Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

May / June 2023

N F A P A

PARENTING IN A DIVERSE WORLD

by Joanna Williams / Parenting That Works

Modern Day Parenting

Decades of research tell us the kind of parenting that works best for teens in American households has a mixture of high warmth and rules. It's known as authoritative or balanced parenting. We like to call it Lighthouse Parenting. This finding has been confirmed over and over again across many different studies in the US. But what parenting style is best in other households with different cultural traditions across the world? And do these same approaches work for families with different structures? Like single parent households or when grandparents aid in raising teens?

To shed light on trends in parenting adolescents in an increasingly diverse world, the Journal of Research on Adolescence, a top source for rigorous research on adolescent development, recently published a series of articles. Here's a summary of six key findings and what they mean for parents today.

Messages about cultural pride and knowledge are consistently related to positive outcomes for teens.

6 Parenting Trends to Know

1) The key ingredients of Balanced Parenting – warmth and rules – have relevance around the world.

A team of researchers asked parents from eight countries – the U.S., China, Italy, Kenya, Philippines, Thailand, Sweden, Colombia, and Jordan – about their use of warmth and firmness (or "control") with their children. They found these two features of balanced parenting to be relevant across the globe.

2) Your teen may be changing you more than you realize.

The same team of researchers who looked at families around the world found that by early adolescence – ages 11 or 12 – the child's behavior had more of an impact on the parent's behavior than the reverse. Their findings remind us that parenting is a two-way street.

3) Families come in all shapes and sizes.

Sometimes family structure is defined by biology, but it can also be defined by where teens live or who is most responsible for their care, regardless of biological relationship. While most adolescents live with two parents, almost a third live with only one parent who is usually, but not always, their mom. "Parents" also include grandmothers and fathers, other relatives, and foster families. The number of teens who live with their grandparents – either alone or with their parents – has been rising steadily for about 30 years.

4) Family practices are more important for teens than family structure.

Some research shows a connection between family structure (i.e., who makes up a family) and teens' health and well-being. However, other issues may be more important than family structure, like the family's stress level or their access to resources that promote health and well-being. After reviewing

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3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521
402-476-2273, toll-free 877-257-0176, e-mail: Felicia@nfapa.org
www.nfapa.org.

NFAPA Staff

Felicia Nelsen, Executive Director: 877-257-0176 or Felicia@nfapa.org
Corinne O'Brien, Program Coordinator: 402-476-2273 or Corinne@nfapa.org
Tammy Welker, Northeastern/ Eastern Area RFC: 402-989-2197 or Tammy@nfapa.org
Robbi Blume, Northwestern Area RFC: 402-853-1091 or Robbi@nfapa.org
Terry Robinson, Central RFC & Southwest RFC: 402-460-9177 or Terry@nfapa.org
Jolie Camden, Western RFC: 308-672-3658 or Jolie@nfapa.org
*RFC=Resource Family Consultant

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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/May-June2023***
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. True or False. Family practices are more important for teens than family structure.

2. Fill in the blanks. Messages about _____ _____ and knowledge are consistently related to positive outcomes for teens.

3. True or False. If we only focus on the outcome, kids may do whatever it takes, including cheating or lying, to get to the intended goal.

4. Fill in the Blanks. Praise can also create _____.

5. Fill in the Blanks. Wanting to protect a child from suffering is also the reason why some parents tend to be very poor _____.

6. Fill in the Blanks. Confidence comes from making the effort, from _____, from _____, and _____ ___.

7. True or False. Kids don't whine to intentionally irritate us—they whine because they have learned a positive, productive way to get our attention or have their needs met..

8. What are the 3 steps to stop whining?

9. List 3. Top Reasons Why Teenagers Lie?

10. 5 Ways to Encourage Honesty in Your Teen.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

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hundreds of studies, researchers concluded that regardless of how many parents and caregivers a teenager lives with, the relationships within the family are what matter most. And high-quality relationships stem from warmth and monitoring by parents and caregivers (a.k.a. balanced parenting!).

5) Parental support is critical for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) teens.

LGBT youth are "coming out," or disclosing this part of their identity to others, at a much earlier age than in the past – the average age is now around 14-years-old, compared to 20-years-old a few decades ago. Relationships with parents can affect when a teen chooses to come out, and how they fare after they've done so. Parental support makes a huge difference. The research team who reviewed numerous studies wrote, "Parental acceptance and support can be critical to children's health and well-being."

6) The messages parents share with their children about race and ethnic heritage help youth strengthen their identity and become more resilient.

Messages about cultural pride and knowledge are consistently related to positive outcomes for teens. Those outcomes may include better performance in school, fewer behavioral or mental health problems, and a stronger, more positive sense of ethnic-racial identity. These cultural pride messages may have most impact when parents use a balanced parenting style — you know, love and support and setting appropriate boundaries. Beyond teaching teens about race or ethnicity, researchers also suggest that parents should help teens navigate unfamiliar cultural situations, recognize injustices, and interact across differences.

This article was co-authored by Andrew Pool, PhD, CPTC's Senior Research Manager.

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https://parentandteen.com/parenting-diverse-world/

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN PARENTING AND WHY IT MATTERS

By Kerry Flatley, Certified Parent Educator

We want our children to feel how proud we are of them

because, after all, we're proud when they do their best or achieve a goal.

But how can we communicate our admiration in a way that expresses our true sentiments and inspires our kids to want to do better in the future?

On the surface, it may seem like simply showing our delight in our children's accomplishments is enough. And there's no doubt our children appreciate it when we acknowledge their achievements.

But often the message we intend to convey to our kids – through praise – is interpreted in unintended ways by our kids. What we really want to do is use words of encouragement to our children to help them continue to grow and succeed.

What's the difference between praise and encouragement?

On the surface, praise and encouragement seem to be nearly identical reactions to an accomplishment. But there are, in fact, subtle differences.

And most importantly, there's a big difference in the way our children internalize them.

When kids are praised more than encouraged, they tend to develop a mindset that seeks external motivation (think = rewards, grades, compliments). Someone with this mindset is unlikely to step up and take initiative unless something will be given to them in return.

Whereas, when a child is primarily encouraged, **research shows kids develop internal motivation** (they're led from within to accomplish a goal free of any incentives). This mindset serves kids well as they don't need anything from

other people to find motivation.

