

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

May/June 2019

N F A P A

HOW TO BE FRIENDS WITH A FOSTER MOM

By Maralee Bradley

So your friend has become a foster mom or maybe you just met a new friend and it turns out she's a foster mom. You like this woman. You want to be close and be a support. You want to understand what this whole "foster mom" business means. But where to start? How can you be a good friend to a foster mom?

Recognize that Foster Moms are mostly just moms.

She's not a saint, she's not a monster. She's a mom to kids who need her right now. She isn't made of different stuff than you, able to turn off her emotions when she needs to or with an unending supply of patience. She's just passionate about these kids and families and she wants to help, but many of her motherhood struggles are exactly like yours. The fostering part is a unique aspect of her motherhood, but dirty diapers and making dinner and school drop-off lines are all the same no matter how you got into this gig. Building a relationship with a foster mom can begin with focusing on what you have in common as women, as parents. Affirming that she is a mother and that you are doing the same motherhood work is important. She wants her kids to be invited to VBS and she wants to come to your MOPS group and your zoo playdates. Let her know that you see her unique family as just that- a family.

Give her room to talk, but don't push for details.

We know foster care brings out everybody's curiosity. Is this that toddler we heard about on the news? Are the parents in jail? Does she call you Mommy? Does he have behavioral problems? There are some questions we can answer and some

we just can't. Or at least, we shouldn't. We are the guardians of these kids' stories and we need to protect them. As much as we'd like to explain to you why this child is acting like he is or why reunification isn't happening or why none of us are getting much sleep at night, we may not be able to without compromising this child's privacy. We don't want him to become the subject of gossip in the neighborhood or at church or school.

We may desperately need to talk to someone about our own struggles, so please don't feel like you can't talk to us about foster care or how things are going, just know that when it comes to the stories of these children, we may be guarded or vague.

Let her vent.

We need friends who will let us complain a bit about foster care. Okay, we need friends who will let us complain A LOT about foster care. Foster care can be absolutely ridiculous. No one knows that better than foster parents and we're also the ones who need to be absolute diplomats within the system. We shouldn't be complaining to the families, to the caseworkers, to the lawyers (unless we're doing it in a formal complaint kind of way because it's gotten that bad), so we NEED friends we can voice our frustrations to. If you want to be the kind of friend we trust with our venting, we need to know you can hear us out, ask us questions, and be an encouragement. If we sense that you think we're crazy to keep doing this with as frustrating as it is, we won't keep telling you about it. We need to get it out of our system so we can dive back in. Let us vent without feeling like you have to help us solve anything. The problems may not be solvable, but your support may make them more bearable.



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

N F A P A

Families First is published bimonthly.

When reprinting an article, please receive permission from the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

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

Michael Wilson, Social Media: 402-476-2273 or Michael@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: 402-460-7296 or Terry@nfapa.org

Jolie Camden, Western RFC: 308-672-3658 or jolie@nfapa.org

*RFC=Resource Family Consultant

NFAPA Board of Directors

President

Jay & Tammy Wells

308-928-3111

jtwells@frontiernet.net

Vice-President

Rebecca Rowe

308-737-8430

chocolatedreamsand

sweetthings@gmail.com

Secretary

Kathy Wagoner-Wiese

402-752-3712

okwiese@windstream.net

Treasurer

Vacant

Southeast Representative

Kristine Ray

402-613-3409

KristineRay01@live.com

Northern Representative

Vacant

Eastern Representative

Joey Gaines

402-699-5105

joeygaines@aol.com

Western Representative:

Southwest

Vacant

Western Representative:

Panhandle

Vacant

At Large Board Members

Sam Carwyn, M.A. (she-her-hers)

402-870-4432

sam.annette.carwyn@gmail.com

Central Representative

Luke Kliewer

402-705-8971

ragetoroyalty@gmail.com

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

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/mayjune2019>.

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. One of the most helpful tools I've found to build a relationship with my foster children's biological parents is a back and forth journal.
2. True or False. This is foolproof. It's certainly one size, fits all.
3. How can you be a good friend to a foster mom?
4. Fill in the blanks. If you want to help your friend, consider going through the process to become a _____.
5. So how can we move from advocating for our children to teaching the self-advocacy they will need for the rest of their lives?
6. Fill in the blank. We could help Sam to use his _____ to meet his own _____.
7. True or False. These facilities are rarely effective for kids with developmental trauma disorder.
8. List three times when should you consider an RTF.
9. If you're deciding whether or not foster care is something you want to do, there are a number of things to consider. List 3.
10. True or False. Rates are based on the following, The study identified the "minimum adequate rates for children" specific to each state and based on an analysis of the real costs of providing care. This includes food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, insurance and travel.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

(Continued from page 1)

Don't tell her to quit.

