

Advisor

THE SFFA IS HERE FOR YOU!

RISK MANAGEMENT TIPS

**LIFELONG CONNECTIONS
FOR CHILDREN IN CARE**

**SECONDARY TRAUMATIC
STRESS**

**A LOOK AT HOW WE USE
SOCIAL MEDIA**

**FOSTER CARE IN
MOVIES & TELEVISION**

**THE HOUSE THAT LOVE
BUILT**

**GETTING RID OF
CLUTTER**

**TEACHING YOUR CHILD
RESILIENCE**

**INDIGENOUS FOCUSED
GATHERING**



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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We are here for you!



The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association supports foster parents through education and advocacy to create healthy homes and brighter futures for children and youth in care.

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA) is committed to making a difference by connecting with families and listening not only to the positive stories, but the struggles and challenges of fostering. The SFFA is a non-profit, community-based organization created to support foster parents in their role as caregivers. As an approved Foster Parent with the Ministry of Social Services, membership starts on the date of formal approval.

SUPPORT FOR SUCCESS

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

Many families over the past year have participated and benefited from the following trainings, resources and workshops that are included as part of a Foster Parents membership with the SFFA:

- FASD TRAINING
- First Aid & CPR Level B
- Becoming a Trauma Competent Caregiver
- Caring for Aboriginal Children: A Cultural Curriculum

If you have suggestions for additional trainings or would like further information about any of our offered trainings, please contact us.

GUIDING FAMILIES THROUGH THE PROCESS

The foster care system can be challenging to navigate without support. Our association is here to guide parents through reimbursement issues, struggles with case planning, foster home investigations, the conflict resolution process or assist with damages caused to your property by a

foster child. All of these supports can be accessed by contacting our Foster Family Advocate.

MEMBERSHIP CARD

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

“The SFFA is a non-profit, community-based organization created to support foster parents in their role as caregivers.”

THE ADVISOR

Our newsletter is mailed to all families quarterly and contains articles that may be specific to things you are faced with in your fostering journey. All past editions can be found on our website at <http://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/resources-for-foster-parents/sffa-advisor-newsletter>.

IN HOME SUPPORT

The In Home Support Program supports families who not only exceed the maximum number of children that can be cared for in policy, but those who require increased supports in maintaining placement of a child. This can be offered through domestic services, supervision of children, meal preparation or help with homework. As well, services can be offered as a “one to one” to a child or youth in need of mentorship or increased supports for safety. ▶ ...continued on page 5.

HOME LESSONS

Risk management tips provided by: Butler Byers Insurance Ltd is for informational purposes only.

Did You Know?

Approximately 60,000 children are reported missing each year in Canada. For parents, this is one of the scariest times of their lives. The good news is that most children who are reported missing are not missing at all—there is usually a miscommunication about their whereabouts or they turn up with family members or friends. Use the following tips to help prevent an abduction from occurring.

TEACH YOUR KIDS “STRANGER DANGER”

- Have an identification photograph taken of your child at least every six months.
- Have your child fingerprinted at your local police station.
- Be aware of your child’s activities on the Internet and remind them that personal information should not be given out to strangers online.
- Supervise your children when you are out in public and set boundaries for older children for where they can go without you.
- Do not allow your children to do door-to-door fundraising without you.
- Do not leave your child alone in a car or stroller.
- Check references of babysitters, day care providers and home cleaning professionals before allowing them near your children.
- Inform your children’s school when someone other than you is going to pick them up.
- Avoid dressing your children in clothing with their names on it. Children tend to trust people who call them by their first name, and these identifiers are bait for predators.
- Explain the concept of a stranger to your children and tell them that strangers may not look scary but can hurt them.

Healthy Hints

Be sure to tell your kids the following to help keep them safe:

- Never accept gifts or candy from strangers or go anywhere with someone they don’t know, even if it sounds like fun.
- If someone your kids do not know tries to get them to go with him or her, they should run away and make as much noise as they can.
- Always tell you or a trusted adult if a stranger asks them personal questions or makes them feel uneasy.



LEADERSHIP COMMITTEES

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

Some of the 'Leadership Events' that took place in the last few months were focused around Christmas celebrations:

- Flynn's Forest, Saskatoon
- CJ's Climb & Play, Prince Albert
- Dynasty Twin Cinemas, Melfort — Families gathered to watch the Grinch (Tickets were supplied by the Melfort Ministerial Committee and lunch sponsored by the Salvation Army in Melfort)

Invitations to events like these is through mail and email about three weeks prior to the event date. If you would like to be connected with a Leadership Committee (Foster Parent Group), or become involved in leading a group in your area, please send us an email to sffa@sffa.sk.ca or call (306) 975-1580.

As a member, or a non-member, if you have any further questions or would like to speak with someone from our office, please feel free to connect with us at 1.888.276.2880.



We need your email

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

Child & Family Program

Monthly Maintenance Payment Dates

- Released from Linkin

Month Being Paid	Date Maintenance Cheques released from Linkin - Mailed/*Direct Deposit
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****IMPORTANT NOTE:** *If using direct deposit, it may take up to 3 additional business days before the funds are deposited in your bank account depending on your Financial Institution.*

November 2018	December 4, 2018
December 2018	January 3, 2019
January 2019	February 4, 2019
February 2019	March 4, 2019
March 2019	April 2, 2019
April 2019	May 2, 2019
May 2019	June 4, 2019
June 2019	July 4, 2019
July 2019	August 2, 2019
August 2019	September 4, 2019
September 2019	October 2, 2019
October 2019	November 4, 2019
November 2019	December 3, 2019
December 2019	January 3, 2020
January 2020	February 4, 2020

Monthly Maintenance Schedule applies to Regular Foster Care, Extended Family Care (Person of Sufficient Interest, Place of Safety & Alternative Care) and Assisted Adoption monthly maintenance.