This chart illustrates the main contrasting differences between praise and encouragement:

Praise	Encouragement
Focuses on the end result or accomplishment	Focuses on the effort or persistence
A judgment that typically includes a subjective opinion	An observation or a question
Non-specific and tends to obviously exaggerate	Specific and does not exaggerate
Can cause kids to lose sight of what *they* want to achieve	Causes kids to reflect internally about their accomplishments, progress, and goals
Kids begin to feel they need praise from others to be successful	Kids do not *need* encouragement to feel successful, but they do feel supported
Diminishes self-esteem and self-confidence	Boosts self-esteem and self-confidence

The first row is perhaps what distinguishes praise and encouragement the most. Praise focuses solely on what was achieved, whereas encouragement focuses on effort.

By placing the focus on effort, we are inviting kids to consider what led them to success so they can hopefully replicate it in the future. It also shows that we are noticing their hard work and that we consider this to be more important than the outcome.

If we only focus on the outcome, kids may do whatever it takes, including cheating or lying, to get to the intended goal.

What are examples of praise vs. encouragement?

What does praise and encouragement look like in real life? Here are a few contrasting statements that show the difference:

Praise	Encouragement
"I'm proud of you for making a goal!"	"All that hard work during practices appears to have paid off. It must have felt good to have scored a goal."
"What a beautiful drawing!"	"The way you blended the green and blue colors is very unique. What do you like most about this drawing?"
"You're so smart!"	"I've seen you practicing your Spanish vocabulary a lot over the past few weeks. Do you think that helped you do well on the test?"
"Good girl!"	"Putting your dishes away really helps when it comes time to clean the kitchen. Thank you."
"Good job!"	"You figured it out all by yourself."
"I'm so proud of you!"	"You should be proud of yourself."

What are the drawbacks of praise?

Many parents don't understand why praising their children has drawbacks.

After all, their children often glow with satisfaction when they hear their parents say "good job."

Kids do enjoy getting praise. Who wouldn't? It feels good to receive validation.

The problem with praise is that it creates dependency. It's natural for kids to seek the acceptance and approval of their parents – the most important adults in their lives.

But too much praise can cause children to feel that their parents only approve of them – or love them – when they accomplish a goal or task.

So they seek out opportunities to achieve simply so they can receive more praise and thus their parents' approval. Take the praise or reward away, and the child may feel they have let down their parents, making the accomplishment no longer desirable.

Praise can also create competition. Siblings may unconsciously strive to receive more praise and recognition than their sister or brother with the goal of obtaining more of their parents' love and acceptance.

But what if I find it hard to stop praising my kids?

Let's be real for a minute…it can be difficult to stop using phrases like "Good job!" or "I love it!" when our child achieves a goal or shows us something they've created.

After years of conditioning, it's like our minds are programmed with these responses.

Most likely, these are phrases our own parents, teachers, and coaches used with us as a way to express their delight in our achievements.

So the words just spill out.

But don't worry. If we slip and find ourselves responding with these trite statements, it's not the end of the world.

Especially if we follow them up with words of encouragement – focusing on the specifics of our daughter's drawing, for example, or the work our son put into building a boxcar.

The important thing is to turn our attention from the goal they've achieved to the process they followed to get there,

helping our children reflect on their perseverance and effort.

The more we invite our children to do this, the more they will begin doing it themselves.

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https://selfsufficientkids.com/difference-between-praise-and-encouragement/

WHAT'S WRONG WITH HELICOPTER PARENTING?

Sometimes obstacles are actually a good thing

by Gail Saltz, MD

This generation of parents of young kids has, I think wisely, discovered that being very present as a parent is important to really nurture a child. But this generation has also—as it does in so many other endeavors—taken active parenting to new competitive heights. And we are a society that tends to subscribe to the idea that if something is good, then more of it must be better. And that's where the idea of the helicopter parent comes in, because in fact more isn't always better.

The benefits of learning the hard way

A recent study from the University of Buffalo speaks to the issue of whether too much hovering over a child can be bad for her. Researchers looked at people who had been through difficult things, and they found that, on the one hand, going through very traumatic experiences does not bode well for one's long-term resilience, but, on the other, going through almost no difficult experiences also does not bode well for one's resilience.

Coping and competence

Having obstacles to overcome is what helps children to build resilience, to develop coping skills to deal with things that are difficult. As they get older, they're able to say, when facing a challenge, "Well I got through that so I can probably get through this." Children need to learn through trial and error—this worked, this didn't work. This is something that that parents may have difficulty with, because of course they don't want to see their children suffer at all. But with no suffering, you build no skills.

Eventually an overprotected child will grow into an adult and face adult problems: "I'm having trouble getting a job." "I didn't get accepted to that program I wanted." "That guy didn't ask me to marry him." Whatever it is, if you have no tools in your armory for coping with disappointment, for struggling and persevering, then you're in trouble. I think that kind of lack of resilience—the feeling of being overwhelmed as an adult and unable to cope—often ends in depression.

Strong boundaries

Another problem is that parents often want to sort of enjoy childhood all over again through the eyes of their kids. Again, I'm sympathetic—it's hard to resist—but when you blur the boundaries, because it's fun to sort of be a teen with your teenager, it can lead to over-identification.

You want to make it as enjoyable as possible for both of you: so you want to ensure that your daughter enjoys pleasures you were denied, and has successes that you didn't have the first time around. But when you become invested that way, you own it, you don't really let your children own their own accomplishments. So they don't end up feeling that whatever they did, they did. And again they're robbed of the feeling that they have the equipment to manage.

Role confusion

Wanting to protect a child from suffering is also the reason why some parents tend to be very poor disciplinarians. If you are very identified with your child then it's painful to discipline them because you are standing so much in their shoes that you feel like you are disciplining yourself. Hence all these parents who are sort of being the friend and not the parent. But you know, kids have got friends; they really need parents, and parents are the people who say, "No, and this is the consequence if you do the thing that I said you can't do."

Having parents who set limits enables kids to internalize their own moral compass. They learn to say to themselves some form of, "No, I really can't do that; that's my limit." And the flip side: "Oh, I did this thing wrong, now I feel guilty and bad, and I have to make reparations." If you didn't provide any of this kind of training, it's going to be harder for them to set limits for themselves.