Let your friends be frustrated, be heartbroken, be upset. If they say they want to quit, ask them questions and be a support. Recognize that those feelings may be intense, but fleeting. If you think your friend really is being damaged by foster care or isn't capable of safely caring for foster kids, I think this is a conversation you can lovingly have. But if it's just that she needs a safe place to complain, don't turn that conversation into the reasons why she should be done. I bet she's complained about her husband before, but you probably didn't advocate divorce. Give lots of grace in those frustrating moments.

Be mindful that traditional parenting techniques may not work.

As you do life alongside a fostering friend, you may notice that she doesn't parent the way other people do. That's okay. She's dealing with healing wounds she didn't create and that takes a unique kind of parenting. She may feel like a failure for not being able to help this child the way she wishes she could. She may be exhausted from having to explain why she's making the parenting choices she is. She may be hyper aware of how people judge her parenting without understanding why this child is acting like she is— it isn't a problem she caused, but now she has to work to solve it. She needs a good friend who can love her, support her, ask her questions and listen to why she's doing what she's doing. Kids who have been abandoned may not be able to do time-out. Kids who have been screamed at may respond very negatively to a mother who yells across the park, even if it's just to tell them they have five more minutes to play. Children who have been starving may not be able to skip a snack as a consequence. Realizing there are reasons behind the choices she's making may help you give her the grace she needs to parent differently and in a way that is healing to these children.

Ask about respite needs.

There are lots of ways you can offer practical support to a foster family, but one of the most pressing needs is for respite help. Respite is when you provide care for a foster child so the foster parents can get some time away. If there's a wedding or funeral out of town, the child may not be able to go. If the foster parents want to do an anniversary trip, they need specialized help. Even just getting a babysitter for date night can be a major hassle if you've got to have them background checked and approved ahead of time. That's where you come in. If you want to help your friend, consider going through the process to become a respite family. There is no more practical way to communicate to your friend that you support what she's doing than to stick your toes in that water, too.

Love her kids.

I can't tell you how important this one is. If you can see past

the struggles and to the heart of this child, you will forever win a place in this mom's heart. Can you take the time to get down on his level and smile at him and ask how he's doing? Can you invite her over for a playdate even if you know tantrums will be involved? Can you drop by some ice-cream for the family? Can you be one more adult in this child's life that helps reinforce the message that he is worth loving? If a foster mom sees you genuinely loving her foster child (and seeking to understand that healthy boundaries are part of that process), she's going to love you all the more.

Foster care is hard work, but it is made easier with the loving support of good friends. For those of you who function as a support structure for the families doing the work of foster care, we thank you. We can't do this well without your help.

Reprinted with permission from:

<http://www.amusingmaralee.com/>

Back + Forth Journal: Building a Relationship with Biological Parents

by Anonymous



When I first became a foster parent, I believed my kids' biological parents to be the addicted, criminal, dangerous enemy, who should be avoided at all costs. Thank the Lord, He didn't leave me there. God placed compassion in my heart for my kids' parents and an understanding that the family is precious to Him. I've since worked to build a relationship with my kids' biological parents in an effort to show compassion, support reunification, and maintain a relationship after their/my/our child returns home.

One of the most helpful tools I've found to build a relationship with my foster children's biological parents is a back and forth journal. Whenever I share about this, I get a slew of messages from foster parents about just how to do this, what exactly I say, and the ins and outs of it all. It's a pretty simple idea, but many people feel intimidated by the idea of communicating

with biological parents and are searching for direction. So if you're looking to start building with your kids' parents and don't know where to start, I hope this serves you!