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association, its Board Members, and the Provincial Office Staff, we wish you and your family all the best for the year ahead!

What Lifelong Connections mean for Children in Care

Children and youth of all ages, regardless of their needs and circumstances, long for loving lifelong connections to others.



When children are placed into foster care, they all too often have lost not only their parents but also brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and others who are important in their lives. Children and adolescents who move from foster home to foster home, hospital to residential care, and in and out of juvenile detention facilities are frequently lost and in crisis. They are young, alone, and lonely for a family, a home, a school with friends, and a neighborhood.

Without the stability of lifelong connections, children and youth are missing the needed guidance to prepare them for adulthood. Unfortunately, many youth in foster care grow up and leave the system without any permanent, lifelong connections. They have neither the security of a family, nor the resources necessary for adulthood. They lack an essential network of relationships to rely on when the going gets tough, and they lack people to pat them on the back when things go well. For some young adults, they become part of the disproportionate number of former foster youth who end up in jail, lack job skills, face early pregnancy, and/or become homeless.

As children grow and develop, a sense of identity begins to form. For many children, they gain this sense of identity from their family. For children

in out-of-home care, however, their birth family ties have been damaged and often severed. It's painful to think about youth who have birthday after birthday in an out-of-home placement without receiving even a card or a call from birth parents, grandparents, or siblings. Ironically, while the youth struggles to get through such holidays without birth family contact, there are very likely birth family members who are thinking of and missing him or her. And while the youth is struggling to form a healthy sense of identity, he or she may end up ultimately identifying with individuals who are a negative influence, as the need to belong to someone — anyone — is so overpowering at this stage of development.

Establishing lifelong connections with important adults is a major factor in ensuring a youth's success as an adult. For many youth in out-of-home care, their connections to their foster parents and foster siblings are their lifelines. Children who are adopted are able to have a lifelong family to provide needed guidance and support. However, children who have been through the child welfare system — who may have been abused and neglected — typically need an ongoing support system in addition to their foster and adoptive family to help them succeed. Furthermore, research shows that children — adopted or not — long for connections to their biological family, and they develop a sense of their identity from their biological family.

Youth express their need for connections in many ways

Youth tell us about their needs and wants in a variety of ways. As foster and/or adoptive parents, we often need to be sensitive to pick up on subtle cues:

- Youth may openly express a desire to have a family. Look for ways the youth expresses a desire to reconnect with his or her birth family or to be able to visit birth family for birthdays, holidays, etc.
- Youth may express a desire to maintain the limited birth family connections they have.
- Youth may want to reestablish birth family connections. Sometimes youth may talk about birth family members that once visited them.
- Youth may talk about others in the home receiving calls or letters from birth family members when they are not. They may also talk about how they feel when they see others going on visits or receiving visits from birth family members.
- The youth sometimes may act out instead of expressing his or her feelings. There are behavioral expressions of feelings directly related to feelings of hopelessness and confusion about birth family connections. Typical behavioral expressions include depression, running away, aggressive outbursts, and suicidal behaviors. Through these nonverbal behavioral expressions the youth may be crying out for help in understanding the birth family relationships and their need for some kind of a connection to their birth families.

“The greatest disease is to be nobody to anybody.” - Mother Teresa, Humanitarian

Common Myths, Mindsets, and Barriers

There are a number of common concerns that people have expressed that often cause delays in connecting youth to important people in their lives. The following represent some of the most common concerns, myths and mindsets:

- “We already do this.” Considering that youth typically have 40-100 relatives with which to connect, there is always room to do more.
- “Middle Class Bias.” Sometimes people settle into a “middle class bias” and are more comfortable in facilitating visits with people of the same socioeconomic status, race, etc., as the foster home in which the youth has been residing. Cultural, social, and economic differences need to be acknowledged without inhibiting lifelong relationships.
- “This child has no family.” We often think that a youth does not have birth family because there is no record of any relatives in the file nor can the youth recall any other birth family.
- “Teenagers don’t want or need family.” It is often assumed that because a youth may be angry at his birth parents or a relative that he or she does not want or need to connect with anyone. We all need connections. Nobody is ever too old to need a committed, supportive and loving relationship with others.
- “Termination should be completed or the child should be stabilized before searching for or involving anyone else in planning or visits.” Research indicates that connections can help stabilize youth.
- “The child’s negative behaviors may intimidate any potential connections.” While it is true that many youth in care have complex needs and challenging behaviors, people who care about the child typically will care about him or her regardless of the challenges the child presents. You are seeking lifelong connections who will stand by the child during good and bad times. Also, it is common for youth to act out because they long for a connection to biological family and because their family is in total disarray. Not making the connection may actually increase the negative behaviors. Frequently, behavior improves as children feel a sense of safety and improved understanding.

Source: <http://www.ifapa.org/>

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Because they work so closely with traumatized children and care so much about them, foster and adoptive parents and kinship caregivers are at increased risk for secondary traumatic stress.

