

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

July/August 2021

N F A P A

How To Make A Foster Child's First Day At School A Good One

Blog by Camelot

Going back to school is an exciting time that is filled with change. But change can also be scary. It's natural for children to feel a somewhat anxious about the first day of school, even with brand new clothes and school supplies at the ready.

For children in foster care, starting the school year can be uniquely challenging. They have already had to learn new names and adjust to change by coming to live with you. Adding school to the equation may be overwhelming.

As a foster parent, there are things you can do to help make the transition back to school a little bit less scary. Read on to learn how to make a foster child's first day at school their best one yet.

Keep the lines of communication open.

When it comes to school, the best way you can help your child is to stay involved. Let the teacher know that the student is in foster care and how they should address you as the foster parent, such as Mr. or Mrs., Mom or Dad, or in some foster situations, Auntie or Grandpa. Inform the teacher of any possible triggers or special needs. Keep in touch with the teacher about any visitation days or setbacks. This will help the teacher understand if their behavior is off that day. Sign up for tools like Remind 101, so that you are aware of assignments. Keep the lines of communication open, so that you can help your foster child succeed.

Give your foster child time to mentally prepare.

Make arrangements to meet the teacher and tour the school beforehand, so that your foster child knows what to expect the

first day. Attend the Open House to give your child a chance to see their classroom, locker and desk. If there is not an official Open House, you can contact the teacher or principal about a setting up meeting to give your foster child time to mentally prepare. While at the school, introduce your foster child to the principal, librarian, secretary, and anyone else they will encounter on a regular basis. A fun way to help them remember new faces is to print the school website directory and glue the photos into a book.

Take your foster child shopping.

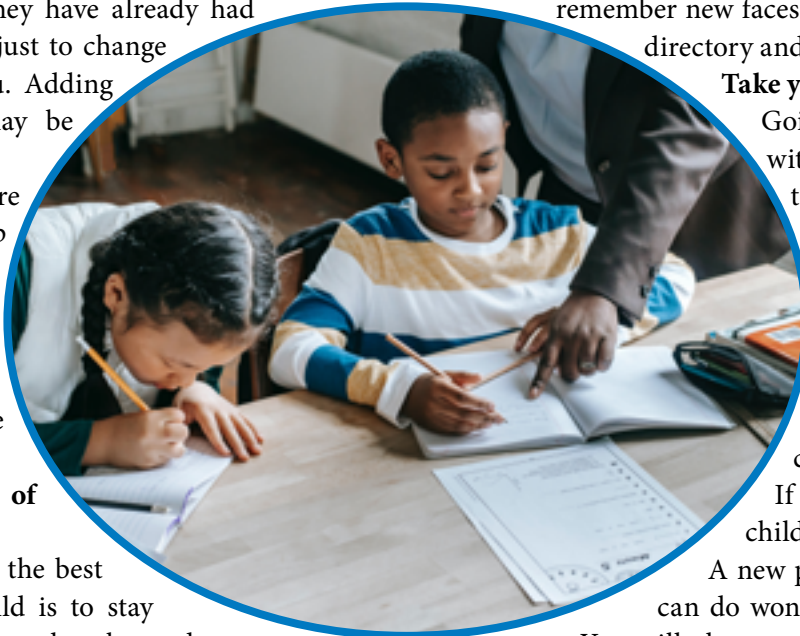
Going back to school shopping with your foster child can help them feel part of the process and may even generate excitement about the first day. Print off an extra copy of the school supply list to give to the child. Also give them a pen they can use to check off each item they find.

If you are able to, let your foster child pick out a new outfit or two.

A new pair of shoes and new clothes can do wonders for a child's self-esteem.

You will also want to stop at the grocery store together to shop for their favorite healthy breakfast and school lunch options.

Once school begins, help your foster child explore their interests by encouraging them to try out for sports or join an after-school club. This could be a great opportunity for them to form a group of friends and find a home in their school life. With a little support, your child can thrive in their new school environment.



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<https://camelotcarecenters.com/blog/>

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association
Families First
 a newsletter for Nebraska Families
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Families First is published bimonthly.

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Questions? Interested in becoming a member of the Board?

Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.

This publication is supported by Grant #93.566 under a sub-grant from HHS
 Administration for Children and Families and Nebraska DHHS.

Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a \$10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Corinne@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JulyAugust2021> We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. List three things you can do, to help make the first day of school a success.
2. True or False. Once school begins, help your foster child explore their interests by encouraging them to try out for sports or join an after-school club.
3. True or False. The secret to school success is being on time.
4. List seven ways to be your child's sleep advocate.
5. True or False. It's best to be reactive and catch school refusal as soon as you can
6. Fill in the blanks. When school refusal starts to become a bigger problem, you should _____
7. True or False. Social pressures are intense in middle school and your middle-schooler is as likely to be worried as much about what other kids will think of her as she is about how she'll do in her classes.
8. True or False. If your child gets off track easily or has problems with impulsivity, "studying" with friends might be the best way for him to prepare for tests.
9. Fill In Blanks. Give kids space to _____, and _____, and _____ again.
10. List six tips to help your foster child ease back into school.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL WITH KIDS IN FOSTER CARE

by Aurie

Back to school can be an exciting time for kids! They get back into routine, they can share about what they did on their summer vacation and the fun trips they took. They get to model new clothes (at least the girls!) and hang out with their friends.

But if you are a child in foster care, back to school can be a very hard time. They might be starting a new school, or starting school with a new foster family – and it can be really easy to feel left out when all the kids are sharing about fun summer experiences and they are trying to assimilate as quietly as possible. If you have a foster child in your home, or you have a foster child in your class, or you know of a foster family, there are some simple ways that you can ease the back to school transition for them.

Tips to Help Your Foster Child Ease into Back to School:

- **Get them new supplies.** Start them off on the right foot with a new backpack and supplies on the list that was sent home from the teacher. Back to School sales are everywhere, and this is something that is often overlooked – but can help the child feel like part of the class.
 - Allow them to pick out a special outfit and new shoes. You don't have to break the bank, but having new sneakers and a pretty (or cool) outfit makes the difference. Help them take pride in their appearance!
 - **Meet their teachers.** Take time and meet their teachers or guidance counselor. Let them know that you are invested in their education and that you will be taking it seriously. Many times kids in foster care are behind in their grades simply because no one took notice before.
 - **Sit down and talk with them.** Let them share their days with you. Ask questions about the class and listen to their answers. Listen both to what they are saying.....and what they aren't saying. Kids in foster care have a hard time trusting adults, so this will take time but it's crucial!
 - **Encourage them to branch out their interests.** Look for clubs that might be a good fit, sports teams that they might want to try. Yes, any extracurricular activities will cost extra, but check with your agency for help in reimbursement. You can also try the Foster Swell Fund or One Simple Wish which may be able to assist with the extra cost.
 - **If they have siblings in other homes, help them keep in touch.** Sadly, often families are split up when entering foster care and the kids are dealing with that loss as well as the newness of going back to school.

As foster parents, our goal is to make our foster kids feel part

of our family while they are with us. A large part of making them feel included and secure is to help them navigate stressful times and show them that we are on their side. If you have any additional tips to help foster kids navigate back to school I would love for you to share them.

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<http://www.ourgoodfamily.org/2016/07/going-back-to-school-with-kids-in-foster-care/>

WHEN KIDS REFUSE TO GO TO SCHOOL

How to recognize what's called 'school refusal' and how to get kids back in class

by Rachel Busman, PsyD, ABPP

The term “school refusal” used to be more or less synonymous with truancy, invoking a picture of kids hanging out on the street corner, or holed up in their bedrooms playing video games.