Make room for mistakes

And, finally, for parents who have invested heavily in excelling at parenting, who've made it a big part of their own self-image, there is the risk that if something doesn't go well for the child, it means you have failed. It's something to watch out for, as you try to do your best for your kids: you don't want them to be afraid of failure more for your sake than their own.

What builds confidence in kids is working hard at something and seeing that something real was accomplished—even if it is partially a failure. Confidence comes from making the effort,

from persevering, from coping, and seeing the results. So as a parent you're better off praising the something that has more to do with those qualities of coping and managing something difficult than letting your kids know that just about everything they do is perfect story.

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https://childmind.org/article/whats-wrong-with-helicopter-parenting/

HELPING KIDS WHO ARE IMMATURE

What parents can do to support children who are behind their peers

by Rae Jacobson

As children grow up, the world's expectations of them seem to change at the speed of light. Schoolwork is suddenly more challenging. Sports that were fun become more competitive and physically demanding. Activities, games, and TV shows your child and her friends loved one day are considered "babyish" the next.

All kids struggle to navigate shifting social norms and expectations of parents or teachers, but when a child matures more slowly than her peers, the changes can leave her feeling left out, embarrassed or bewildered by the things her friends are doing. Luckily, as every formerly awkward adult knows, immaturity is usually temporary, but that doesn't mean it's easy for kids who are in the thick of it.

"In most cases, as kids grow up, things even out," says Rachel Busman, PsyD, a clinical psychologist. "They're going to catch up. But the process can be hard." Our role as parents, she explains, is to reassure kids and give them the support and scaffolding they need to make it through.

Signs of immaturity in younger kids

Children whose birthdays place them at the younger end of the class are more likely to be less mature than their classmates, but age isn't the only factor, as kids mature at different paces.

In younger kids some signs of immaturity might be:

- Needing a little extra attention or help to do things her peers will do independently
- Being less physically coordinated than other children her age
- Becoming easily upset or overwhelmed or having trouble calming herself down when things don't go her way
- Struggling to adapt to new concepts in school
- Being physically smaller or less developed than other kids her age
- Hanging back or avoiding activities that are new or challenging

Signs of immaturity in older kids

As kids get older, immaturity might look like:

- Age-inappropriate interests, for example a preteen who's still watching Paw Patrol
- Social awkwardness, discomfort with new social relationships like dating, or unsupervised group hang outs
- Rigidity or unwillingness to try new things
- Being "grossed out" by conversations about sex and sexuality
- Being less physically developed than his peers
- Difficulty adapting to new academic challenges

It's also important to note that kids may be less mature in one area, and advanced in another. For example, a child might be at the top of her reading group but feel lost when it comes to the social complexity of middle school, even when it seems like all her friends have it figured out.

Emotional regulation

At its core, being mature isn't about the toys kids are into, or whether they're afraid of scary movies when their friends aren't. The key work of growing up is acquiring a set of invisible skills called self-regulation — the ability to understand and manage emotions and impulses when they come up. Kids who struggle to self-regulate have a harder time dealing with even small setbacks and aren't good at calming themselves down or controlling impulsive behaviors. For example:

- A child who stalks off in a huff if her friends won't play the game she wants, bursts into tears if she doesn't get the pink cupcake, or throws a tantrum when asked to clean her room or set the table.
- A pre-teen who smashes his video game controller when he loses, impulsively interrupts when friends or teachers are talking, or is late for everything.

Parents can help by encouraging children to practice skills and behaviors that bolster and teach self-regulation skills.

- Talk about how he could advocate for himself if he's in a difficult situation. For example: if a child is uncomfortable with an activity his friends are doing you could develop a script he can use to defuse the situation: "You know, that's not my thing but you guys have fun, I'll catch up with you afterwards."
- Work on negotiating and being patient. For example, if a girl gets upset when her friends don't want to play her favorite game, you might say: "I know it's upsetting when you and Jen want to do different things. Next time, maybe you could try agreeing that you'll play a game she chooses first, then play one you choose afterwards."
- Practice mindfulness with your child, and model what good self-regulation looks like. For example, "I get upset sometimes, too, and it can be hard to calm down. What if we both agree to take ten deep breaths next time we start feeling angry or upset?"

As kids learn better self-regulation skills, they'll feel more confident and capable when it comes to navigating new or difficult challenges, and be better able to make smarter (and more mature) choices for themselves.

Be realistic about risks

We want our children to grow at their own speed and feel comfortable and happy and excited about the things they love. But pressure to conform to what other kids are doing can be intense. The most hazardous part of immaturity is the

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFAPAIn-Service-2023

Virtual: Attachment and Bonding — 2 CEs

July 29, 2023 9:00 am—11:00 am (Central Time)

Kim Stevens from North American Council on Adoptable Children

This session will provide an in-depth examination of attachment and bonding, including topics such as personality characteristics, responding to rejection, and realistic attachment expectations. This session will also offer practical tips and strategies to help strengthen parent-child relationships.

Virtual: GPS for Kids on the Trauma Highway: How to Help them Navigate the World - 2 CEs

September 23, 2023 9:00 am—11:00 am (Central Time)

Barb Clark from North American Council on Adoptable Children

The world is only beginning to grasp the impact trauma has on children and we all know that the process of helping children heal can be slow, frustrating and grossly misunderstood. Our children are assumed to be "bad" kids and the parents are judged as well. Parents hear advise like "this child needs some discipline" or "have you tried taking away their cell phone?" The world does not understand trauma and the behaviors that come from it, or the gaps in social and emotional age which are common with children who have come from hard places. We will explore strategies to give our children and their families tools to navigate a "trauma uniformed" world. Discussion will also focus on how caregivers can participate in building a trauma informed community for their child. We must be the ones to stir the change…it is our responsibility to our children to help their journey be less bumpy. So buckle up…it is time to repave this trauma highway together!

You must register to attend! We will send you the Zoom link to log in or location of in-person training. Registration closes the day before training.

Questions? Contact the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association at 402-476-2273 or Corinne@nfapa.org

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potential for kids to be embarrassed, teased or bullied.