As the “secondary” in the name suggests, the cause of secondary traumatic stress (STS) is indirect. It is trauma that results from exposure to someone else’s trauma, or to their trauma reactions. Because they work so closely with traumatized children and care so much about them, foster and adoptive parents and kinship caregivers are at increased risk of STS. Resource parents’ exposure to children’s trauma commonly occurs through:

- What a child tells them or what they hear a child say
- A child’s play, drawings, or written stories
- A child’s reactions to trauma reminders
- Media coverage, case reports, or other documents about the trauma

Resource parents’ reactions to these things can vary. Some are troubled or moved by what they hear and see but are able to continue on as before. Others may begin to experience signs of STS. These signs can include intrusive images; nervousness or jumpiness; difficulty concentrating or taking in information; nightmares or insomnia; emotional numbing; feelings of hopelessness or helplessness; anger (e.g., at the birth families, society, etc.); and feeling disconnected from loved ones. Like a primary trauma, secondary traumatic stress can change the way you see and feel about the world. It can cause you to:

- Lose perspective and identify too closely with the child
- Respond inappropriately or disproportionately (e.g., you may try to “cocoon” your child from any possible trauma reminders)
- Withdraw from the child
- Go to great lengths to avoid further exposure to the child’s trauma (e.g., try never to be alone with the child)

Unaddressed, STS can disrupt lives, feelings, personal relationships, and even foster care and adoptive placements.

When You Have Unresolved Trauma

If a resource parent had a trauma in their past (e.g., loss of a family member, death of a close friend, physical or emotional abuse, domestic violence) and it was not fully resolved, they may be more vulnerable to STS. The pain of resource parents’ past experiences can be “reawakened” by exposure to children going through similar situations. As a result, they may have trouble differentiating their experience from their child’s or

STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING SECONDARY TRAUMA

Understand and respond to your own needs. Learn to recognize your body’s signs of stress.

- Set limits. You cannot be everything to everyone. Learn to say “no” to requests for your time or attention. Recognize the job of parenting children who have been traumatized requires a change in other priorities and other relationships.
- Create time for rest and leisure. Small ways of taking care of yourself can include a morning cup of coffee, a special bubble bath, a walk in the park. Focus on healthy ways to relax—increasing your consumption of alcohol or eating sweets may feel good in the moment but will lead to further stress in the future.
- Maintain positive view of the world. Bad things happen, but there is a lot of good in the world. Remember that you are part of the good that is happening in your child’s life.
- Seek out help for your own feelings. You are your child’s lifeline. Taking care of you is taking care of your child. Find others who will listen without judgment—a friend, a sibling, a therapist, or a support group. (All of the above, if possible!)
- Choose your battles. Ask yourself “does this really matter?” See what you can let go of. Realize that life will go on even if you are not perfect.
- Keep hope alive. Focus on the glimmers of hope and change in your child and your relationship with your child.

expect the child to cope with the trauma the same way they did.

Here are some suggestions for coping when a child's trauma is a reminder for you:

- Recognize the connection between your child's trauma and your own history
- Distinguish which feelings belong to the present and which to the past
- Be honest: with yourself, with your child, and with your caseworker
- Get support, including trauma-focused treatment. It's never too late to heal
- Recognize that what worked for you may not work for your child