While it is true that some game-playing might well be involved, it's important to understand that school refusal is not the same as playing hooky. It isn't driven by the allure of having fun outside of school, but rather by an aversion to school itself.

Problematic patterns

Everyone resists going to school once in a while, but school refusal behavior is an extreme pattern of avoiding school that causes real problems for a child. School refusal is distinguished from normal avoidance by a number of factors:

- How long a child has been avoiding school
- How much distress she associates with attending school
- How strongly she resists
- How much her resistance is interfering with her (and her family's) life

Including all these aspects is important, because a child can still have school refusal even if she attends school most days. I've worked with kids who have missed only a day or two of school, but they've been tardy 30 times because their anxiety is so extreme it keeps them from getting to school on time. Kids with school refusal might also have a habit of leaving early, spending a lot of time visiting the nurse, or texting parents throughout the day.

Suspicious sick days

Often kids with school refusal will start reporting unexplained symptoms like headaches or stomachaches. Anxiety does manifest in physical ways, so their symptoms could be indicative of that. As a parent, the first thing you want to do in this situation is get your child checked out by a pediatrician; you don't want to overlook a medical problem. But it may be that going to school is her problem.

Sometimes resistance to attending school is just a little blip on the radar, and it can be easily remedied. Maybe your child had the flu and was out for a good amount of time, and now she is having a hard time making the transition back to school. Suddenly she's getting clingy and anxious about all the

homework she missed.

In this scenario, it is important not to prolong time at home. Instead, you want to have a conversation with the teacher and with your daughter. You want to be able to tell her, “We’ve talked to your teacher, and he knows you were sick. I know you’re worried, but he understands. It’s time to get back to school.” Then she returns to school and often things go relatively smoothly.

Similarly, some kids in school experience blips of anxiety after vacations. The key point is to get children back in school as soon as possible.

More serious concerns

When school refusal starts to become a bigger problem—it’s going on for numerous days, weeks or even months—you should reach out and ask for help. This includes kids who go to school but only attend partial days because they are spending a lot of time in the nurse’s office and getting sent home early from school.

or more serious cases of school refusal, the first step in treatment is getting a comprehensive diagnostic assessment. While school refusal is not a diagnosable disorder, it often accompanies disorders like separation anxiety, social anxiety, depression or panic disorder. A complete assessment helps treatment professionals understand what is underlying school refusal, allowing them to tailor therapy to your child’s particular situation.

Listen up

It’s also possible that something specific is happening at school, like bullying or a difficult class. This doesn’t mean you should immediately jump in and ask your child who doesn’t want to go to school, “Who’s bullying you?” But it is important to know what is going on in your child’s life. You should expect to hear what her teacher is like and how homework is going. You should also have a sense of the kids your child is hanging out with. These are all things that should come up in everyday conversation. And if your child mentions that something happened that day, perk your ears and put down whatever you were doing and listen in a nonjudgmental way, because it could be important.

Reaching out

Treatment providers working with kids who have school refusal will often use cognitive behavioral therapy, which helps kids learn to manage their anxious thoughts and face their fears. While kids who are anxious might disagree, the best way to get over anxiety is actually to get more comfortable with feeling anxious. Kids need the chance to see that they can attend school and their worst fears won’t happen. Exposure therapy, which reintroduces kids to the school environment gradually, is very effective at this. In the very beginning of treatment, this might mean driving by the school or walking through its empty halls on the weekend. From there kids can work up to attending one or two classes and then eventually attending a full day towards the end of treatment.

It’s best to be proactive and catch school refusal as soon as you can. Unfortunately, the longer a child misses school, the harder it is to get back in the routine, because being absent is very reinforcing. I have worked with families that describe getting ready for school like it’s a battle complete with huge tantrums. Sometimes the morning gets so challenging and exhausting that mom and dad just give up and say, “Fine, stay home; I’ll go pick up your homework.” It’s a very understandable situation, but again, letting it continue puts kids one day further from

being back at school. It is important for parents to know that the sooner the child gets back to school the better, and reaching out for help is an important first step.

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<https://childmind.org/article/when-kids-refuse-to-go-to-school/>

THE ULTIMATE BACK-TO-SCHOOL CHECKLIST

by *Best Brains*

Are you ready to have the best back-to-school season ever? It can happen, we promise! We’ve compiled a 5-step guide designed to help every family make the most out of their summer and start the new school year with energy, focus, and joy!

Reestablish rules, boundaries, and routines NOW!

We’re the first to admit, summer can make the strictest of households a little lax. Whether it’s staying up way too late on the weekends, or sleeping in early on the weekdays, playing on our tablets for hours on end, or eating dessert every night, we all indulge in the summertime. And there’s nothing wrong with that, especially during stressful and uncertain times. However, when back-to-school time comes around, these little lapses can add up to a huge adjustment and shock for our kids, which isn’t fair to them or us.

In order to give your kids the best opportunity to start the new school year right, make a plan with them to slowly ease them back into a normal schedule. Now, nobody needs to be waking up at 6 a.m. or earlier right away! But you can make a week-by-week plan to transition into a school routine so that when the first day of school comes, your kids will already be up and focused on choosing their cool new outfit, not yawning and complaining.

Finish all summer assignments...and summer activities!

Hopefully your kids haven’t been putting off any summer assignments until the last minute, but now is the time to make sure that all their summer assignments are completed in plenty of time for the new school year. If they have been procrastinating, better to catch it early while there is still time! Make sure you have a talk with your kids to establish a plan for next year, and remind them how stressful it is to leave assignments until they are due. Remember, once school starts, there’s going to be getting a lot more work, so better to start strong than scrambling!

Also important to remember is that, as summertime ends, we need to enjoy every last moment of it! Make a list with the family of all the summertime activities they want to experience. Have plans been modified by recent events? Come up with a new plan to create lasting memories. Partner with friends and family to put together an unforgettable summer

staycation! Use the money you might have been saving for a trip and instead Invest in things like a quality grill, new deck furniture, inflatable pools and water slides, or outdoor stereo systems. These things can be enjoyed beyond summer and for years to come.

Get your child's school supplies in order.

We're all familiar with the list of school supplies our children receive every year. But you may not know that this list can simply be a starting point to creating a well-stocked classroom. If your budget can afford it, consider buying double or triple the amount of supplies on your child's list. A pro-tip: skip the individually packaged items and check the internet for bulk size supplies intended for offices. It's a fact that many of your child's classmates may have a hard time purchasing supplies, and most teachers use their own funds to make sure their classrooms are adequately supplied and no one is left out. Anything you can do to help will be appreciated by everyone.

Another tip: don't wait until BTS time to get supplies.

Keep an eye out for sales and specials throughout the year and make purchases when it's advantageous. You don't have to even store the supplies in your house; your child's teacher will



be more than happy to keep them in the classroom or at home and use them as needed.

Want to go above and beyond? Teachers have to not only provide supplies, but often decorate and organize classrooms out of their own pockets as well. You can offer buckets, baskets, toy organizers, shelving, shoe racks, old books, blocks, and crafting supplies. All are welcome! Don't forget the tissues, hand sanitizer, garbage bags, paper towels, and cleaning solutions. It can get messy in the classroom!

Prep your family calendar for the whole year.

