked. Repeat for all slices.

*Garnish with additional diced green onions or a sprinkle of cheese while still warm.*





## Wise Owl Toast

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 English Muffin
- 1 tbs Peanut Butter
- 1 Small Banana
- 2 Strawberries
- 4 Blueberries

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Split and toast the English breakfast muffin. Spread the toasted muffin with peanut butter. Add slices of banana to create owl eyes. Put blueberries onto the banana slices to finish the owl eyes. Add the strawberry slices as wings and beak

## Reindeer Pancakes

### INGREDIENTS:

- 12 slices bacon
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 large egg
- 1 banana
- 8 blueberries
- 4 raspberries
- oil for greasing the pan

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 400° F. Line a large, rimmed baking sheet with foil. Arrange the bacon in a single layer on the baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes or until your desired level of crispness is achieved. Once the bacon is cooked, cut each strip in half. While the bacon is cooking, prepare the pancake batter. Whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Combine the milk, butter (melted and cooled), and egg in a small bowl. Add the wet ingredients to the dry and mix until well combined. Allow the mixture to sit for 5-10 minutes before cooking it. Preheat a griddle or large skillet with oil over med-high heat for 2-3 mins. Add ¼ cup of batter to the griddle, this will be the face of the reindeer. Once bubbles form on the top of the batter, flip the pancake and cook the other side. Use 1 ½ tablespoons of batter to form a medium circle for the reindeer's mouth and 1 tablespoon to form an even smaller circle. Once cooked and cooled, cut the smallest circle in half to create the ears. Cut the banana into round slices for the base of the eyes. To assemble the reindeer, arrange 4 pieces of bacon in the top half of the plate to create the antlers. Add the large pancake to the center of the plate, slightly overlapping the bottom of the antlers. Add the med pancake to the bottom of the large pancake. Add half of the small pancake to each side of the large pancake for the reindeer ears. Add two banana slices topped with blueberries to the middle of the large pancake to form the eyes. Finally, place a raspberry in the middle of the medium pancake for the reindeer nose.



## Grinch Waffles

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups Bisquick
- 1 1/3 cup milk
- 2 vegetable oil
- 1 egg
- Neon green food coloring
- Mini heart waffle maker
- Strawberries
- Mini heart cookie cutter

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Make waffle batter according to box instructions. Add in the neon green food coloring until you get the color you want. Then spoon the batter in the heart waffle maker. Now remove the waffle when it is done. Slice strawberries and use the mini heart cookie cutter to make heart shapes. Finally place heart strawberries on top of the waffles and serve with whipped cream and syrup.





Winter may be cold but that gives us opportunities to enjoy trying new things.

One fun activity is making ice decorations, like these ice lanterns!



### STEP 1: GATHERING THE NEEDED ELEMENTS

A container that will form the shape of the lantern. Ensure that the upper part is not narrower than the lower part. If not, the ice lantern will not be able to slide out of the top of the container when ready to display it, so choose the container, or cut its top off, accordingly. You can use a large yogurt container for a small lantern or a larger plastic container, small bucket or even a metal tin (pizza places get them for large size crushed tomatoes).

A smaller container to go inside and create space to put a tea light. Choose a container that is smooth and straight enough to let it slide out when ready. Ensure the container fits well inside your larger container with enough space in between for a thick enough wall of the ice lantern.



You'll also need to check that it is tall enough – as tall or taller than

## MAKING ICE LANTERNS

your large container, keeping in mind that it won't sit directly on the bottom of your large container but a little higher. This allows space for ice to form the base of your lantern. Also make sure it is large enough to place a tea light in that spot once it's removed. The width is also very important for if your large container is very large and you use a narrow inner container, that could mean a very deep drop for a tea light and no space for your hand to reach in and light it safely.

Making smaller lanterns is recommended, as they freeze much more quickly and if you get a thaw you can pop them back into their container, put the lid on and stick in the freezer until the temperature drops outside again.

Finally, you'll need to choose something that can withstand both freezing and then room temperature or warm water which will help free

it from the ice. Plastic or metal is usually your best bet for this.

Natural items like fresh or frozen cranberries and evergreens. Fresh or frozen cranberries from the store are attractive as are other berries that you might have growing on bushes in your garden. (You won't need many, so the birds will end up getting most of them). You could also slice an orange or clementine and use that for added colour.



If you can find some, snip some fern fronds. They would be brown by the spring, but still only take the little that is needed. Or try snipping some evergreens. You might be surprised to find the ends of spruce or cedar branches as well as small pine cones ready to collect. Another option is to get a bundle of greens at a grocery or other local store, typically sold at this time of year.

**Stones to weigh down the inner container.** You'll need this once you add water, to stop your inner

container from floating around and making an uneven freeze. Alternatively, use masking tape to tape along the top of the inner container, joining it with the top of the outer container. This also helps ensure your inner container is high enough.

**Water**, to fill and form the lantern!



## STEP 2: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Fill the bottom of your container with a little water. This will be your base and only needs to be thick enough for stability, perhaps one centimeter for small lanterns or up to three centimeters in larger ones.

Perhaps place some berries and greenery in the water. It depends upon the look you are going for. If you'd like your elements to be all around the lantern then fill in the base with a little bit now. If, however, you go for the look where it is all clear except at the top, then leave the base clear. You may find the second option easier as many items, like cranberries and leaves will float to the top. If you want them dispersed more evenly, you'll have to play with them to see what items you have can push them down somewhat.

Take it outside to freeze or put it in your freezer. Or you can even use the freezer for the little one, and the outdoors for the bigger one. Before you leave it, however, check to see that your berries or

leaves are now in a spot that will allow the center to be flat. If you have something in the center that is floating, it may stick out of the ice enough to cause your tea light to be slanted.

Once your base is fully frozen, place your inner container in the middle and fill with some stones to keep it in place. If you try and cut corners and don't let the base completely freeze, your heavy inner container might break the weak ice below and you'll have to start again.

Fill the gap between the two containers with water. This will be your lantern's wall. Don't fill it right to the top as you will be also adding your berries and greens. This also allows space for the water to expand as it freezes. You may need to add more stones if your inner container begins to move.



Add in your berries, greens and whatever else you'd like to include like orange slices or small cones, and arrange until you are happy with them. I tend to use more of the greens and reds for vibrant colour and only use a few cones, if any.

Carefully carry outside or to the freezer and wait several hours.

The small lantern may freeze the same day, but the larger one may take over a day to set and freeze properly.

## STEP 3: UNVEILING YOUR MASTERPIECE

Once you are sure that your lantern is totally frozen, pour a little warm water inside your inner container. It will soon release from the ice. Take care to not get water on the ice itself.



Next, run a little warm water carefully on the side of your outer container. It should also soon release your lantern inside. Take it outside quickly before it melts too much. You may wish to have a small towel on hand both for your hands to not stick to the ice or get too cold but also to dry any moisture from the outside of your lantern. If you place your lantern on your porch or front steps with moisture, it may stick in place to where you first put it, making it hard to rearrange, if desired!

You might enjoy making several and having a few lined up on your stairs or porch to simply enjoy or be a stylish way to greet guests in the evening.



Source: <https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/DIY/making-ice-lanterns.html>



## GOODS & SERVICES VOUCHERS

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 may 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

For a list of community retailers accepting vouchers, visit the following online link:

<https://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/resources-for-foster-parents/member-benefits>



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<https://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/resources-for-foster-parents/tool-kit-resources>

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