So how can parents walk the line between supporting a child where she is and making sure she's not at risk? Let your child know that liking or doing things that are different than their peers isn't something to be ashamed of, but that they may have to be ready for other kids to not want to play. For example, if a child likes to play with dinosaurs but his friends have moved on to Fortnite, you could make a plan for how he'll talk to them about it. For example, he could say, "I'm going to play dinosaurs now, but can we play tag together later?"

"If a child is still sucking her thumb or bringing a stuffed animal to school at an age where that's not really appropriate anymore it isn't the end of the world," says Dr. Busman. "We don't want to shame kids or shut them down by saying, "Don't be a baby. Get your thumb out of your mouth."

Still, it's helpful to warn your child that her favorite activity may not be accepted by her peers. "It's a chance to help kids understand that some activities are really only acceptable in certain places," Dr. Busman explains. "You might say, I know that sucking your thumb is super relaxing, but you know I haven't seen any of the other kids doing it at school. I wonder if that means that's something that's just better to do at home? What do you think?"

Keep communication open

Unfortunately, no amount of planning or practice can totally ward off the potential for bullying so parents should keep their antennae up.

The best way to know what your child is dealing with is to keep an open line of communication. That may require persistence. Ask open-ended questions and give kids as many opportunities as you can to tell you what's going on in their lives. For example, if your child reports that a girl she was friends with no longer wants to play, take it as an opportunity to do some detective work. Instead of saying, "Oh, I'm sorry," which kind of shuts the conversation down, try, "That sounds upsetting. Has anything happened or changed between you guys lately?" If she doesn't want to answer, or simply says "I don't know," give her some space, but make a point of checking in again later.

Do some research

If you're concerned your child's immaturity might be causing problems for her, start by doing some research into what her universe looks like. What are other kids your child's age listening to, reading, wearing, watching, etc.? How do they compare to your child's interests? If you find something she might be interested in but hasn't picked up, like a band or a tv show, try making a plan to check it out together.

And if your child has an interest her friends think is silly, find somewhere — a club or group or class — where she's able to do it in an accepting, judgment-free space.

Enlist the school as ally

Finally, if you're worried your child might be uncomfortable or being bullied at school, enlist her teachers or the school's guidance counselor as an ally. "If you sense that your kid might benefit from a little extra scaffolding at school, you could ask them to keep an eye out for bullies, and to maybe help her along socially until she's feeling more comfortable." Even if you don't suspect your child is being bullied it might be a good idea to schedule a check-in with your child's teacher. He may be able to give you a better idea of the social and academic pressures she's facing at school.

When to be concerned

In some cases, what looks like immaturity may have a different cause. Early signs of ADHD, some learning disabilities, anxiety and autism can all be mistaken for run-of-the-mill immaturity. Behaviors that seem extreme, or don't fade as children grow, warrant a visit to your child's pediatrician or a clinician.

Some things to watch for include:

- Speech delays
- Significant lack of coordination that is age-inappropriate — for example, a child who has difficulty using a fork or trouble writing legibly long into grade school
- Total lack of interest in social activities
- Serious anxiety around social situations like sleepovers or parties, or trouble making or keeping friends
- Significant sleep issues that are age-inappropriate, for example a 9-year-old who struggles to sleep through the night without parental intervention
- Academic difficulties that have a significant impact on grades
- Problems with impulse control or concentration
- Tantrums or meltdowns in elementary or middle school

In most cases though, being immature is just a part of growing up, like having knobby knees or braces. Giving your child the help and support she needs to navigate it in a safe, less stressful way will help her land on her feet when she catches up and give her powerful tools to care for herself both now and when she's "mature."

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WHY DO KIDS WHINE? 3 STEPS TO MAKE IT STOP

by Amy McCready

You said "no" to brownies for breakfast, a new puppy and your 15-year-old's request to spend the weekend at a beach house with friends.

And each time, just like clockwork, the whining begins.

From toddlers to teens, all children know how to argue with your decision in their best nails-on-a-chalkboard voice.

You've tried everything from time-outs to earplugs, but the whining won't end. Don't worry–you're not alone. Parents worldwide fall victim to their child's whining daily, but this doesn't mean you can't stop it.

By learning why your kids whine, you can discover how to put an end to it for good.

Why Do Kids Whine?

Because it works! (For your kids, that is.)

When your kids whine and negotiate, they secure a big chunk of your attention.

Positive Parenting is based on Adlerian Psychology which asserts all humans are hard-wired with two basic emotional needs – belonging and significance. One of the crucial ways parents can meet a child's need for belonging is to give kids sufficient amounts of attention.

Kids don't whine to intentionally irritate us—they whine because they haven't learned a positive, productive way to get our attention or have their needs met.

Let's face it, parents are the busiest creatures on the planet and there are about a billion things competing for our time and attention. But when kids aren't getting as much positive attention as they need from us, they'll experiment with different ways to get our attention–whining, helplessness, **tantrums**…you get the idea.

And of course, when kids whine, we typically respond with a correction or a reprimand — not exactly the positive attention they were looking for – but it worked to get our attention.

The truth is, children only continue behaviors that work for them.

When kids whine and parents give in, kids realize that whining gets them what they want–the attention they crave and maybe even that candy bar in the grocery checkout line.

But giving in to demands–like one more television show or another scoop of ice cream–isn't the only way we reward our kids' whining. Just responding, even if it's to reprimand them, gives a child payoff. Picking up the child or responding with an annoyed remark ("Enough! Stop whining!") still gives the child attention–even though it wasn't the positive attention she really wanted–and now she'll be more likely to whine again and again to get the same result.

How Can You Make the Whining Stop?

Now that you know why kids whine, you can make it stop–before your ears fall off. Here are 3 steps you can start using today to curb the whining in your home:

1. Make it NOT Work

Remember the main reason why your kids whine? It works! By not giving in to whatever they're whining for–you'll cut back dramatically on this annoying misbehavior.

Whether you're in the grocery store or at the dinner table, say "no," and stick to it. If a tantrum happens, calmly let it happen in a safe place (like the car)–and your child will soon learn that whining, and even a tantrum, won't get him what he wants. You should still help your child deal with his big feelings of disappointment, but you're not caving into the demand.