We've spoken before about the importance of a family calendar, and back-to-school time is the perfect reason to get yourself ready for the whole year. You'll usually be receiving a schedule of events around this time, and putting everything in your plans now saves remembering later. Also, doing this prep work will get your family ready for the coming seasons. Is there a party before winter break? What charity drives are going on in the spring? Are their late arrival/early dismissal dates in the

future which may conflict with other commitments?

Planning ahead for future events will not only help you feel more in control, but it can help with your budgeting too. Is there a cupcake party in March and boxes of cake mix go on clearance in November? You'll know to stock up and hold onto those supplies until they're needed. Kids are going camping on the class trip in April? Start looking now for used supplies in good condition instead of buying all new at last minute. With foresight and planning, you can avoid major headaches and expenses down the line!

Create the perfect learning space.

Our kids may be spending more time than ever doing their learning at home. Now is the perfect time to collaborate with them to find the best space in the house to facilitate their studies, and set it up exactly how they would like it. If you have the space in your house, you can invest in a child size desk and bookshelf and decorate with a calendar, white board, clock, and organization for school and craft supplies. But there's no need to get so fancy. The important factor to remember is that the study space is dedicated to your child's education. If they're working with an afterschool program over the computer, make sure they have access to their handouts and a way to easily connect with their teacher via laptop or desktop. Keep the space free of clutter. If utilizing the family dining room table, make sure that the seat reserved for your child never becomes overwhelmed with dirty dishes, newspaper circulars, or groceries. When things are uncertain, our children need a sense of stability and ownership. Their education should not feel like an inconvenience or an afterthought.

So, do you feel prepared for the school year? Need some extra help? Best Brains is here for you. From child-friendly content on YouTube, to free weekly workbooks, to live tutoring sessions with board-certified teachers, Best Brains can help your family to Be Your Best!

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https://bestbrains.com/article/the-ultimate-back-to-school-checklist?gclid=CjwKCAjw2ZaGBhBoEiwA8pfP_IXjNrvJxFmXZQqvFZdrWnVSL6Tcb_Gxo7O-mSR8cbSkwJ_izXihoCPUwQAvD_BwE

TIPS FOR HELPING TEENS IN FOSTER CARE WITH HOMEWORK

It is common for youth in foster care to be behind their peers academically. Although younger children may be more willing to spend time on homework, teens in foster care may rebel against foster parents or guardians who try to get them focused on academic goals. In-home tutoring can provide the motivation teens need to do well in school. Tutors with experience working with kids who are several grades behind where they should be can boost a child's confidence and get

them thinking about their future.

However, a tutor cannot be with your foster child all the time. There are steps you can take to provide an environment conducive to learning. Here's how foster parents and guardians can help teens with homework without turning these after-school study sessions into a dreaded war of wills:

Be Organized

Homework hour is all about making sure your teen has sufficient time to complete assigns while he still has energy. Make sure your chores are completed beforehand so she has your undivided attention if she needs it. Turn off the television and eliminate other distractions that can interrupt a teen's concentration. Actions counter to these recommendations send a message to your child that homework isn't a priority.

Be Consistent

Establishing a reliable routine is just as important as helping your teen with homework. Set a designated time and place for schoolwork. Have everything your child needs at hand, including reference books, a computer, dictionary, and writing paper. Your child has a limited attention span, so don't waste it by having him hunt around for an eraser.

Take a Break

After school, give your teen some downtime before hitting the books again at home. Have a healthy snack while chatting about her day at school. Discover what she learned in class and if she faced problems during a particular lesson. Reassure her that homework reinforces learning. This is your opening to start the day's assignments.

Learn the Lesson

Nothing frustrates a teen more than a difficult homework assignment and nothing annoys you more than not being able to help her. Take time to study the material before trying to teach your child how to find the correct answers. If you don't understand the lesson, find someone who does. An in-home or online tutor can provide assistance when you need it.

Think Outside the Box

Learning should be fun. Change settings by doing homework at the library instead of at home. Experiment with various methods of imparting the same knowledge to your child and see which ones work best to help her understand her homework.

Limit Homework Time

Your teen has spent almost an entire day in school, learning many subjects in a closed classroom environment. At home, keep homework time between 15 to 20 minute increments. Forcing your tired child to spend longer than 20 minutes on homework may produce resentment against extra assignments and discourage learning in general.

Offer Constructive Feedback

If your child has a tough time with a particular task, be patient and suggest different approaches to the problem instead of berating his inability to find a solution. Remember that homework is practice for what your child has already

learned in class. Go through the lesson with her briefly before taking another shot at the answer.

Monitor Progress

Keep tabs on your teen's progress in school. His struggle with homework may point towards learning difficulties during class. Discuss the issue with his teachers or attend parent-teacher meetings to find out more about the teaching methods employed in school and ways you can help at home.

Article provided by Educational Tutorial Services
<https://www.educationaltutorialservices.com/old/tips-for-helping-teens-in-foster-care-with-homework/>

THE SECRET WEAPON FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

What research reveals about sleep deprivation and its consequences for academic achievement.

by GreatSchools Staff

Is your child having behavior problems and trouble in school? Making sure she gets enough sleep may be the solution.

Lack of sleep is a national epidemic for today's children, and the consequences are serious.

Sleep deprivation can affect cognitive skills and academic achievement. A continuing lack of sleep is linked to serious health problems including diabetes, obesity, heart disease, depression, and a shortened life span.

Why aren't kids getting enough sleep?

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, children ages 6 to 12 need about 9 to 12 hours of sleep and teens ages 13 to 18 need 8 to 10 hours of sleep, according to the National Sleep Foundation. Yet survey data analyzed by the CDC revealed that 6 in 10 middle schoolers and more than 7 in 10 high schoolers don't get enough sleep on school nights.

Children ages 6 to 13 need about 9 to 11 hours of sleep, according to the National Sleep Foundation. Yet studies show that most kids are getting about an hour less sleep each night than they did 30 years ago.

Why? Extracurricular activities, such as sports teams and arts programs, may schedule events at night. Working parents who get home late may feel guilty and want to spend time with their children in the evening. Too much homework and the many distractions of television, video games, and computers all play a role. In addition, all the pressures and stresses of today's frenetic lifestyles may make it difficult for kids to calm down so they can fall asleep.

Catching up on sleep is not a good option

Parents may think they'll let their children catch up on sleep on the weekend. But sleep experts at the Mayo Clinic advise against this practice as irregular sleep schedules can affect the biological clock, hurt the quality of sleep and cause greater irritability. Children who sleep in on the weekend may have an even harder time getting up for school on Monday morning, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. It's better, the experts say, to keep similar schedules during the week and on the weekends.

Make sleep a priority

Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, teacher, parent educator, and author of *Sleepless in America*, says parents can play a key role by placing a high value on their children's sleep. She says the first step for parents is to "make sleep a priority."

"Scientific research links heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity with lack of sleep. There's also a study out of the University of Michigan," adds Kurcinka, "that shows that 20 to 25 % of kids with ADHD have sleep disorders. Sleep is not a luxury. This is about health and well-being."

Some parents may think that their child isn't sleeping much because he just doesn't need as much sleep as other children. But Kurcinka doesn't buy that argument. She says, "When I hear a parent say, 'He is a kid who doesn't need sleep,' generally this means he is a kid who can't sleep. He needs help learning to calm himself to get to sleep. If I see a child who has behavior problems, can't focus or pay attention, a child who's getting sick a lot, craving carbohydrates, I'll want to look at how much sleep he's getting. Maybe the child is just exhausted."