THE WHYS

- In NJ, most foster parents have no—or very little—contact with biological parents. There is no built-in context for connecting with parents, and it's up to the foster parent create one themselves. For states/counties where you don't transport to visits or have other contexts for connection, the journal is vital for initiating communication. But even for those states/counties where you see parents on a regular basis, I think it's a helpful tool. The relationship between biological and foster parents can be very awkward and difficult to navigate. I find that I am able to communicate my heart, share information, ask questions, and introduce a depth of conversation that might not be natural in person, with an almost stranger.
- I've learned more information about my kids' stories, medical histories, and trajectory of their cases from biological parents than I've ever learned from workers.
- I want to care for my kids' parents whether I think they're worthy of it or not—because I've experienced so much mercy myself. But there are added benefits to building a relationship—for the child and, quite honestly, for myself. It's served their/my/our children well to have two moms who are willing to work together to make the reunification process as seamless as possible. I've been able to “bridge” care (a fancy foster care word for helping ease the transition) because my kids' parents know and trust me and are willing to listen to my input and ask questions. The added “personal benefit” is that because I've worked to keep my kids' parents informed and involved when they were in my care, I've often found that parents are willing to do the same, once the kids are back in their care. I've receive updates and pictures, I've had lunch with my kids and their moms, I've had kids come to the house to visit. I've been able to stay involved in my kids' lives in a meaningful way, which has benefitted everyone involved—mom, the child...and me!

THE HOWS

- Check with the worker first. While I don't think we should assume our kids' parents are dangerous, we also shouldn't naively assume they are all safe.
- I introduce myself and explain why I am a foster parent. For me, this means saying straight out, “I'm not trying to adopt your child.” If you are hoping to adopt, I would not communicate that. Almost without a doubt, once the parent gets to know me, they share how relieved they are that I am a “good” foster parent. So many of our kids' parents were in the system or have watched friends or

family deal with the system, and it's left them wary of foster parents. We know we're good parents, but they don't! I try to express right away what kind of foster parent I am by sharing how I will care for their child as one of my own (while not forgetting whose child they are!)

- Limit the personal information you share. I don't talk about my other children and, unless specifically asked, don't share how many children I have. Yes, I have 5-6 children, I'm tired, and I'm physically and emotionally overwhelmed. But it's probably not going to instill confidence in them to hear that.
- Ask questions about their preferences and routines. I ask questions like: How would you like me to do her hair? Any songs or books that you sing or read? What is your nighttime routine? What is his favorite show/activity/toy? What kinds of foods does she usually eat? Anything you'd like me to know about your parenting style? Yes, this could open a can of worms of demands, but it could also shut down the battle for control that often ensues. If parents feel like they have a voice with you, they'll be more likely to feel like you're in it together and talk rather than yell, fight, or report.
- Share things that the child is experiencing and accomplishing. Tell them that the baby is cooing, that he is making new friends at school, that her new favorite show is My Little Pony, that he had a doctor's appointment and is 40th percentile for height. Share every day details about how they spend their time and big life things that every parent would want to know. Two things to be careful of:
 - o Don't share overshare anything that could lead to worry, which could lead to interference. I usually underplay struggles, hard behaviors, and health concerns, until reunification is imminent and it serves them to be aware.
 - o Don't overshare how happy and joyful the child's life with you is. In my experience, parents want their kids to be happy in your home, but they don't want them to be too happy in your home. Sharing that your foster son is taking swim lessons and is the fastest swimmer on the team and she would be so proud is helpful. Sharing that your family went to the zoo and had ice cream and each kid bought something from the souvenir shop and everyone took a dip in the pool afterwards and fell asleep in a pillow fort together may not be. Basically, highlight how the child is doing personally, but not necessarily how they're doing as a part of your happy family unit.
- Send photos from every day, school, sports, and special occasions. Send report cards, art projects, encouraging notes from the teacher, and anything else you would want as a parent.
- Encourage them. Let them know that you're praying for

them, that you believe in them, that you hope they can be with their child soon. Say things that you believe, even if you don't feel them. It's not a lie for me to say "I hope that your child can be with you soon" to a mom struggling with meth addiction. Because I'm not saying, "I hope your child can come join you in your meth house and be neglected." I'm saying, "I hope that you can get clean and be healthy and make good choices and see all that your child needs from you, so that she can be with you again soon." I've said many things to parents that I don't feel, because I believe them and I'm fighting for them and I'm praying that God helps me to feel them.

- Share details that would be helpful to know for the visit. She should be hungry around 5:00. He might be tired because he had a baseball game until 9:00. She's been fighting off a cold and might have a runny nose.
- Include a pen as another hint: I want to hear from you, too.

Below are two pages—the first page and a page from a couple of months in—from the back and forth journal I shared with one of my foster children's moms. It's not profound. There's nothing spectacular in it. But I am asked for a sample constantly, so I'm sharing these in case you find them helpful:

Hi "Mom!"