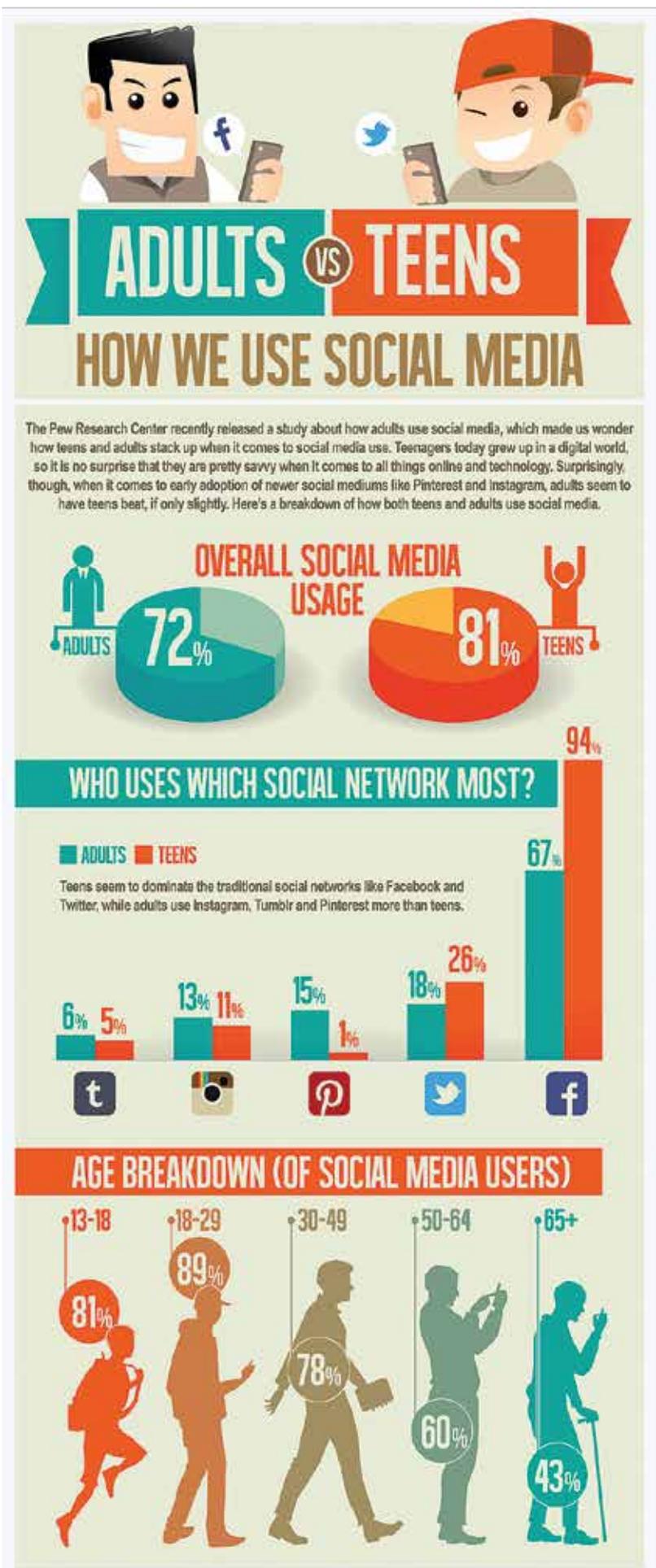
Preventing STS

One way that resource parents can protect themselves from secondary traumatic stress is to learn about STS—what it is and how it is caused. Knowing the signs to look for will help you recognize early on when you see possible symptoms in yourself or other family members.

Self-care is tremendously important, too. If you regularly do things that help you live a balanced life, you are protecting yourself against secondary traumatic stress. Creating and using a self-care plan is strongly recommended.

To help the children in your care, you must take care of yourself—physically, psychologically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. If you do this, you can be there for children and their families when they need you.

Source: <http://fosteringperspectives.org>



Foster Care in *Movies* &

The spectrum of films and television shows that feature foster care in some shape or form run the gamut from kid friendly tales of hope and happiness to the depressing realities of difficult situations. However, each representation from film to television has something that calls out to current and former foster parents. Here are a few favorites of foster families:



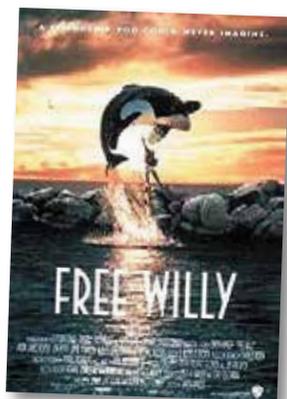
Instant Family

When married couple Pete and Ellie Wagner decide to start a family, they stumble into the world of foster care adoption. They hope to take in one small child but when they meet three siblings, including a rebellious 15 year old girl (Isabela Moner), they find themselves speeding from zero to three kids

overnight. Now, Pete and Ellie must hilariously try to learn the ropes of instant parenthood in the hopes of becoming a family. INSTANT FAMILY is inspired by the real events from the life of writer/director Sean Anders and also stars Octavia Spencer, Tig Notaro and Margo Martindale.

Free Willy

Often forgotten when recalling the story of a boy and a whale trapped in a theme park is the fact the 12-year-old, who was troubled at the start of the film, was in foster care. The boy, Jesse, was abandoned by his mother and, after getting caught stealing and vandalizing, was placed in the care of Annie and Glen Greenwood. Although distrustful and hostile at the outset, Jesse learns to trust and love his foster parents following a whale of an adventure.



Angels in the Outfield

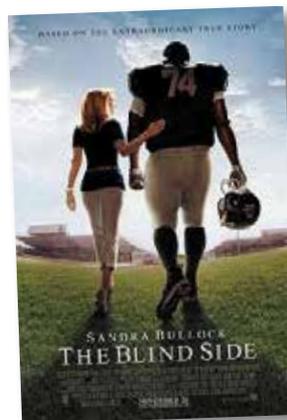
Another Disney movie in the early 90s also focuses on a child in foster care. This time, a young Joseph Gordon-Levitt prays to God for the Angels to win the pennant because his widower father said they could be a family again if the not-so-great-team won the pennant.

What follows is a series of victories for the baseball team spurred on by real Angels, unseen to anyone by Gordon-Levitt. Even so, his father still surrenders parental rights. The fantastical film shows how a foster child still may want to be in his father's care, regardless if the dad is no good. But relax; it's a Disney film so the ending features a happy adoption.



The Blind Side

The film, based on the wonderful book by author Michael Lewis, focuses on 17-year-old Michael Oher and strong-minded Leigh Ann Tuohy. After bouncing from foster home to foster home, Oher is discovered by Leigh Ann walking alone on a road with the intention of sleeping outside a school gym. What follows is the story of one woman's devotion to adopting, raising and protecting the boy who would grow up to be an NFL lineman for the Baltimore Ravens and Tennessee Titans.



Television

Superman

What if a child dreamed of becoming something other than what society had intended? What if a

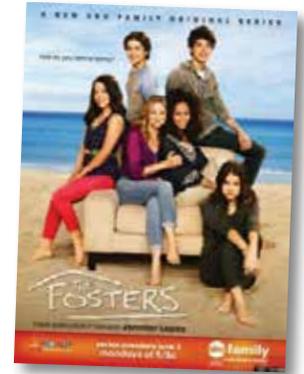


child aspired to something greater? Okay, admittedly this one is a little out there. But the story of alien Kal-El, who was given away by his birth parents on Krypton and sent across the universe to Earth on a ship where he was discovered, fostered and raised by Martha and Jonathan Kent, is a classic reminder of the importance of foster parenting. Kal-El grows up as Clark Kent,

raised by his now adoptive parents in Kansas. He becomes Superman, protector of Earth. Why? Because he was more than where he came from; he was who his parents, biological or not, raised him to be.

The Fosters

The Fosters is a TV series which revolves around Lena Adams Foster and Stef Adams Foster, a couple who are raising a biological son, adopted twins and two foster children. The show, which focuses on diversity, helps spread a lesson of acceptance and understanding, something many foster parents can relate to. While the show does appear to present a hands off approach to parenting (quite different than the active and involved approach most foster parents must take with children in their care), it also sheds light on issues facing older children and siblings in foster care as well as the frequency of placement changes.