Lack of sleep is linked to a multitude of problems

Several studies presented at Sleep 2007, the annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies, highlighted some of the adverse effects caused by lack of sleep — aggressive behavior and bullying, poor grades, poor attention span, disruptions in cognitive and linguistic function including the skills necessary for reading and language development. A few scientists theorize that sleep problems at a young age can cause permanent changes in a child's brain structure.

Lack of sleep may be the cause of behavior problems

Sometimes lack of sleep will be the reason behind temper tantrums, morning meltdowns and irritable behavior. Your child may not be able to tell you that's the problem and you may not see it because a tired child may become a wired child-full of energy. "It's as though their body is out of control," says Kurcinka. "And it is."

Kurcinka says parents need to set limits on extracurricular activities and computer time, and become advocates at their school for reducing the amount of homework, and encouraging schools to adopt later start times.

More and more children lack sleep — a disturbing trend

Kurcinka argues that lack of sleep among children is more common now than ever before and attributes this trend to three factors: science, safety, and achievement.

"Science — The research on early brain development and the importance of brain stimulation has meant kids are overstimulated starting at a young age. They begin by watching 'Baby Einstein' videos and continue from there. Safety-parents are afraid to let kids go out and play so they provide more structured activities which tend to be organized around adult hours and schedules. Achievement-so much is competitive and overly achievement oriented for kids, from soccer to gymnastics to academics."

To counter these factors, Kurcinka says, parents should "create an environment that values sleep and is conducive to it. The bottom line is that parents of children who are successful have a secret weapon — they protect their kids' sleep. Kids who get more sleep have higher grade-point averages. In a study

reported in the journal, *Child Development*, in 2003 entitled 'The Effects of Sleep Restriction and Extension on School-Age Children: What a Difference an Hour Makes,' Tel Aviv University researcher Avi Sadeh found that even 41 minutes less sleep each night can affect memory and attention."

Managing sleep patterns begins in the morning

Kurcinka says managing sleep problems and controlling stress levels begins in the morning by making time for a peaceful family breakfast. She sees it as a way to take time to sit and talk, to "check in" and connect with your child. By starting the day without rushing, you set a calm tone for the rest of the day.

Avoiding bedtime battles

To avoid bedtime battles at night, Kurcinka advocates establishing a calming, predictable bedtime routine attuned to your child's needs that will help her wind down. In her book, *Sleepless in America*, she compares the process of getting your child to bed to landing a jumbo jet:

"Landing a jumbo jet is not a simple process. Miles from their destination, the pilots begin to prepare. They check the weather, determine which runway to utilize, the level of instrumentation to use on approach as well as the optimal speed. Once those decisions are made, they start to configure the aircraft appropriately...What the crew is trained to know is that conscientious preparation and a gradual descent lead to a soft landing and satisfied customers. When it comes to bedtime, most children are like those jumbo jets. Their days are often spent 'flying' from one activity to another, and they need to gradually 'glide' from the 'high' of their day to a 'soft landing' in bed."

Spending 20 minutes with your child before bedtime in a soothing activity, such as reading, quietly catching up on the day's activities, or telling stories, can help provide the calm that will help your child transition to going to sleep. Adjusting the routine, depending on your child's mood and needs, (just as the pilot adjusts the plane's landing pattern depending on the weather) will help, too. Some days kids just need a little more connection and attention.

Seven ways to be your child's sleep advocate

- Talk to your child about sleep. Have a conversation with your child about the importance of sleep. "Educate your child about how much sleep he needs and how it will affect his performance," advises Kurcinka. "If he wants to do well in his soccer game, or on a test, make him aware that he will do better if he gets more sleep."

- Encourage your child to establish a sleep routine. Encourage your child to stick to a regular sleep schedule. School-age children need an average of 10 to 11 hours of sleep each night. Insist on a regular bedtime and wake-up time. Have a regular quiet, relaxing bedtime routine such as reading to your child or reading together to help him slow down before going to sleep.

- Say no to late-night TV and computer use. Keep the computer and TV out of your child's bedroom. It's a good way to monitor his screen activities and make sure he doesn't stay up past his bedtime. If he insists on watching TV right before bedtime, you can tell him to start getting ready for bed

FOSTER CHAT

Many of you are foster/adoptive parents and understand the commitment, love and patience that is needed to help a child placed in your home. Because of your experience, you are the best recruiters for others interested in fostering! If you know someone interested in becoming a foster parent, have them reach at by calling the 1-800-7PARENT line (1-800-772-7368) or join one of our online foster chat sessions to answer questions and support them on their foster care journey. Chat sessions are listed on our website calendar at www.nfapa.org.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A PART-TIME JOB?

NFAPA is looking for a foster/adoptive parent willing to be a Resource Family Consultant in the Southwest area of the state. Hours can vary but expectation is 10-20 hours a week. Please call Felicia at the NFAPA office to learn more! 402-476-2273

The NFAPA Board is looking to fill several volunteer board positions in the following areas: Eastern (Omaha), Central and Western service areas. Please contact Felicia at the NFAPA office at 402-476-2273 and send a bio of why you would like to be on the board to: Felicia@nfapa.org

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

As Nebraska is opening up with changes due to COVID please contact the RFC in your area to see when support groups will be back up and running or continuing with an online support. Registration is required when meeting in person.

CONTACT A RESOURCE FAMILY CONSULTANT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Jolie Camden (Panhandle Area): 308-672-3658

- Virtual Support Group at this time for July, August & September. Available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday at 6:30 pm (MT). Contact Jolie for Google Meet information

Tammy Welker: 402-989-2197

- Virtual Support Group at this time, available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm (CT). Contact Tammy for Zoom information.

Terry Robinson (Central): 402-460-7296

- One on one support or if you would like one started in your area, please contact

Robbi Blume: 402-853-1091

- FACES-Our online support group. Meets Tuesday night at 9:00 pm (CT)

NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176

- Parenting Across Color Lines in Lincoln. Meets the 4th Monday of the month at Connection Point, 1333 N 33rd Street, Lincoln. Contact Felicia for information or the NFAPA Office.

during the commercials and to record “must-see” late-night shows and watch them at another time.

- Check in with your child’s teacher. Ask your child’s teacher if your child is alert or sleepy in class. If he is frequently sleepy in class, that’s a sign that you need to help him get more sleep.

- The pros and cons of naps. A short nap after school (no more than 30 minutes) may be refreshing, but don’t let your school-age child sleep for hours during the day as this will throw off her natural sleep schedule. It may be a stretch to convince your school to provide a time for naps, but it is done in Japan. Schools there encourage “power naps” at lunchtime, when students put their heads down on their desk for 20 to 30 minutes.

- Exercise plays a role in keeping a regular sleep schedule. “Exercise is very important, particularly getting outside and getting morning light,” says Kurcinka. “But exercise raises the body temperature so it is not a good idea to exercise right before going to sleep. That means it’s important to regulate organized soccer and baseball games so they are not scheduled too late into the evening.”

- Be a role model. Show your child that you make sleep a priority in your own life. Children are more likely to follow your advice if you follow the same rules for yourself.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/sleep-the-secret-weapon-for-school-success/>

TEN WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD MAKE FRIENDS

by Ashley Patek

Not only is having friends fun, but it also has a positive developmental influence on social and emotional skills to teach kids how to get along with others and interact with the world. “Friendships are critical to helping children improve their communication, sharing, empathy, problem-solving, and creativity,” says Rachelle Theise, Psy.D., a clinical assistant professor and child psychologist at the NYU Child Study Center in New York City.