2. Pay No (Negative) Attention

By refusing to give attention to the whining, you'll remove a big part of the payoff. Here's a simple 3-step training process to make it work:

Step 1: Set the Expectation

In a calm moment, tell your kids:

"You're growing up so much! You're big enough now to ask for what you'd like in a normal voice, without whining, AND be okay if you don't get it. If you ask me something in a whiny voice, I will put my hands over my ears as a gentle reminder to use your regular voice. Then, you can try again with your normal voice, and I'll be happy to talk about anything that's on your mind."

NOTE: You may have to do some role-playing about the difference between a normal voice and a whiny voice.

Step 2: Reveal How You Will Respond

"If you continue to use your whiny voice, I will not respond. Instead, I'll just go about my business until you want to talk in your normal voice, and then I'll be happy to listen."

Step 3: Confirm Understanding

"Just so we're on the same page, and we don't have any surprises, let's practice how we'll talk to each other and what I will do if you decide to use your whiny voice?"

Okay, you've laid the groundwork. But, once you've made this bed, my friend, you MUST lie in it (don't worry, it'll be really relaxing before you know it).

Follow through EVERY. SINGLE. TIME. your children start to whine. Stay calm and walk away – even a negative non-verbal reaction to whining can be a payoff. **When your child uses her normal voice, be sure to respond RIGHT AWAY, calmly and pleasantly.**

We all know behaviors don't develop overnight, so curbing the whining in your home can take days and even weeks to remediate. However, with a little patience, practice, and consistency, you'll help your child kick this habit in no time.

3. Provide Proactive POSITIVE Attention

For these steps to work, you must also provide plenty of positive attention to meet your child's need for emotional connection.

Each parent should shoot for 10 minutes of quality time every day with each child. You can play their favorite card game, shoot hoops in the driveway, or do whatever they love to do! During the special one-on-one time, ignore the email notification. Don't respond to the text. Hold off on the dinner prep.

When you fill your child's attention basket positively and proactively, your kids will become more cooperative and less likely to resort to whining as a way to gain your attention.

Life is busy for everyone, and finding extra time in the day

may be daunting at first, but think of this as an investment in your relationship with your children and in helping them learn more positive and effective ways to communicate their needs.

Note: For Positive Parenting Solutions Members, refer to STEP 1 to learn the secrets to easily implement MIND, BODY AND SOUL TIME® togetherness into your already-too-busy day! Also see the Ultimate Survival Guide, MBST: Your Secret Weapon for Better Behavior.

Final Thoughts

With these strategies in place, you'll keep the whining to a minimum. But the truth is, other frustrating behaviors might pop up in its place.

I wish I could help you tackle every frustrating behavior in this one article, but sadly, there is no silver bullet to parenting! Correcting misbehavior and raising respectful, independent, capable kids requires an intentional process and set of tools.

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https://www.positiveparentingsolutions.com/parenting/why-do-kids-whine

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE A NURTURING ENEMY TO A CHILD WITH REACTIVE ATTACHMENT DISORDER

by Anonymous

When I was asked to write about how it feels to be the nurturing enemy of a child with reactive attachment disorder (RAD), while I accepted the assignment, I resisted writing this piece for as long as I possibly could.

To write about the most heartbreaking, helpless, and hopeless years of my life meant feeling it all again. I really, really, really didn't want to do that.

I feel great compassion for parents of children with reactive attachment disorder who are still in the thick of things. I think about all of those who are still riding the roller coaster of behaviors, therapies, interventions, medications, parenting techniques, and hospitals.

I distinctly remember feeling hopeful with each improvement my son seemed to make and then devastated when it didn't last. I understand the confusion around what is happening in one's own family, the loss of trust in anyone or anything, the uncertainty of where to turn, and the rapid unraveling of mind, body, and finances.

To publicly share how far into the abyss of despair I personally fell and how close I came to losing my mind, my marriage, my faith, and my life feels incredibly vulnerable. It's not comfortable to bring to a wide audience with unknown intentions.

While it is healthy to have boundaries around intimate and vulnerable details of one's life, my fear of and lack of trust is one of the many side effects of filling the nurturing enemy role for nearly a decade.

So, as difficult as it is, I'm hoping that writing this will end up being therapeutic in the long run.

What is a Nurturing Enemy?

The term nurturing enemy is originally attributed to Nancy Verrier from her book The Primal Wound. Verrier refers to the nurturing enemy as the primary caregiver of a child with complex developmental trauma, otherwise known as reactive attachment disorder. These are children who experienced trauma during critical stages of early development and struggle with the impacts left on the brain. Although often the mother figure, any primary caregiver can become the nurturing enemy.

A child with reactive attachment disorder has an intense fear of abandonment and a negative projection of hostility, anger, and rejection onto the nurturing enemy. The sheer volume and intensity of RAD behaviors often lead to the primary caregiver's own post-traumatic stress disorder.

This dynamic sets the stage for a roller-coaster relationship in which both the child and primary caregiver gradually become confused, exhausted, angry, and unwilling to trust each other without proper intervention (Verrier, 2009).

How I Became a Nurturing Enemy

My husband and I were not informed about reactive attachment disorder during our foster care training. They presented parenting traumatized children as slightly harder than parenting biological children, just with more paperwork. So they ultimately placed a child with incredibly high needs into the unknowing arms of uneducated and unprepared parents. They exacerbated the disorder.

Because we were unaware and uneducated, we were easily manipulated by our son's disorder. Our lack of understanding about our son's resistance to our care led to unnecessary frustration. We didn't understand that the disorder, not the child, was running the show.

A frog dropped into boiling water will jump out of the pot. But a frog will stay in room temperature water, even as it's

slowly getting hot. By the time the water is boiling, that frog is cooked through. That's how I became the nurturing enemy. I failed to see that I was slowly slipping deeper and deeper into hopelessness. Like that frog, I didn't know I was boiling until it was too late for all of us.

Because our son didn't receive the proper reactive attachment disorder diagnosis until years into our journey, we struggled to find the right support. And because I didn't know I was his nurturing enemy for years, my son's disorder worsened. This put our entire family in harm's way.

What a Nurturing Enemy Feels Like

Before I knew about the term nurturing enemy, I was solely focused on finding "the thing" to help my son long-term. But the thing I needed to know first and foremost was that I was the nurturing enemy. Not knowing made everything worse.

Nothing we did helped. Most professionals who worked with our son were well-meaning but ineffective at best. Many unknowingly enabled my son's disorder.