*I want to introduce myself. My name is Jamie. I've been a foster parent for five years, and I've cared for 21 other children. I often care for babies. *Yourdaughter* is beautiful and sweet, happy and content. She's been sleeping through the night and eating well. She's loving being held, played with, sitting in the swing, playing in exersaucer, and singing. I would love to be able to write, back and forth, in this journal. I can update you on things here, and you can let me know if there's anything specific you would like me to do, ways you'd like me to care for her, songs you'd like me to sing, routines you'd like me to establish, etc. I want you to know that I understand that she is your daughter—I am not trying to take her from you and not trying to adopt her. While she is here, I will love her as my child—she'll get the same love and attention my other children do—but I'll do everything I can to support you also. My hope and prayer is that you will be together soon. Please let me know if there are any ways I can pray for you. We love *Yourdaughter* already! I would love to hear back from you! Love, Jamie*

Mom,

*I'm glad you feel less alone with me on your side--because I am. *Yourdaughter* had a great week since you've seen her last. Everyone who meets her comments on how beautiful and happy she is. She's so content and she smiles and laughs often. To answer your question, we haven't been giving her baby food yet, per the doc's recommendation. I'll start introducing cereal and then foods one at a time, and I'll send them along once we start! Six ounces of formula is keeping her full and happy and sleeping through the night. I think she's going to roll over*

*soon—she's so close! She's doing that thing where she'll bend her neck around and start to fling her body but not really make it! She's so close! We're taking great care of her—holding her, singing your special song to her, and playing with her all day. I'm getting new pictures printed for you, and I'll send them next visit! I prayed for this morning and do often—I believe that God can give you the strength and help you to do all that needs to be done, as hard as it is. I'm praying that He reveals himself to you in a new way and you experience His love for you! And mine! And *yourdaughters*! She'll be ready to eat as soon as she gets there—just pour the formula into the 6 oz. of water! Have a great visit! Love, Jamie*

After I've established communication using the back and forth journal, I take it from there. For me, this usually means sharing my phone number and encouraging periodic texts or phone calls (other's prefer Google Voice or Facebook Messenger, and I've also created a second e-mail address). Then I try to invite to doctor's appointments or special events. The relationship grows and continues from there!

This isn't foolproof. It's certainly not one size, fits all. You may be able to do all of this or none of it. I'm sure many of you have horror stories of efforts like this going awry. Bottom line, I believe that as foster parents, the most important part is seeking compassion for our kids' parents and looking to involve and encourage and support them—when possible—in any way possible.

Reprinted with permission from:

<http://www.fosterthefamilyblog.com/foster-the-family-blog-1/back-and-forth-journal>

Forgotten Friday/Letting Go

by Bailey

Sometimes when you love something so much you have to let it go. Sometimes life requires you to do hard, painful things because of a love so deep you have for a person. This is where my heart is right now, loving something so fiercely that I have chosen to say goodbye. In just a few short weeks we will say goodbye to E and his brother and I know it's the best possible decision for them and us, but saying goodbye still isn't going to be easy.

When the boys came back into care in December we knew the case was taking a turn towards adoption and we knew that the Lord had spoken to us and told us these boys weren't meant to be ours forever. Prior to them coming back to us, we felt that was because they were meant to move back to their momma, but when things fell apart we knew that there was another reason and it was our job to advocate for them in every single way we could. My job turned from foster mom to advocate, and let me tell you I advocated for these boys more

than I've advocated for ANYTHING in my life.

I spent hours upon hours talking to social workers, the GAL, and potential new foster families that were interested in taking the boys. I sent tons of emails and texts, and prayed every single night that the Lord would continue to keep their best interest in His mind as He determined their path. We met with three, yes that's right, three families who were interested in the boys. I poured my heart and soul out to all three families, disclosing why we had made the choice to disrupt and why we felt it was in the best interest of our two little guys. I disclosed behaviors, trauma, schedules, routines, likes and dislikes to each of these families. I warned them about what they were up against while reassuring them they could do this and the boys would be a wonderful addition to their family. We welcomed two of those families into our own home for meet and greets. They got to know us, see where we lived, and met the boys. It was exhausting.