While some kids are natural social butterflies, others need more time to warm up to new situations. Do you notice that your child hovers the margins of the playground unsure of how to assert himself, or feels squeamish in social experiences?

As parents, we can meet our child where they are, and help teach them skills to feel more confident and comfortable making friends. Rachel Busman, PsyD, a psychologist who works with anxious kids, explains, “Different children in the same family can have different social limits and degrees of comfort. For kids who struggle with these skills, we want to give them opportunities to meet new kids, yet we also want to help bridge the transition so they aren’t too uncomfortable. We don’t want to throw them off the diving board, but rather ease them toward the deep end.”

And while parents can’t make friends for their children, decades of research suggest that parents play a big role in teaching children the skills required to make friends.

TEN WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD MAKE FRIENDS

1. Be a fly on the wall

Take time to observe your child and understand how they socialize with others.

- Does your child behave differently around others than they do at home? If so, why could this be?
- Does your child prefer to keep to himself and observe, or does he prefer to join in the group?
- What skills does your child seem to have the most difficulty with - questioning, sharing, or extending invitations?

2. Celebrate your child for who they are

Be realistic and accepting of your child's unique personality and temperament, which guides how much social interaction they seek. Just because social situations are easy/difficult for you, doesn't mean it will be the same for your child. Instead, notice who your child is innately, and honor it. Dr. Eastman shares, "It's tough when a parent's normal doesn't line up with a child's normal. As long as your kids are doing things they want to do and are happy and well-adjusted, that's good."

3. Model positive social behavior

Every time you interact with others, your child is aware. Whether you're saying hi to someone as you pass by in the grocery store or strike up a conversation with the neighbor, every situation is a learning opportunity for your child to see how you join in, converse, problem-solve, and invite others to do something.



4. Be an emotion coach

Kids first learn about social and emotional skills - the keystones to communication and making friends - at home. Help your child notice bodily sensations (such as mad, sad, calm, and happy), name them, and select strategies to regulate their bodies. Using a Calming Corner is a great way to create a safe space for children to feel and develop the foundation of self-awareness, social awareness, empathy, problem-solving, and making amends. Knowing these emotions can help them feel confident enough to cross barriers to making friends.

5. Roleplay

If your child has difficulty starting conversations with peers, practice at home.

- Conversation is the trading of information. Discuss topics with your child that interests her and that she may like to talk about with other kids. In addition, help her brainstorm questions to ask other kids about themselves, too.
- A part of communication is active listening. Teach your child how to pause and listen before following up with a

response, or ask a question of their own. Once children learn how to question-ask, listen, and follow-up, they are better able to make connections with others.

- For a friendship to begin, someone has to take action. This can be as simple as a smile, and grow towards the invitation to do something or it can be joining in with what a child or group is already doing. Explain this concept and brainstorm simple, low-risk invitations: Do you want to play during recess? May I sit next to you?

6. Start in familiar territory

Children who feel less confident in social situations often feel more comfortable in their own home. To help put your child at ease, plan a playdate on his home-turf where everything is familiar, and he is not overwhelmed with being in a new environment. Practicing and rehearsing social skills in a safe and warm environment will support your child by teaching him social cues and age-appropriate social skills.

7. Practice outside of the home

As your child becomes more comfortable, help her stretch her comfort zone to outside of the home. Perhaps take her to a park and choose another child to approach. Maybe at first, it's just a smile, and then to say hi. Then, progress to exchanging names. From there, practice asking to join in the play and then inviting others to join in, too. Eventually, your child will feel more comfortable and can sequence the steps on her own.

One mom shares, "I took my five-year-old to the park and we walked hand-in-hand to another child. I offered a hello, my name, helped my child introduce himself, and bridged the gap by helping my child ask to join in the game of tag. Eventually, we progressed to where we walked up together, but he would do the talking. And now, he runs off on his own and takes the lead. It took time and teaching, but he got there."

8. Be a guide by the side

Be there to guide your children from the sidelines without robbing them of the chance to explore and develop their own social skills. Children learn from the natural consequences of their actions. The trial and error involved in making friends and trying new things help build resilience and grit.

9. Play games

Several studies have shown that children feel more comfortable participating in cooperative games and activities where they share a common goal as opposed to competitive games. If your child is new to building social skills, this may be a good place to start.

But, games, in general, are a great way to help your child learn many skills such as communication, impulse control, taking turns, interpreting social situations, and more. Once your child learns how to play a game, encourage them to invite their sibling or a friend to join.

10. Read books

Children learn so much through the play and wonder of a good book. Look for books that feature friendships, compassion, sharing, inclusion, and books that encourage self-love and self-esteem. As you read, talk about what the characters may be feeling, why they chose certain actions, and what they could do differently. By exploring the story's characters, your child will learn a great deal about friendship.

Making friends isn't always something that happens overnight. It involves many important social-emotional skills such as self-awareness, empathy, problem-solving, communication, and more. Parents can introduce these

important tidbits from the youngest of ages and continue to build on them as their child grows.

As children step out on their journey to making friends, reinforce their behavior and celebrate their small successes. Because let's face it, we aren't just their parents - we are their biggest fans and best coaches.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://genmindful.com/blogs/mindful-moments/ten-ways-to-help-your-child-make-friends>

BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIPS FOR KIDS WHO ARE STRUGGLING

How resetting expectations and planning ahead can help children with learning challenges

by Rae Jacobson

The first day of a new school year always feels like a new start. New school supplies, new classes, new teachers, new hopes and, if you're anything like I was, a brand new chance to screw up.

I have ADHD, and in high school I was undiagnosed and barely scraping by academically. Every semester I'd start off full of optimism and big hopes for academic success. This, I'd tell myself, was going to be "The One." The One where everything changes, when I turn my act around, when I start — and stay — on the right foot. The. One.

If you're the parent of a child with ADHD or a learning disability you can probably guess what happened next.

When you've got high hopes but no plan for how to achieve them, things tend to go off the rails pretty quickly. It never took long for The One to become just another one. Another year of barely keeping my head above water.

It wasn't until after I was diagnosed that things began to change. Once I understood why I was struggling, I was able to start creating strategies to address my problems — instead of just hoping that wanting things to change really badly would somehow be enough. Turning things around took a lot of hard work, understanding my strengths and weaknesses, learning how to ask for (and accept) support, facing difficulties instead of avoiding them, and learning how to be a little less hard on myself. It's not easy but it is doable, and the rewards last long after school's out.

Here are some steps you can take to help your child lay the groundwork for an (actually) good start this year.

Be specific about learning challenges

When you have ADHD or a learning disability, the difficulties it causes often feel baffling, unmanageable and inevitable: The teacher has been talking for an hour and I have no idea what she said. How does everyone else know!? Or: All the other kids are already done with the quiz! Why is this taking me so long?

Without understanding it can be easy for kids to disappear down a rabbit-hole of self-loathing: I'm such a screw-up. Or simply write the subject off: I'll never get it anyway, so why bother?

When it comes to learning disorders, knowledge is power. Helping your child understand his learning difference — not

just what it is, but the specific ways it affects him both in and out of school — is the bedrock of success. For example:

- If your child gets off track easily or has problems with impulsivity, "studying" with friends might not be the best way for him to prepare for tests. Agree that this year he'll study in a dedicated quiet place at home and see his buddies afterwards.
- If your daughter is easily overwhelmed by large projects, look at her syllabus together and make a plan to break daunting assignments down into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- If she's struggled with a particular subject, add support and planning from the start, rather than waiting until she's falling behind.