Medications seemed ineffective. Because of the demands of my son's needs at both school and home, I was no longer able to work. My marriage was strained. Our family was in perpetual crisis. My default response was to try harder, love harder, advocate harder, and therapy harder. Finally, utterly exhausted, resentful, and angry at who I had become, I dreaded waking up in the morning.

One day, as my son was raging, his then 8-year-old younger brother ran down the stairs. He got between me and his brother in his martial arts stance and said, "Don't worry, Mom. I'll protect you." My heart stopped. I was supposed to protect my children, not the other way around. It wasn't until that moment that I realized we were in boiling water.

I later told a therapist about the incident between my two sons, through tears of regret and guilt. With her mouth agape, her response was, "This is why moms drive their minivans off bridges." I quietly replied, "I know."

To be a nurturing enemy feels hopeless, like an endless dark maze with no way out.

A Clearer But Still Painful Path

When I finally learned the term nurturing enemy, it hit me right in the heart. No two words better described how I felt. When I discovered that there was language to describe the role I'd been playing in my son's life, it brought relief and helped define the path forward. But it didn't make it easy.

I came to the heartbreaking conclusion that I was no longer capable of helping my son heal. And that my son may never have been capable of allowing me to do so. I realized that I'd have to love him the way he needed, not the way I wanted.

Before I knew about the term nurturing enemy, I was solely focused on finding "the thing" to help my son long-term. But the thing I needed to know first and foremost was that I was the nurturing enemy.

If love, nurture, and potentially my existence were my son's triggers, then it was my job to remove those triggers. It was the most logical, yet most painful, way for me to love him. Out of a desire to help him feel safe, I needed to remove expectations of emotional reciprocity.

Out of a desire to ease my son's suffering, I needed to shift the focus from the nurturing and love of a parent to the managerial tasks of a caseworker. And in our severe case, out of a desire to do what was best for him, I ended up needing to remove myself altogether.

I wouldn't wish being a nurturing enemy on my worst enemy.

The nurturing enemy is a devastating dynamic for everyone involved. It hurts the child with the disorder and everyone in the family. Reactive attachment disorder touches everyone in its path.

If you're a nurturing enemy to a child with reactive attachment disorder, reach out. Find support. There is hope. You don't need to do this alone.

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https://www.radadvocates.org/post/what-it-feels-like-to-be-a-nurturing-enemy-to-a-child-with-

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

Foster parenting is hard. You face challenges as you parent children and youth with a trauma history that your friends and family do not understand. Support groups can provide informal mutual support and opportunities to discuss parenting joys, challenges and strategies as you navigate the life of a foster parent

Live Virtual Support Group

- Available the first Tuesday at 6:30 pm (MT). Contact Jolie at 308-672-3658 or Tammy at 402-989-2197 for the Zoom link. You must register to attend. In-service training (CE) offered in this support group almost every month.

LGBTQIA+ Virtual Support Group

- Join foster, adoptive & guardianship parents over the lunch hour for our support group meeting. Come get and give support! Next meeting is June 9th at 12:30 CST. You must register to attend. Check our website calendar for the registration link.

Faces: Online Foster Parent Support Group Chat on Facebook

- Meets Tuesday nights at 9:00 (CT). No CE's or training. Contact Robbi at 402-853-1091. You must have a Facebook account.

Parenting Across Color Lines

- For multi-racial families on the fourth Monday of the month at 6:30 pm in-person in Lincoln. No CE's or training. Contact Felicia at 402-476-2273 to register to attend.

May is National Foster Care Month

Thank you for all you do!

WHY YOUR TEEN IS LYING TO YOU AND HOW TO HANDLE IT

by Marybeth Bock & Nancy Reynolds

There you are, in the grocery store grabbing a few things for dinner when you run into the mom of one of your son's friends. Striking up a conversation, she tells you how great it was to see your son last Friday night when she picked the boys up from that party they went to across town.

Party? You think to yourself. Your son told you he was spending the night at a friend's house and that they were just going to hang out, order a pizza and play video games.

Trying to hide your confusion, you tell the mom how much you loved catching up and you walk away with a smile. But *inside*, your mind is racing… "Why would my son lie to me?" "What is he hiding?" "What else has he lied about?"

If you've caught your teen in a lie, just know it's not the end of the world. The fact is, the vast majority of teenagers admit to lying to their parents at one time or another.

Research by Nancy Darling, an expert on teens and lying, revealed that nearly 96% of teens lie to their parents. In another study, 82% of high school and college students admitted to lying to their parents in the previous year. The bottom line is, teen lying is far more common than most parents realize.

Why Your Teen is Lying to You and How to Handle It

Why Do Teenagers Lie?

Because teens are getting older and tugging at the ropes of independence, it should only be expected that they might want a little more privacy in their lives, to call the shots on at least *some* things, and even push a few boundaries from time to time, which can lead to lying or "bending the truth."

And, if you've ever caught your teen in a lie, you know… they can be quite convincing! According to one study, teenagers are, overall, the best liars out of all age groups with most teens lying to their parents, on average (gasp!), three times a day.

What Do Teens Lie About?

There's a myriad of things teenagers might lie about, but some of the top things include:

- Their whereabouts or what they were doing
- Who they're hanging with (friends/girlfriend/boyfriend)
- Whether a parent will be home at a friend's house
- Whether a party is supervised or unsupervised
- Whether they vaped, consumed alcohol, or did drugs
- Whether they finished homework, studied, or finished a school project
- Whether they were speeding, texting and driving, or being a "safe driver"
- Their feelings ("Saying "I don't really care," or "It doesn't bother me," when it does.)
- Their emotions (Saying "I'm fine" when they're not.)

Top Reasons Why Teenagers Lie

Now that we've settled the fact that teens are, generally speaking, notorious fibbers, let's take a look at *why* they lie.

1. To assert their independence

Developmentally, our kids' teen years are all about helping them gain autonomy and teaching them how to stand on their two feet. But quite often, there's a gap between how much independence a parent is willing to give and how much independence a teen wants, thus, that's where the lying comes into play.

From lying about how much homework they have and who they're hanging with to what they spend their money on and what they do when they're hanging with friends, teenagers might lie to feel in more control of their own lives and have more privacy.