By the time the third family came forward and met with the boys at our home, I had nothing left to give. I prayed so hard that this would be the right family, but I knew even if it wasn't I wasn't giving up. These boys needed someone to advocate for their needs and this is what I was born to do, fight for them when they didn't have a voice to fight for themselves. I wasn't about to let them go to a home where they wouldn't be loved on and cared for. They needed a special family that could continue on with their case but be open to adopting them, and they needed someone who was willing to fight through the challenges of the trauma they've been exposed to and the effects it's had on their tiny bodies. When the last family came forward, I was skeptical because I had watched two other families walk away and I didn't want to get my hopes up.

When the "A" family met the boys for the first time, I'm not going to lie, it was a little awkward. We were exhausted at this point and the boys were tired of having new people in their house. They spent 2 hours in our home and we spent the majority of it in silence. I learned right then and there that this wasn't about me being comfortable, it was about the boys finding the best fit for them and if that meant sitting in a silent living room while our dog barked loudly upstairs and we awkwardly smiled at strangers from across the couch then I was willing to do it, because they needed a voice, and I had been given the privilege of being that voice. After our visit the family informed their worker that they were all in and they were committed to taking on the boys and loving them for however long the Lord allowed. When we finally heard these words, I felt as if I let out a sigh of relief while being struck with a pang of grief. It was finally happening—we were really going to be saying goodbye.

The past 2 weekends the boys have spent time with their new, hopefully forever, family and it's been such a change. The family is completely smitten with them and I couldn't be any more grateful; at the same time I'm so sad. I'm so sad because E has been my baby for over a year and we will finally be saying

goodbye. I know this is what needs to be done and I know this is the best answer for everyone in the long run, but, man, is it still hard. I don't think I've fully let my heart feel the extent of the grief that I know I will have to experience, but I know that this was all still completely worth it.

This is something about foster care that so many people say but I don't think many "outsiders" really understand. How can you love someone so much and hurt so bad when they leave but still claim it's worth it? It's worth it because where would these boys be if we hadn't said yes? Would E and his brother ever have been able to be in the same home together if we hadn't agreed to take in brother when he was brought into care? Would the boys ever have moved to a potentially pre-adoptive home if it wasn't for us? Probably not. Do I attribute all their successes to what I've done for them? Absolutely not. All I did was listen to the call from the Lord when He spoke and told me I needed to love on the children of my community. I make mistakes daily. I get frustrated, am more selfish than I'd like to admit, and worry how I will recover when we say goodbye again, but I know that it's worth it.

So as we spend these last few weeks with our sweet boys, I will cherish every last second I have with them while praying for their future and their new family. I will love them as much as my heart can while also slowly letting them go. And when I feel sad or overwhelmed with anxiety and grief of the big changes about to come, I will remember that sometimes when you love something so much you just have to let it go.

-Bailey

*Bailey and her husband have been married 4.5 years and live in South Florida with their foster children and crazy dog, Nessie. After suffering from infertility for over a year, they felt the Lord calling them to a life of fostering. They began their fostering journey in September 2015 and took their first placement in January 2016 and have had eight placements over the two years since. Bailey shares glimpses into their life on her blog, *Whichever Shoe Fits*.*

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.theforgotteninitiative.org/blog/2018/12/forgotten-friday-letting-go/>

How To Help Your Children Advocate For Themselves

by Kristin Berry

As parents, we spend a lot of time advocating for our children, and ensuring their needs are understood, and met. That's a big part of our job. But we also must begin to teach our children to speak for themselves. How do we successfully do that?

Hello, my name is Sam. I have an FASD, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Some things are harder for me like focusing, sitting still and remembering things. I'm very good at some things like drawing, problem solving and building things. I feel anxious when things are loud or when things are change. If I'm anxious I feel like my body is out of control, my head and my neck feel cold. You will know that I'm feeling anxious when I'm wiggling, when my voice gets loud or when I sound angry, sometimes I hang my head or look away. I can get regulated by wearing my hoodie, wearing my headphones, taking a walk with Mrs. C or going to Miss R's room. Sometimes I can carry heavy things, or jump on the trampoline to make my body feel better. If I need help getting regulated I can raise my hand and ask my teacher.

- Sam Berry, age 9 (from a presentation he gave to his principal, special education team and teachers.)