Make organization a priority

Disorganization and poor time management: twin agents of chaos and destruction. Nothing pushes a new semester off course faster than lost assignments, forgotten backpacks and late arrivals. If your child struggles with organization, help her be proactive. Discuss with her organizational challenges and choose some realistic strategies for tackling them. Here are some tips to help you get started.

Talk about what to do when things don't go as planned

"Everything is going to be perfect this year," I'd tell myself. "Perfect." Unfortunately, in real life things are very rarely perfect, and as soon as I inevitably fell short of the impossible goal I'd set, I gave up. Being able to recover and move forward from a mistake is one of the most important skills kids can learn.

- Discuss what she'll do if she misses an assignment or starts to fall behind. This could include staying behind to talk to her teacher about extra credit, reaching out to the school's resource center, or agreeing to refocus her efforts on getting a good grade on a major test or project that can pull her grade back up.

- Address avoidance. When and if things do start to slide, many kids fall back on the time-honored strategy of "If-I-ignore-it-maybe-it'll-just-go-away." Of course, avoiding scary assignments or the gut-punch of a bad grade may feel better in the moment, but in the end it leads to disaster. Help your child face his fears in a healthy way by setting up regular check-ins and giving him positive feedback for being honest and proactive. "I'm so glad you told me your paper is late! I know you were worried about it. Let me help you get it done."

- Turning something in is always better than nothing. Kids

are often embarrassed to turn in assignments that are late, unfinished or just not that great. But a zero (or many zeros) in the grade book is far, far more damaging than a C. Make an agreement at the start of the year that your child will turn in his assignments no matter what. For younger kids, or those that need a little extra incentive, you could add a reward: “If you get all your assignments in this semester, you can get the Mario game once school ends.”

- Help her learn to manage mistakes in a healthy way. Slipping up is upsetting, especially when a kid’s confidence is already shaky. It can be easy to slide into self-recrimination, or feel like it’s not worth it to keep trying. Take care to validate her feelings — she may be frustrated, sad or worried about disappointing you — and let her know you appreciate her telling you about the problem. Then quickly change the focus to how she’ll move forward and what she’ll do to avoid similar problems in the future.

Set up morale boosters

Figuring out how to achieve and sustain academic success is a long process, and there are bound to be moments when your child’s self-esteem takes a beating. Creating some things to look forward to can help bolster a kid’s self-image and take some of the pressure off when things get rough.

- Make sure your child has time to just relax. Don’t go overboard on extracurriculars.
- When she does participate in extracurriculars, encourage her to find activities where she has the chance to excel. A little success can go a long way towards building (and protecting) confidence.
- Plan a few specific events your child can look forward to that have nothing to do with school: Sleeping over at a friend’s house, going on a trip, getting a brand-new video game and having a day to just play. Having something good on the horizon can help make rough patches feel less consuming.

Don’t surprise kids with questions about school

When kids have a history of failure, conversations about school can be fraught. Questions like “Did you turn in your report?” or “How did the math test go?” may read as criticism or leave kids feeling upset and rattled. Avoid ambushing kids with questions about school when they’ve just gotten off the bus. Instead, agree on times when you’ll talk about what’s going on and what they need to do.

- Validate your child’s feelings by acknowledging that school is a hard topic for everyone. “I know this isn’t easy to talk about — how can I help?”
- Keeping conversations regular and predictable will help normalize them and make them more productive. And by setting boundaries around school discussions, you’ll be able to preserve peace and positive family time even when things aren’t going great academically.

Give kids space to try, and fail, and try again

Whenever you can, try to empower your child to take charge of his own needs. Whether that’s setting up his backpack for school the night before, arranging a study-session or asking a teacher for help when he’s struggling with an assignment, giving him the reins (within reason) will communicate your confidence in his abilities and enable him to practice being independent.

That said, some kids need more scaffolding than others. Some, especially those who struggle with mental health conditions like depression or anxiety, may benefit from greater

parental oversight. Assess where your child is realistically and move forward in the way that makes the most sense for your family.

Finally, after all these years what I’ve learned is that there’s no cheat code, no “perfect” way to do better. It’s hard work, but work that pays off, both at school and long after.

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<https://childmind.org/article/back-to-school-tips-for-kids-who-are-struggling/>

HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU TELL TEACHERS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S TRAUMA?

by Kristin Berry

We’re now weeks into the school year and, even though some children are doing virtual school, and some are in person, the fact is they are involved with a teacher. That teacher may notice that comprehension, or attention, is in short supply with your child. That begs the question: How much should you fill your teacher in on your child’s trauma history?

We face this question with our own kids several times every year! Each time, we must reevaluate where our child is emotionally and how we can help them be successful at school. If we determine that the school needs to know about our child’s past, we then must determine how much to share. Here are some guidelines we follow:

1. Privacy first. Our child’s story belongs to them first. We should never share any detail that we don’t have to share. Keep the story factual and do not allow for judgment or discussion about the specifics.

2. The fewer details, the better. No one needs to know the whole story except for your child. You can tell a teacher that your child experienced food insecurity or that the child missed a significant amount of school while in foster care. Don’t tell more than necessary.

3. Some details matter. If your child experienced food insecurity and now hoards or steals food, the teacher will need to know. If your child is afraid to be touched, the teacher needs to know. If the child has an FASD, the school needs to know. Trauma can affect the child’s success in all areas of life but won’t necessarily limit success everywhere. Determine what details need to be shared.

4. Healing at home leads to success at school. Teachers may not understand the partnership between the school and home. This conversation is a must. The child’s success at home will determine the success at school. The child’s feelings of safety at school will carry over into the home environment. A well-rounded experience of support and safety will be healthiest for the child.

5. Safe, consistent language is crucial. Our son, who experienced food insecurity as a baby, discovered he could get extra snacks from his teachers in second grade. Instead of reinforcing his safety, the extra snacks reinforced his feeling of insecurity and his belief that moms and dads will not provide for their kids. With the school and our son’s teacher, we came up with consistent language that we all used around food. The

teacher and school were able to support our family and our son by saying things like, “Your mom always packs you a good lunch. Can you show me what you have today?”

6. Shared goals lead to success. The goal is to raise a successful and healthy adult. When we partner with the school, we support one another in raising this child. When we work together, we can help our child understand the expectations at school, and the school can reinforce the trust and security we are building at home. Our child’s teacher needs to know a little about the child’s past in order to help move him or her toward the future.

We love movie quotes and one of our favorites comes from the 1996 movie *The Rock* starring Nicolas Cage and Sean Connery. In one particular scene, Mason (played by Connery) asks Goodspeed (played by Cage) a serious question. Goodspeed replies, “You’re on a need-to-know basis...and right now...you don’t need to know!”

That may sound harsh, but that’s the perspective you need to take with people outside of your home who provide care, or a service, for your child. There may be details they need to know about your child’s past trauma at a certain point. Just not everything, and not all the time. It’s a need-to-know basis.

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<https://honestlyadoption.com/how-much-should-you-tell-teachers-about-your-childs-trauma/>



HOW DOES ANXIETY AFFECT KIDS IN SCHOOL?

What it looks like, and why it's often mistaken for something else

by Rachel Ehmke

Sometimes anxiety is easy to identify — like when a child is feeling nervous before a test at school. Other times anxiety in the classroom can look like something else entirely — an upset stomach, disruptive or angry behavior, ADHD, or even a learning disorder.