2. To avoid getting into trouble

Your son walks in past curfew. To avoid getting a lecture (or facing consequences), he lies and says a friend asked for a ride and he had to drop them off at home. Your daughter accidentally backed the car into a post causing a dent in the back fender. When you ask her about it, she lies and denies having anything to do with it.

Getting grounded, losing car privileges, not being able to

hang out with friends on a Friday night, having to do extra chores over the weekend – few teens want to face the music when it comes to admitting fault – especially if it means there will be consequences to their actions. Rather than fess up to their mistake, they take their chances and lie.

3. To do something they know parents wouldn't approve of

You told your daughter you didn't want her hanging with a boy you feel is a bad influence on her. Since she knows you won't approve, she tells you she's going to her friend's house after school, but instead she hangs out with the boy.

Sneaking around, lying, bending the truth – nearly every teenager has lied so they can do something they know their parents wouldn't approve of.

While it's another way of asserting their independence over their own lives, what most teenagers don't realize is that sometimes, those seemingly harmless "white" (or blatant) lies can put them in serious danger.

4. To protect or defend a friend

For a lot of teens, their friends aren't simply their friends… they're family. And, they'd do anything to protect them – even if it involves lying to their parents. If a friend is into vaping, drinking, drugs, or sneaking out at night, for example, chances are your teen won't share those tidbits of information with you out of fear it will either put their friend in a bad light or, worse, prompt you to forbid your teen from hanging out with them anymore.

The fact is, our teens' friends have an enormous influence on their lives. And the desire to fit in and be accepted by their friends can be a powerful force that can trigger teens to lie.

5. To avoid embarrassment

The normal day-to-day life of a teenager can have its share of insecure feelings and embarrassing moments. Rather than tell a parent that they got turned down by a girl, that they didn't make the team or they didn't get asked to the dance, they might lie to save themselves the embarrassment or frustration of having their parent ask too many questions. For teens, it's better to avoid the situation altogether by making up a lie.

6. To cover up difficult feelings & emotions

Being a teenager is hard. Especially in a world that can be judgmental, competitive, and downright scary. Many teens keep a whole lot of feelings bottled up to avoid appearing weak, to avoid questions or criticism, because they simply haven't come to terms with how to deal with them, or because they don't want their parents to worry. Thus, they'll lie.

A teen who is experiencing social anxiety may lie about why they don't want to participate in activities. A teen who is grappling with their sexuality may not want to admit who they're attracted to. And a teen who's been struggling with anxiety or depression may try to cover it up and claim they're "fine" to avoid discussing it with a parent.

How to Respond to a Teen When They Lie

All teenagers – even those labeled as "good kids" by their parents – are fully capable of lying. Because most lies that teens tell are fairly harmless in nature, it's always a good rule of thumb to try not to overreact or call your teen a "liar." Instead, focus on the "why."

Sit down with your teen calmly (before you slap on any disciplinary consequences) and ask them why they lied, why they felt the need to lie as opposed to coming to you with the truth, and what (if anything) they were trying to cover up.

Remember, (in most cases) it's not their intent to deliberately hurt you. The more calm and rational you are, the more likely your teen will be to come to you and be honest moving forward.

The goal is to open the lines of communication with your teen, keep them open, and draw them closer to you – not push them away. If you fly off the handle and lose your cool, you'll actually be perpetuating the lying by sending the message that you can't be trusted with their secrets and they can't come to you without you overreacting.

Of course, if you find that lying is becoming a habit with your teen, you need to establish reasonable consequences for their behavior and seek professional help if the lying is tied to seriously risky or harmful behavior. If you think your teen's lying has become compulsive, this article from PsychCentral includes helpful information and resources.

5 Ways to Encourage Honesty in Your Teen

1. Avoid overreacting and harsh interrogations

When your teen feels like they are being interrogated or yelled at every turn, it will trigger them to become defensive and, in turn, more secretive about their life. Remember, you don't always have to agree with your teen, (conflict between parents and teens is normal), but you always have a choice in how you respond.

2. Promote trust in your relationship

Make your teen part of the process when establishing rules and consequences that are fair and make sense to both of you. When they have a say and feel respected and heard, teens are much more apt to be honest. The best way to build trust is to create a partnership with your teen and solve problems together.

3. Be willing to negotiate

There are going to be instances when you and your teen disagree on boundaries, rules, or how much freedom you give

them. Let your teen know that if they present their case in a calm, respectful manner you'll be willing to listen. If they state a reasonable case that makes sense to you, be willing to change your rule. The more your teen feels that you're willing to negotiate on some things, the more they'll understand when you have to stand your ground.

4. Be an "honest" role model

When you fess up and admit to making a mistake, when you talk openly about your successes and your failures, and when you apologize when you overreact or snap at your teen, you're teaching them the beauty of honesty. Through you, they'll learn that no one is perfect, that mistakes can and do happen, that oftentimes mistakes can be made right, and that dishonesty rarely makes things better in the long run.

5. Celebrate their honesty when they confide in you

It takes a lot for your teen to come to you and admit when they messed up royally, broke a rule, or lied about something. So, when they do, you need to let them know how much you appreciate their bravery and honesty. Even if consequences are in order, when they know they can come to you about anything and you won't freak out (too much, anyway) or shame them, they'll be far more likely to share their world with you.

Getting to the bottom of it when your teen is lying to you requires tremendous self-restraint and the ability to stay focused on your connection.

Remember, your teen isn't trying to disappoint you, they're simply still in the process of becoming emotionally mature and honest with both themselves and us. Take a deep breath, communicate with respect, give grace, and keep on loving them with all your heart.

Marybeth Bock, MPH, is Mom to two young adults and one delightful hound dog. She has logged time as a military spouse, childbirth educator, college instructor, and freelance writer. She lives in Arizona and thoroughly enjoys research and writing – as long as iced coffee is involved. Her work can be found on numerous websites and in two books. Follow her on Facebook and Instagram.

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https://raisingteenstoday.com/why-your-teen-is-lying-to-you-and-how-to-handle-it/

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO GROW UP WITH ALCOHOLIC PARENTS

by Vinita-Mehta PHD

What is it like to grow up in an alcoholic family, in which one or both parents are dependent on or misuse alcohol?