Sources:
<https://www.rottentomatoes.com>
<http://foster-adoptive-kinship-family-services-nj.org/foster-care-in-movies-and-television/>



The House that **LOVE** Built

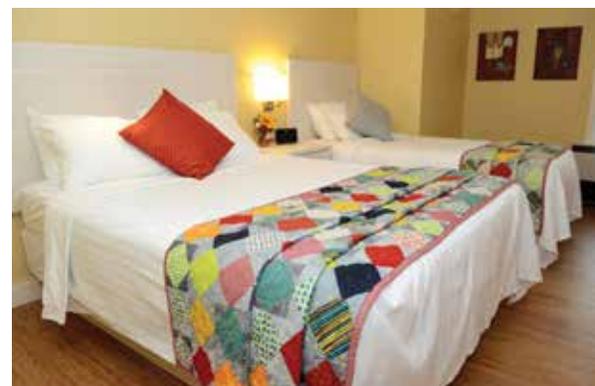
Ronald McDonald House Charities Saskatchewan (RMHC-SK) provides a supportive home-like environment in both their House in Saskatoon and the Family Room in the Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert to support families of sick children.

RMHC-SK plays an essential role in improving a child's health and well being through Family Centered Care. Research shows, patient outcomes are improved with the family's presence and support both in the hospital and when families are near their sick child. A family functioning cohesively and who is not in a state of crisis is better equipped to assist their child with the demands of illness. Staying close by allows parents and caregivers to better communicate with their child's medical team which improves adherence to complicated treatment plans. With the focus on Family Centered Care, families can become part of the health care team by providing emotional support, monitoring ongoing health, advocating on behalf of their child, and

understanding their child's long term health-care needs. Ronald McDonald Houses and Family Rooms work to support this collaboration to help keep families close so they are better equipped to care for their child.

The HOUSE

The Ronald McDonald House located in Saskatoon, focuses on providing accommodation for families of sick children receiving medical treatment for a requested contribution of \$10/night, but more significantly, RMHC-SK prides itself on maintaining a warm, comfortable and safe atmosphere where families have the opportunity to connect with other families in similar situations. Through the doors of the House, you will find families struggling with a child's fragile health or celebrating healing milestones



while at the same time dealing with the routine necessities of everyday life. Over the past 33 years RMHC-SK has been able to support over 23,000 families in this province. But in addition to accommodations, RMHC-SK provides a variety of family supports including the "Generous Helping Food" program which includes breakfasts 4 days a week, dinners 3 times a week and access to community pantry



food that helps in providing nutritious snacks for long days at the hospital. The food program also supports volunteer bakers who come to the House to provide daily baking that is both comfort food and wholesome. The “Generous Helping Food” program provides families with healthy, nutritious meal options and reduces the stress of planning and preparation for their family. Other supports that are present in the House include weekly pet therapy visits, expressive art therapy, massages and various other comforts aimed at easing the stress and burden of supporting a sick child.

Since 1985, RMHC-SK has supported families from across the province which started as a 13 bedroom bed and breakfast facility is now a 42,000 square foot home with 34 guest rooms and expanded living space to address the demand in the province of families requiring support. Now they can offer families 2 large kitchens with seven designated work stations, two maternal baby care rooms, and 6 large gathering spaces, with additional play room focused on children and youth. Designated laundry rooms

with 2 washers and 2 dryers on each floor, where families have access to this facility anytime they require. Special gifts for families upon check-out include a handmade quilt provided by quilters from all over Saskatchewan, and a gift of a toy for the children (siblings and patients) of the House to help create the joy of childhood during difficult times.

“ A family functioning cohesively and who is not in a state of crisis is better equipped to assist their child with the demands of illness.”

Families staying at the house are comprised of parents, siblings and/or extended family of children receiving medical care in Saskatoon, who live 40km outside of Saskatoon. They can stay for a night, a week, or months and are welcome to stay as long as their child is receiving medical care in Saskatoon. Accommodation at the House ensures a reduced financial burden for families associated

with a stay away from home. RMHC-SK relies on community support from donors and volunteers. With nearly 300 volunteers who bring their support to the House in so many ways, they are able to bring the programs to families of the House and the Family Room that they require the most. In 2017, our volunteers gave 9220 hours of service to the families and the organization which includes serving 3228 people at breakfast and 4671 people at dinner. ▶



The FAMILY ROOM

In addition to the House, RMHC-SK opened its' first Family Room in September of 2016, in the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital.



The Ronald McDonald Family Room program in Prince Albert provides a quiet retreat from the medical setting but is just steps away from their sick child. Since opening the Ronald McDonald Family Room has supported over 3,200 families who have had 11,500 visits. That's a lot of care, compassion and coffee!



At the end of the hall on the Pediatrics Unit, this 1300 square foot space has been carefully designed and decorated to contribute to a families' mental and physical wellbeing during a stressful time. The Ronald McDonald Family Room is similar to a home and here are a few features:

- Quiet living room with a TV and fireplace
- Kitchenette with coffee, tea, fresh baking and a variety of healthy snacks
- Dining space
- Sleeping nooks
- Play space for kids
- Arts and craft opportunities
- Private bathroom and shower
- Laundry facility
- Phone, computer and complimentary Wi-Fi
- And most importantly, an opportunity to chat with staff, volunteers and other families



Support from the Saskatchewan Health Authority and Prince Albert community, in particular, has been both incredible and instrumental in programming and ongoing operations.