There are many different kinds of anxiety, which is one of the reasons it can be hard to detect in the classroom. What they

all have in common, says neurologist and former teacher Ken Schuster, PsyD, is that anxiety “tends to lock up the brain,” making school hard for anxious kids.

Children can struggle with:

- **Separation anxiety:** When children are worried about being separated from caregivers. These kids can have a hard time at school drop-offs and throughout the day.
- **Social anxiety:** When children are excessively self-conscious, making it difficult for them to participate in class and socialize with peers.
- **Selective mutism:** When children have a hard time speaking in some settings, like at school around the teacher.
- **Generalized anxiety:** When children worry about a wide variety of everyday things. Kids with generalized anxiety often worry particularly about school performance and can struggle with perfectionism.
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder:** When children’s minds are filled with unwanted and stressful thoughts. Kids with OCD try to alleviate their anxiety by performing compulsive rituals like counting or washing their hands.
- **Specific phobias:** When children have an excessive and irrational fear of particular things, like being afraid of animals or storms.

Here are some tips for recognizing anxiety in kids at school, and what might be causing it.

Inattention and restlessness

When a child is squirming in his seat and not paying attention, we tend to think of ADHD, but anxiety could also be the cause. When kids are anxious in the classroom, they might have a hard time focusing on the lesson and ignoring the worried thoughts overtaking their brains. “Some kids might appear really ‘on’ at one point but then they can suddenly drift away, depending on what they’re feeling anxious about,” says Dr. Schuster. “That looks like inattention, and it is, but it’s triggered by anxiety.”

Attendance problems and clingy kids

It might look like truancy, but for kids for whom school is a big source of anxiety, refusing to go to school is also pretty common. School refusal rates tend to be higher after vacations or sick days, because kids have a harder time coming back after a few days away.

Going to school can also be a problem for kids who have trouble separating from their parents. Some amount of separation anxiety is normal, but when kids don’t adjust to separation over time and their anxiety makes going to school difficult or even impossible, it becomes a real problem. Kids with separation anxiety may also feel compelled to use their phones throughout the day to check in with their parents.

Disruptive behavior

Acting out is another thing we might not associate with anxiety. But when a student is compulsively kicking the chair of the kid in front of him, or throws a tantrum whenever the schedule is ignored or a classmate isn’t following the rules, anxiety may well be the cause. Similarly, kids who are feeling anxious might ask a lot of questions, including repetitive ones, because they are feeling worried and want reassurance.

Anxiety can also make kids aggressive. When children are feeling upset or threatened and don’t know how to handle their feelings, their fight or flight response to protect themselves can kick in — and some kids are more likely to fight. They might attack another child or a teacher, throw things, or push over a desk because they’re feeling out of control.

Trouble answering questions in class

Sometimes kids will do perfectly well on tests and homework, but when they're called on in class teachers hit a wall. There are several different reasons why this might happen.

"Back when I was teaching, I would notice that when I had to call on someone, or had to figure out who's turn it was to speak, it was like the anxious kid always tended to disappear," says Dr. Schuster. "The eager child is making eye contact, they're giving you some kind of physical presence in the room like 'Call on me, call on me!'" But when kids are anxious about answering questions in class, "they're going to break eye contact, they might look down, they might start writing something even though they're not really writing something. They're trying to break the connection with the teacher in order to avoid what's making them feel anxious."

If they do get called on, sometimes kids get so anxious that they freeze. They might have been paying attention to the lesson and they might even know the answer, but when they're called on their anxiety level becomes so heightened that they can't respond.

Frequent trips to the nurse

Anxiety can manifest in physical complaints, too. If a student is having unexplained headaches, nausea, stomachaches, or even vomiting, those could be symptoms of anxiety. So can a racing heart, sweaty palms, tense muscles, and being out of breath.

Problems in certain subjects

When a child starts doubting her abilities in a subject, anxiety can become a factor that gets in the way of her learning or showing what she knows. Sometimes this can be mistaken for a learning disorder when it's really just anxiety.

However anxiety can also go hand in hand with learning disorders. When kids start noticing that something is harder for them than the other kids, and that they are falling behind, they can understandably get anxious. The period before a learning disorder is diagnosed can be particularly stressful for kids.

Not turning in homework

When a student doesn't turn in her homework, it could be because she didn't do it, but it could also be because she is worried that it isn't good enough. Likewise, anxiety can lead to second guessing — an anxious child might erase his work over and over until there's a hole in the paper — and spending so much time on something that it never gets finished. We tend to think of perfectionism as a good thing, but when children are overly self-critical it can sabotage even the things they are trying their hardest at, like school work.

You might also notice that some anxious kids will start worrying about tests much earlier than their classmates and may begin dreading certain assignments, subjects, or even school itself.

Avoiding socializing or group work

Some kids will avoid or even refuse to participate in the things that make them anxious. This includes obvious anxiety triggers like giving presentations, but also things like gym class, eating in the cafeteria, and doing group work.

When kids start skipping things it might look to their teachers and peers like they are uninterested or underachieving, but the opposite might be true. Sometimes kids avoid things because they are afraid of making a mistake or being judged.

Dr. Schuster notes that when kids get anxious in social situations, sometimes they have a much easier time showing what they know when teachers engage them one-to-one, away from the group.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://childmind.org/article/classroom-anxiety-in-children/>

HELPING YOUR FOSTER CHILD MAKE THE GRADE IN A NEW SCHOOL

by Plummer Youth Promise

There are age-specific challenges all students face in school. For a foster child or teen entering a new school, these challenges may be magnified. As a foster parent, there are things you can do to help your foster child cope with stress as they enter a new school.

For elementary-age kids

Drive by the school with them, and if possible, arrange for them to have a tour of the school building and see their classroom. Make sure they have the name of their teacher. Go through the routine of the school day with them: when will school start and end and how will they get to and from school.

Ease any worries related to hunger. Make sure they know how their lunch will be provided. If they will be getting lunch at school, let them know how it will be paid for. If they'll bring their lunch, involve them in picking out their lunch bag and let them help with preparation.



For middle-school children

Social pressures are intense in middle school and your middle-schooler is as likely to be worried as much about what other kids will think of her as she is about how she'll do in her classes. Talk with her about what she hopes school will be like for her, what she is looking forward to and what she is nervous about. Help her identify an activity or club she can join in order to make friends. Provide her with the information she'll need to get involved in her chosen activity. If she is interested in playing a sport, be proactive in helping her get needed equipment.

Make sure she knows about her school's dress code and help her pick clothes that she likes and that meet the dress code. Expect some struggles around clothing and appearance, and remember, that this is entirely normal for someone her age.

For high school students

Be prepared to advocate for your foster teen to be placed in classes suited to his needs. For students who have changed schools frequently, class placement can be complicated. Understand that finding the right academic fit for your foster son may take a while and be prepared to work with him and his school to ensure that

he is assigned to the right classes.

Get an idea from the school of typical homework expectations and share them with your foster child. Determine with him how he can best keep up with homework; make a plan with him about when and where he will do his school work. Ask for his ideas about what support he'll need from you.

Understand that for high schoolers, social life is an extremely important part of school. Provide your foster child opportunities to connect with other teens in a positive way. Help him join a school activity, a sports team or a church youth group.