This was the question of a study conducted by Swedish researchers Anneli Silvén Hagström and Ulla Forinder. Because children who experience parental alcoholism tend not to disclose their circumstances for fear of shame and stigma, their urgent need for help often goes undetected—and their voices go unheard.

Given this secrecy, the investigators wanted to better understand their experience, with a particular interest in what kinds of support they need and the coping strategies they use.

In order to pursue this inquiry, Hagström and Forinder analyzed the narratives of 19 children between the ages of six and eleven. The participants were enrolled in a psycho-educational program in the 1990s for youngsters living with parents who struggled with alcohol (these data were part of a longitudinal study).

There were a series of three interviews. At the initial interview, just after the program concluded, researchers prompted the children by asking: "Tell me the story of your life." The interviewers encouraged them to reflect on their various challenges, including their parent's drinking, neglect, and violence. The children were also interviewed a second time between two and six years later, and then a third time between nine and thirteen years after the program ended.

The results were striking. All of the children described how they understood—even as young as age five—that their alcohol-dependent parent's behavior changed when they drank, sometimes in conjunction with drugs. A picture of the parent's "two faces" emerged, contrasting "the sober parent" with "the drunk parent."

Hagström and Forinder's findings also revealed two major narrative positions. On the one hand, the children framed themselves as vulnerable victims forced to navigate their parent's alcoholism, which often encompassed severe neglect, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. They described feeling powerless, without resources to cope with distress and risk, and a desperate need for protection and care.

On the other hand, the children also framed themselves as competent agents who developed effective coping strategies, such as trying to reduce their parent's drinking and assuming the role of a "young carer." A selective overview of Hagström and Forinder's results, broken down between Vulnerable Victim and Competent Agent, is provided below.

The Vulnerable Victim

In their life stories, the children understood themselves to be vulnerable victims. Parental alcoholism gave rise to various harmful experiences, including neglect of basic needs, verbal and physical violence, and sexual abuse by a family member. The participants struggled with feelings of abandonment, sadness and anger for lack of love and care, and anxiety and distress in dealing with the "two faces" of the alcoholic parent. Neglect and violence were most salient, and are described further below.

Experiences of parental neglect:

All the narratives revealed insufficient caretaking while the parents were under the influence of alcohol. A participant named Per (age 22), for example, recalled that his family never ate at regular times—it could be 5 am or well into the night. He recounted his life as fragmented and isolated:

"I had a childhood friend… who I spent lots of time with. Her parents were alcoholics too. We hung out outside late at night. There were no rules… about what we couldn't do.

My dad sat with his friends and such… They often came to our house too, when I was there. You saw them sitting there drinking, you sat with them… It's no fun for a small child to sit like that. I got to light my dad's cigarettes… They fought and such and you had to listen to it… there were quarrels, fist fights, and tumult all the time."

Experiences of violence:

Almost half of the children's life stories referenced verbal and physical violence. The violent parent was described as hypercritical, intimidating, and prone to violence against them or other family members. Consider Eva's (age 7) recollection:

"When mom comes into my room and says that I must drink, I say 'No!' Then she puts it in my mouth, but then I spit… She puts it in my mouth so I almost vomit."

The Competent Agent

The children's stories also demonstrated competence, in which they employed effective strategies to cope with the myriad of challenges wreaked by their parent's alcoholism. Hagström and Forinder found that these coping strategies changed as the participants grew from children to adolescents, and to adults with increasing independence from their parents. The prominent themes of Competent Agent are expanded upon below.

Controlling or preventing the alcohol-dependent parent from drinking:

All participants attempted to control what and how much their parents drank—and anticipated how drunk they would get. Remarkably, the children learned to differentiate between the effects of low-alcohol beer, strong beer, wine, and liquor by identifying bottles, cans, or labels. The children also diluted, hid, or poured out the alcohol—another effort at control.

Consider Julia (age 24) reflecting on her younger self:

"High school was difficult… I lived with mom and I felt the need to control her all the time. As soon as she felt low… I started feeling so bad. A day before I always knew that she'd drink… so I stopped going to school… I took care of her a lot and thought I could cure her… that she was ill… to make her well again. At the same time, I was so angry."

Confronting the parent with the alcohol misuse problem:

All participants tried to adjust or navigate around their parents when they drank, or when the drinking escalated into verbal fights and/or violence.

Practicing the role of young carer:

The children also assumed the role of caretaker of their alcoholic parents, younger siblings, and themselves, which are described below:

Caring for the alcohol-dependent parent. Several children described how the parent-child relationship was reversed when their parents drank and/or used drugs. Even as pre-schoolers, children assumed the responsibilities of young carers by cleaning up vomit, undressing and getting them ready for bed, reminding them to take their medication, calling for help, etc.

Caring for younger siblings. The children's narratives revealed that the eldest child usually cared for and tried to protect younger siblings. For example, Eva (age 12) recalled how her older brother took care of her and their younger brother when their parents fought:

"Our brother tried to calm us down. Because we were watching children's programs when mom and dad started to fight out there. Then you heard a thud, and then she had just fainted. And when she woke up, she lay there screaming on the floor so that nothing could be heard on TV. Our brother covered our ears and we just sat there crying. It was pretty nasty."

Caring for oneself. The children also took responsibility for their own safety and well-being, demonstrating an awareness of their own feelings and needs. Given that the children's efforts to reduce their parent's drinking were largely unsuccessful, they often avoided their inebriated parent. Benjamin (age 6), for instance, used to hide in a small space beneath his home with a torch, and wait for his mother to return from work. He said to himself: "This is a scary dark place where no one else dares to go."

Disclosing the family secret and seeking help:

The children tended to remain silent about their parent's alcoholism to avoid shame and stigma. The distress associated with disclosing parental alcoholism is technically known as "disclosure stigma," and is not uncommon among children of alcoholics. Vanna (age 21) reflected on why people fail to protect and support children such as herself:

"I think people close their eyes because they think it's awkward… They know very well that it's not alright, but you don't always have the strength and don't know what to do… because it's difficult."

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https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/head-games/202301/what-its-like-to-grow-up-in-an-alcoholic-family?eml

Foster Parent Survey

Foster parents, please answer a brief survey regarding obstacles on foster youth obtaining a driver's license. It should only take a couple of minutes but a great way to let your voice be heard.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NEfosteryouthdriverslicense

WHAT IS INSIDE

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