We noticed our son was struggling with school a few weeks into the year. He had a lot of positive things to say about his friends and his teacher but he still showed signs of anxiety each morning before getting out of the car. We talked with his teacher and came up with some great solutions for him to use throughout the day to address his anxiety. Even so, he still had a number of bad days mixed in with the good. One night as we tucked him into bed, we asked him what was going on. He balled his fists up, narrowed his eyes and said, "It doesn't matter, I'm just a bad kid, I'm a piece of crap. I'm never going to do the right thing. I just clip down and clip down and clip down. I don't care what they take away from me. I can't sit still. I'm not allowed to go to the resource room and the sub didn't even let me walk to the bathroom by myself." We waited till he was done and then circled back to the substitute teacher. Our son told us that his teacher had been sick a lot and they were having substitutes every week. We suddenly understood that if new teachers were coming into the class that it would be nearly impossible for them to get to know all the students, much less read, understand and implement each IEP (individualized educational plan).

The next day we began by contacting the special education department and the principal. Within the next few days we had formulated a plan. We would meet with the principal, special education teacher, counselor, aid and the most frequently used substitutes. We couldn't make his teacher get better any faster but we could help Sam to use his voice to meet his own needs. We met before school and Sam was excited to get to talk to everyone. He dictated what he wanted to say the night before and then used the notecards I copied to practice his presentation with everyone in the house. He was prepared.

We walked into the conference room that morning and Sam was met with a group of caring adults who wanted to hear what he had to say and ultimately wanted to support him. The meeting was amazing. Each adult listened intently and then

the team welcomed Sam to help make some changes to his classroom experience. He practiced telling them that he was feeling anxious and they practiced giving him coping options. I nearly cried. (I do that a lot)

So how can we move from advocating for our children to teaching the self-advocacy they will need for the rest of their lives?

1. Encourage– Highlight your child's strengths. Help your child to unlock his or her learning style and love language. Encourage your child to use his or her gifts and talents whenever possible.
2. Use positive language– Things may be difficult for your child but they are not impossible.
3. No Shame– Your child's diagnosis isn't all that they are, it is a small part. Do not shame your child for his or her anxiety, diagnosis, behavior or struggles.
4. Empower– your child is the only one who knows what it feels like inside his or her body. Empower them to know and use language to describe how they are feeling and what they need.
5. Practice with your child– Your child will begin self-advocacy at home. Allow them to practice perfecting the language and accommodations they will need to use outside of the home.
6. Prepare your audience– Your child will need to advocate for him or herself throughout life. To the best of your ability, create positive opportunities for your child to communicate with the people around them. Call the school and set up a meeting, make arrangements with caring family members or neighbors in which they are prepared to hear your child and respond in a loving supportive way.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://confessionsofanadoptiveparent.com/how-to-help-your-children-advocate-for-themselves/>

No Longer Fostering? We Would Love To Hear From You.

We are interested to learn about families leaving foster care and the reasons behind their decision. This information can assist us to advocate for future policies to support foster families. If you are a former foster parent, please take a moment to provide feedback on your foster care experience.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nfapaexitsurvey>

The Real Costs and Reimbursements of Foster Care

by: *Samantha Devereux*

Can You Make Money From Foster Care?

Nothing is more insulting than some random person asking the question “Oh, do you do foster care for the money?” Well, first, I own a business and have a job (as does my partner), so we can comfortably support ourselves AND the kids. Second, the reimbursement rate for caring for a foster child doesn't even cover the basics like food or clothing, much less leave anything extra for normal kid stuff.

If you're deciding whether or not foster care is something you want to do, there are a number of things to consider. These include:

- The real costs involved
- The other hidden cost: your time!
- How much you'll be reimbursed
- Why you really want to do this

The Real Costs

In my state, we get \$372 per month to care for a child, plus once a year they provide a clothing voucher for \$480.

That amount doesn't cover homecomings, school supplies, sports, field trips, school pictures, summer camp, toys, computers, proms, movies, vacations, amusement parks... or anything else that is normal for a teenager to do. That all comes out of our pocket to make sure the kids can be kids.

\$480 is great... unless the kid arrives with only the clothes on his back. Any idea how much it costs to outfit a 16 year old from the floor up, for all the seasons at once? Don't forget gym clothes, court clothes, swimsuits, and winter coats! Did I mention we only get the voucher for JCPenney's? Yeah, we never figured out how to make it stretch that far either.

Did you know most states do NOT cover daycare costs for foster kids? That whopping monthly payment you get also has to cover \$200-\$400 a week in childcare. And as an extra special bonus, you can only use state-licensed daycares.

And ouch, the utilities! Add a few extra-clean teenagers with a gaming habit, and my water and electric bill double! Ugh. My dish bill doubles with more boxes; my phone bill quadruples with more lines for those ninja texters.