Being aware of the challenges your foster children will face in school will help prepare you for those times when they need your extra support. It may also remind you that some of the struggles they are experiencing are due, at least in part to the fact, that the journey from childhood to young adulthood is sometimes a wild and crazy ride in all families.

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IT'S IMPORTANT TO TAKE FOSTER KIDS ON VACATIONS

Article provided by Vacation Beach Rentals.

Every decision is more significant and has to be carefully analyzed before it is made when you are taking care of foster children. One moment that can give foster parents a bit of a headache is deciding if they should take foster kids on a family vacation or not.

Fostering children is a difficult road to travel, but the joy and experience it can bring to everyone involved are just as great. Children of all ages need to feel included, nurtured, with a sense of belonging. The following are a few reasons why you should definitely take foster children on a "family" vacation.

The Mental Perks for Foster Children

No one has all the answers regarding foster children. Many states are still figuring out how to take care of foster children. For example, some states are starting to allow and even encourage foster parents to give foster kids the kind experience other children their age might have. One of those experiences is family vacations.

Family vacations are activities that most regular children participate in, and it is crucial that foster kids get to experience this because it gives them normalcy. Family trips offer children an opportunity to experience something new.

It forces kids to interact with others, which helps develop cognitive skills related to social interactions. These vacations also foster long-lasting memories a person can resort to when times are difficult.

Stress-Relieving Family Vacations are Heaven-Sent

It is no secret that some foster children have gone through a lot. The stress these kids have experienced can lead to developmental issues that could leak over into their adult lives. Trying to find a way to help these kids find peace and relieve some of that stress is vital, which is yet another reason why foster parents need to consider bringing these children along on family vacations.

Foster children may have a number of ways to decompress during a family vacation depending on where it takes place. For example, vacations that take place in areas that are mostly surrounded by nature can be very therapeutic for kids because nature seems to calm the mind. It should be noted that the excitement of traveling also helps alleviate stress since it releases dopamine and other stress-inhibitors in the brain.

Parents should not let the fear of spending too much on this trip keep them from doing the right thing. This is especially true since foster parents get paid different amounts depending on how many children are being fostered, how long they have been fostering, and how qualified they are.

Igniting Curiosity for a Better Future

It may not seem that important, but employers are looking for a healthy, curious heart. This particular personality trait can lead to innovation, which is something that employers want within their company. The problem is that curiosity is not always promoted, but that does not have to be the case.

Taking children on family vacations on various occasions can help promote curiosity in a number of ways. For one, these trips can help kids see something different, which naturally tickles their curiosity bone. Imagine going to the beach and seeing a dolphin or other marine animal swimming in the ocean. These things and happenings at the beach can help answer some of the child's curiosity. It makes some of these children interested in exploring their new surroundings.

These types of trips could also make children curious about people. Excellent social skills will help in the long run, and these skills can be developed when the child is interested enough to learn more about others.

Experience Should Create a Stronger Bond

Children in this situation sometimes have trouble forming bonds with others. Gifting a child with this kind of experiential gift has been shown to help nurture emotional bonds. It may not seem like a good idea to nurture bonds, especially when parents aren't sure if the child is going to remain in their custody long, but it is actually very beneficial.

Emotional bonds encourage the development of traits like empathy among many other things. These are crucial traits that can help a child become a much better person when he or she grows up. Most parents want to feel like their contribution to this world is a good one, and this is one way to ensure that happens.

Of course, another reason to try to include foster children in these types of trips is to break the ice and help the kid not only form a bond with the foster parents but for the parents to also develop a relationship with the child.

Family Vacations Could Help Crack a Tough Cookie

Vacations like these also give children an opportunity to open up. Foster children can hide their emotions or thoughts quite successfully with the help of gadgets among other things. This is something that children will not be able to do so easily during family vacations where the point is to socialize with others.

As mentioned earlier, family vacations should help enrich a child's social skills, but it should also allow a child to be more emotionally available since all there is to do during a vacation is talk to each other. Doing something that the child has always wanted to do but has felt too shy to voice is a good way to start cracking that shell. Going to a theme park like Disney World is an example of one such popular destination. But don't make assumptions about where your foster child wants to go; let them choose. These vacations offer parents the chance to use varying personalities to try to get through to the children if previous

efforts failed.

Sometimes, a child will only respond to one type of person rather than another, so this is a good way to try to get through to a child that is a bit closed off.

Keep in mind that the hard exteriors some children create are often a defense mechanism and are hard to penetrate. It is okay for some parents to feel overwhelmed by a kid who doesn't want to open up, which is the ideal time for a vacation where foster parents can tag in a little extra help from time to time.

The drawbacks may be there, but that does not mean that they outweigh the positive outcomes of taking your foster child on an unforgettable, but important, experience that can be highly beneficial to their development.

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<https://vacationbeach.rentals/its-important-to-take-foster-children-on-vacations/>

AFFORDABLE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR FOSTER CHILD

Article from Pathway Family Services.

You want to nurture your foster child's talents and help them build strong friendships. You're considering extracurricular activities, but some are over your budget. Don't worry, there are some activities for your child that are not only fun but affordable too. Never force a certain activity on your child if he or she shows no interest in it. This will cause conflict and he won't be motivated to engage in the activity. However, it is fine to encourage him to step out of his comfort zone and suggest something he never thought about. Here are some affordable extracurricular activities.

YMCA's Have an Abundance of Affordable Extracurricular Activities

The local YMCA has everything from dance classes to swimming lessons during the summer. You can join for an affordable annual fee, and your child can enjoy a variety of fun activities that teach important life skills. He just might make new friends that could last many years.

Music Lessons From a College Student

While you might not be able to afford lessons with a private tutor, you can save money by having your child receive lessons from a college student who is studying music. Visit college music departments in your area and meet with the administrative staff. Ask if they know of any students who are currently giving lessons. Look at different campus billboards for flyers about students offering music lessons.

Sports Program Scholarships

For the child who loves sports, he can join a local sports club. If you want to shave off the costs, inquire about any scholarships that the program offers. Apply early and send in any additional documentation before the deadline.

Visit the Library

Libraries are not just for books anymore. They offer numerous activities and classes on certain days of the week, and your child can have fun for free. While he's there, he can check out amazing books or rent DVDs in every genre.

Find More Affordable Extracurricular Activities

In conclusion, extracurricular activities can be affordable. With these tips, your foster child can enjoy himself without breaking the bank.

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Spaulding: Making the Commitment to Adoption

The Spaulding program is offered to prospective adoptive families.

When: July 31 from 9:00 am-5:00 pm. (you will have a break for lunch-on your own) & August 1, 2021 from 1:00 pm-5:00 pm

Where: Harvest Christian Fellowship, 1501 South Dewey, North Platte

Register: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SpauldingRegistration2021>

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Foster Parent In-Service Training

Building & Empowering Family Connections

Presented by Amy Schnacker, TBRI Practitioner, Occupational Therapist, Foster/Adoptive parent

Saturday, September 18, 2021

9:00am-4:00pm

(lunch on your own)

Best Western Plus

3201 S Jeffers St

North Platte, NE

You will learn how to handle challenging behaviors using the three principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) and understand the meaning behind the behaviors, brain chemistry, and how to help heal and connect with your child.

◆ Register online: [HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/INService2021](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/INService2021)

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- Networking opportunities with other foster families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- 25% of membership dues goes toward an NFAPA Scholarship

Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:
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Lincoln, NE 68521.**

Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

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I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for _____ years.
(circle one)

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

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- Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
- Friends of NFAPA**, \$5 billed Monthly

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