Of course, you can't talk about Family Room operations without mentioning the unwavering support of Family Room staff and volunteers who through their time, energy and support provide a warm, supportive and inviting space for all entering our doors. And the efforts don't go unnoticed, one family wrote . . . "Everyone was so supportive and friendly. I felt like they actually cared about our family."



The Family Room is available to families 7 days a week 365 days a year, between the hours of 9am and 9pm and is offered at no cost to the families of sick children admitted in the hospital.

This ONE SIMPLE HABIT will help you feel more in control

by Gretchen Rubin

By getting rid of the everyday clutter, you'll have more command over your life.

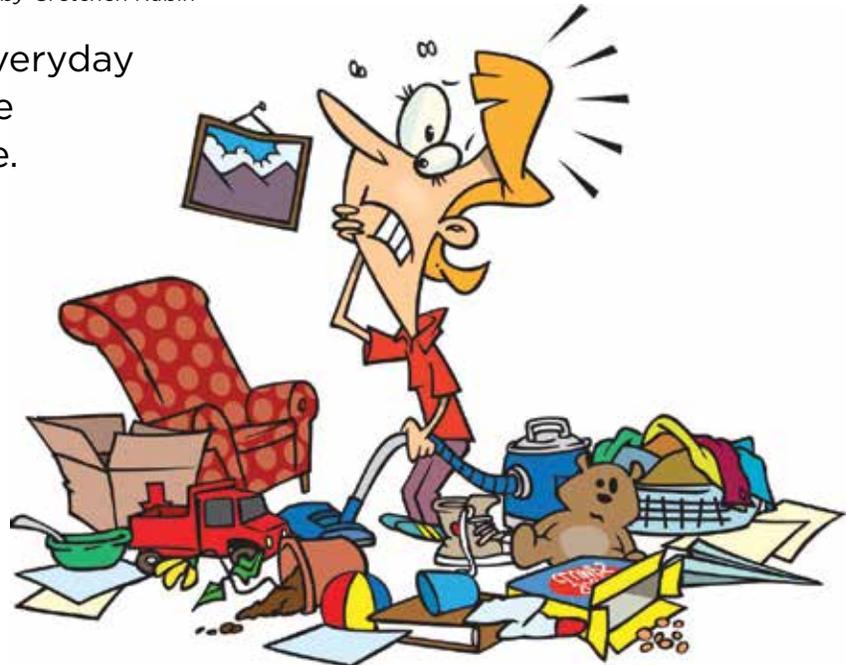
Yet another *Lord-of-the-Rings* inspired article! What can I say? Everything reminds me of habits these days. And, apparently, hobbits.

And here's a hobbit habit, as described in *The Fellowship of the Ring*: "Anything that Hobbits had no further use for, but were unwilling to throw away, they called a mathom. Their dwellings were apt to become rather crowded with mathoms, and many of the presents that passed from hand to hand were of that sort."

I love this term! Mathoms are indeed a problem. All that stuff—you don't want to get rid of it; but you don't actually use it or want it. Re-gifting is a terrific solution, but rarely possible.

What's the tie to habits? One thing that has surprised me most about habits is the degree to which, for most people, outer order contributes to inner calm, and inner self-command.

There's something about getting control of the stuff of life that makes us feel more in control of our lives generally. And if that's an illusion, it's a helpful illusion. Although it doesn't necessarily seem logical, for most people, it's easier to eat right when the kitchen is tidy; it's easier to exercise when your desk isn't buried in papers; it's easier to make the bed when the floor isn't covered by dirty clothes.



In my book *Better Than Before*, I discuss the Strategy of Foundation. From my observation, habits in four areas do most to boost feelings of self-control, and in this way strengthen the Foundation of all our habits. We do well to begin by tackling the habits that help us to:

1. sleep
2. move
3. eat and drink right
4. unclutter

Foundation habits tend to reinforce each other—for instance, exercise helps people sleep, and sleep helps people do everything better—so they're a good place to start for any kind of habit change.

Furthermore, somewhat mysteriously, Foundation habits sometimes make profound change possible. A friend once told me, "I cleaned out my fridge, and now I know I can switch careers." I knew exactly what she meant.

For this reason, taking charge of the mathoms in our lives—giving them away, donating them, tossing them, or putting them to use—makes us feel more in command of ourselves, and therefore more able to master our habits.

What form do your mathoms take? Off the top of my head, in my house, I would say: flower vases, serving dishes, board games, tote bags, light jackets, and mugs.

Flower vases are a particular issue. They always seem so useful, but I never buy cut flowers (as an under-buyer), so whenever we get flowers, it's because someone sent them—in a vase!

When we moved, I gave a giant box of vases to the flower shop on the corner of our street. It may be time to do that again. After all...one apartment (or home) can hold only so many mathoms.

Teaching your child

RESILIENCE

by Dr Justin Coulson

The school years present children with countless challenges, setbacks, failures, and general difficulties. Resilient children withstand the pressures that school provides more effectively than children who are not resilient.

Resilience is being able to 'bounce back' from difficult times, setbacks, and other significant challenges. It includes being able to deal effectively with pressure, and get through tough times with good outcomes.

Parents play a substantial role in the development of resilience in their children. The following eight tips outline the most effective things you can do to raise resilient kids.

Parenting tip #1: Listen with your heart

Listening is one of the most important ways that we can build resilience. Rather than operating on 'auto-parent' we will help our children know they are important by giving them our undivided attention. Children feel validated and worthy when we listen to them. While children are upset, sensitive listening provides emotional first aid.

Listening with your heart allows you to be empathic, take your child's perspective, or see the world through his or her eyes.

Parenting tip #2: See the world through your child's eyes

Imagine you had a difficult day. It wasn't a catastrophic day, but some of your plans failed to materialise into reality. You

failed to effectively navigate some relationship challenges with someone close. When you explained things to your spouse the response you received was, "Oh well, I guess you'll just have to try harder again tomorrow."

While this response may be correct, it is unlikely to help you feel any better. If you don't feel better, you're unlikely to 'bounce-back' with as much bounce!

Likewise, giving advice when children are upset just makes them feel frustrated, or foolish. When they tell you they feel sad, saying "Cheer up, you'll be ok. There's no reason to feel like that" will undermine their feelings, make them question their worth, and create a feeling that they are not normal inside them.

Instead, reflect their emotions and avoid advice or lectures.

"I can see it's been a tough day for you today."

"Wow, that must have made you feel really disappointed."

When they know you understand them, ask them how they think you can help. Let them strategise the most effective way to overcome their challenges and support them in their decisions or guide them toward appropriate actions.

Parenting tip #3: Accept your children for who they are

Your child is likely to be resilient if she feels accepted for who she is. To really accept our children for who they are we must resist

the temptation to judge and criticise. Continual fault-finding is a sure-fire way to create questions about self-worth in children. Additionally, children who are consistently criticised will start to wonder about their relevance.

In contrast, children whose parents affirm their children's efforts feel useful. When children are validated they feel worthy and acceptable as people. And they are also likely to work hard to maintain those positive feelings, which means when they encounter setbacks they will have the confidence to try again.

Letting children know specifically what you love about them or why you are proud of them can bolster resilience.

"I am so proud to be your mum. The way you treated the children outside the school this afternoon made me feel like the luckiest mum in the world!"

"You worked so hard at that activity today. I know you didn't come first, but all that matters is that you tried hard - and it looked to me like you gave it everything you had!"

Remember, be specific. And avoid general praise such as "You're such a good boy." This is meaningless and can be taken back at any time. But when we let our children know we accept and love them, and offer them specifics, they feel like they can conquer anything!

Our children don't need to 'fixed' as much as they need to be loved.

Parenting tip #4: Develop strengths

One of the best things for promoting resilience is a belief that we are competent and able to complete difficult challenges. Parents who identify their children's strengths and help them develop those strengths will see their children become increasingly competent. Their children will experience success. They will be inspired and confident. They will gain a sense that they have something to offer the world.

Maddie, a seven year-old, had trouble with reading and writing. But her parents and teachers noticed her love for drawing. They encouraged Maddie to draw by displaying her art in the classroom and at home. Maddie's strengths ensured she was not defined by her weaknesses in reading.

Your child may possess strengths in relationships, academics, music, sport, creativity, curiosity, or any number of other areas. By developing those strengths, inspiration, competence, and confidence will build resilience in your child.

Parenting tip #5: Teach that mistakes are an opportunity to learn

When you make a mistake, what do you do? Are you likely to throw your hands in the air and say it's too hard? Do you give up and go back to what you know you can do? Or do you see the mistake as a chance to learn something new, and try again?

When your children make a mistake, what do they do? And perhaps more importantly, what do you say to them?

When we have a 'learning' orientation we see setbacks

and failures as opportunities for mastery. By teaching our children that continued effort, practice, and learning are the keys to success, setbacks are no longer seen as frightening, and children become more resilient - willing to take risks and try new things.

They are also more likely to look forward to possibilities in the future and have a more optimistic and curious nature. This mindset is strongly linked to resilience.

Parenting tip #6: Promote responsibility by giving responsibilities

Many parents say of their irresponsible children, "I want my child to be responsible but I simply can't trust her to do what I ask." They are unwilling to give the child any responsibilities because they fear the child will not be responsible.

Lectures will not promote responsibility. Instead, responsibility comes from opportunities to be responsible, a chance to help, and by being part of a family that is involved in doing things for others.

Parenting tip #7: Teach your children to make their own decisions

When our children struggle, we often want to tell them what to do to fix things. Constantly making decisions for our children can undermine their decision making skills and confidence.

When your child is faced with a problem, listen with your heart. Then see the world through his eyes. When he feels understood, ask the question:

"What do YOU think we should do?"

Let your child know that you are willing to help and support.

Then invite him or her to make a decision, and be supportive. If a decision is poor, offer gentle guidance or ask, "I wonder what might happen if we did that." As your child thinks through the various possibilities, he will gain confidence in making his own decisions following challenging situations.

Parenting tip #8: Discipline, but don't denigrate

Children will make lots of mistakes, even when trying their best. When our children do things that are wrong, we can focus on teaching them rather than punishing them. Often the most effective way to teach is to invite our children to think about what they have learned from a particular situation. We can then ask them to make decisions about the most appropriate course of action, such as apologising, making restitution, and refraining from doing what they have done again in the future.

Children who are resilient do better than children who are not resilient. Their parents use the skills outlined above to foster resilience, and as a result resilient children:

- feel special and appreciated
- learn to set realistic goals
- have appropriate expectations of themselves and others believe they can solve problems and make good decisions
- see weaknesses as a chance to learn and do things better
- recognise, develop, and enjoy their strengths and talents
- believe they are competent and comfortable with others
- have good interpersonal skills
- and most of all, resilient kids bounce back!



RECIPES FROM

Petty's Kitchen

by Hayley Petrow



TRUDY'S NEVER FAIL PIE CRUST

- 3 cup flour
- 1 cup Tenderflake lard
- 1/4 cup margarine (sorry to all the butter lovers—it MUST be margarine!)
- 1/2 cup cold water

Yields 3 double pie shells

- Hand mix the flour, lard, and margarine.
- Then slowly add the water, and mix. You may not be able to add the whole 1/2 cup, but add as much as you can until the dough is not overly sticky, but doughy and workable.



HONEY TERIYAKI MARINADE

- 1/4 cup soy sauce (decrease amount if there aren't a lot of cuts)
- 3 tbsp honey
- 2 tbsp vinegar
- 1 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 2 chives (I'm obsessed with chives so I usually add more)
- 1 tsp ground pepper
- 4 cuts of pork (this marinade works great on any type of meat, especially chicken!)

- Combine all ingredients in bowl.
- Pour over pork in deep pan and turn over to coat.
- Let marinate for at least 4 hours in fridge. I usually make this the night before, so it's marinating almost 24 hours and it turns out great!
- This recipe can be used to pan fry, bake, or BBQ! I prefer the to bake this recipe.
- *The great thing about marinades is you can always substitute and add different ingredients to play around with the flavor! If you have more than 4 cuts, wait to see how many cuts you can fit into the pan before doubling recipe.*

Letter Writing Day...

A Special Message from a Former Foster Youth

Foster children come from many walks of life and gain tremendous life experience that enables us to get through most situations with ease and understanding.

Financial stability, belonging and the stigma that comes with being a foster child can easily destroy us when we age out of foster care. For example, missing one bill or having one late payment could leave aged out youth homeless or destitute because of lack of support.

Sadly, the amount of psychotropic medications youth are often prescribed creates a significant barrier to how self-perception and abilities to live independent lives are perceived. The stigma is devastating and one of the most difficult roadblocks to overcome. It's not because we don't have to change ourselves. It's that we have to change that person's perception of us — and that person could be our boss or supervisor.

In my life I have experienced a lot of stereotyping from people of all walks of life, such as: "Foster youth are entitled" and use the foster care system as an excuse to not move forward in life or to "use it as a crutch." In reality the system becomes our "parent" so we look to the system to meet our needs. But if this were entirely true, many of us could and would succeed.

Being in the system is an obstacle we have to push out of the way to succeed; it is not a crutch.

Another stereotype I have come across is: "All foster youth have some type of disorder or have been abused."

Not all of us, including those with a mental health challenge or who are survivors of abuse, should be judged in this way. We need to be supported.

The description for anyone who went through these challenges should instead change to "remarkable."

<http://foster-adoptive-kinship-family-services-nj.org/letter-writing-day-special-message-former-foster-youth/>



goodreads

Books written by Ashley Rhodes-Courter

Three Little Words: The heartbreaking true story of an abandoned little girl

'I am trapped centre stage in the spotlight. Do I have a choice? I stare straight ahead, shrug my shoulders and mumble, I guess so. In three words, it is done... Some people can be trusted.'

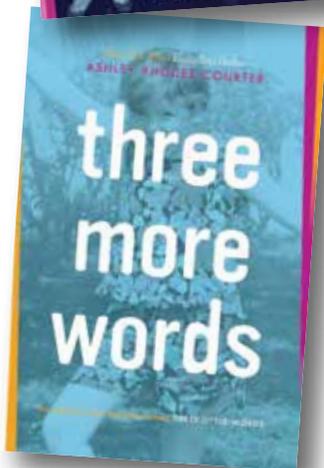
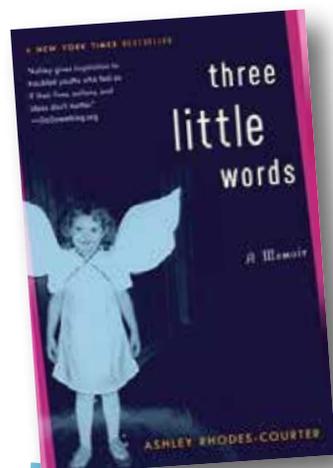
Ashley Rhodes was taken from her mother when she was just three years old. She was left angry and clinging to an unpredictable, dissolving relationship with her family. But the painful memories of being taken away from her home quickly became consumed by real-life horrors. Ashley was forced to endure manipulative, humiliating treatment from an abusive foster family and spent nine years of her young life moving from home to home. Then she met the loving Courter family.

In this inspiring and unforgettable memoir, Ashley finds the courage to accept her past and utter three words that will change her life forever.

Three More Words

In the sequel to the New York Times bestselling memoir *Three Little Words*, Ashley Rhodes-Courter expands on life beyond the foster care system, the joys and heartbreak with the family she's created, and her efforts to make peace with her past.

Ashley Rhodes-Courter spent a harrowing nine years of her life in fourteen different foster homes. Her memoir, *Three Little Words*, captivated audiences everywhere and went on to become a New York Times bestseller. Now Ashley reveals the nuances of life after foster care: College and its assorted hijinks, including meeting "the one." Marriage, which began with a beautiful wedding on a boat that was almost hijacked (literally) by some biological family members. Having kids—from fostering children and the heartbreak of watching them return to destructive environments, to the miraculous joy of blending biological and adopted offspring.



Ashley Rhodes-Courter has been featured in *Teen People*, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Glamour*, as well as on *Good Morning America*. Her memoir began as an essay, which won a writing contest for high school students, and was published in the *New York Times Magazine*. A recent graduate of Eckerd College and a champion for the reformation of the foster care system, Ashley speaks internationally on foster care and adoption.

Visit her at Rhodes-Courter.com.

Whether she's overcoming self-image issues, responding to calls asking for her to run for Senate, or dealing with continuing drama from her biological family, Ashley Rhodes-Courter never fails to impress or inspire with her authentic voice and uplifting message of hope.

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