Finally, the laundry. Oh, my God, the laundry never ends. How do they get so many clothes dirty in one day?

Do You Have to Spend That Much?

Well honestly, do you really think I'm going to go to an amusement park without the kids?

That I'm going to grill up steaks but give my foster kids mac and cheese?

Or that we are going to go all out for Christmas but leave the foster kids out of the fun?

Any kid in our house is treated like a member of the family. This isn't about money or stuff or going places: it's about being included, no matter what we are doing. The entire point of fostering is to have the child feel like they are home until they can go home.

Facts:

We use two gallons of milk in a day. Seriously.

Three pounds of bananas last us one day.

I added three bedrooms onto my house and bought an

11-passenger van JUST for the kids.

The Other Hidden Cost: Your Time

Surely you know how much time it takes for normal everyday kid stuff... and time is money, right? So let me give you a typical breakdown of what happens when new foster kids move in.

Aside from total shock, dismay, and nervous laughter, you need to get some things done... immediately!

- The kids need clothes—and right now. They came with stuff that looked like it was from a dumpster and doesn't remotely fit. (If they came from another foster home, you are usually pretty good to go, because they will have sent the kids to you with stuff that actually fits.) So you need to take all the kids to the store and help them pick out clothes, shoes, socks, a backpack... the list goes on. They will either want nothing or Every. Single. Thing. They. See. Fun times.
- Within 24 hours of placement, you need to get the kid into see a doctor. Sorry if you had plans or work. You need to track down all their school info and have it faxed over to the new school. If the kid has an IEP (Individual Education Plan)—and most do—it can take a week to set that up before they can even start school. Again, I hope you have vacation time at work. Within three days you and the kids will head to a court hearing to determine if they even stay in care, if they should go to relative, or if they need special services. This is always fun when you buy a kid \$300 worth of clothes, take three days off work, and then they leave... and you never hear from them again.
- You will be driving the kids to family visits. These will typically be an hour long, from one to five times a week. These visits are usually hard on the kids... so plan on letting them run crazy in a park to let off some steam afterwards. Then plan on fielding some pretty awful questions as these little people try to get their head around when they can go home. You learn to do your very best to not cry in front of them.
- Medical appointments... Oh, my God, you have no idea. In addition to family visits, the kids must also go to therapy at least once a week. Get a sibling group of five? That's right, pal: you're looking at five separate appointments a week, usually not in the same building or with the same person. Plus dental, which will almost always be some major situation: foster kids haven't usually had someone coaching them on good dental hygiene. Medical involves everything from general issues to mental health issues; plan on at least one actual doctor appointment per week if you have several kids. And that's if no one is actually sick.

My Own Experience

As an example, let's talk about my first foster placement. Let's say you got a new kid this week (who came with a dog... what the hell?), and you have managed to get him settled in your house with clothes, food he will actually eat, and dog food. (Again, who gives a homeless kid a dog?!) Now you find out he will need to go to the dentist once a week for six weeks to fill every single tooth in his head, and the dentist is an hour away. Somehow no one told you that his birthday is in four days (good thing you had his medical card with the dates on it!). The kid is 78 pounds, 4'7" tall, and 15 years old, so that should be looked at for sure. You make a note to call someone, but you're not sure who. Has the dog had shots? No? OK, well, he needs shots, so add that to the list. (You get to pay for that, too.)

Now for the therapy. That's also an hour away, but they can double up on the day you have to drive him the hour to see family, so that's fine. Once you find the right guy to deal with the kid's not growing, you find out the kiddo who you've known for three weeks now needs brain surgery. Flipping wonderful. Plan on sleeping at the hospital

because he's afraid of his shadow and leaving him all alone isn't an option. (I really hope you didn't have anything planned for a few months!) The kid has surgery and gets six weeks off school to recover, which means you get to entertain a kid who can barely move his head for at least four weeks. Naturally you go on a shopping spree of crafts, models, and other stuff he can do sitting or lying down, which prompts your other kid to whine that HE should get brain surgery so he can get more stuff. (Sighs.) FYI, the kid is on a second-grade reading level, can barely add, and has the social skills of a bull—a wild bull—so be sure to plan time to work on all that stuff too!

Once you get the brain thing fixed and the kiddo on growth meds, be sure to set aside a mountain of cash, because in eight months this kid is going to tear through five shoe sizes and go from a Boys' size eight to a Men's Medium in clothing (and I'm not even remotely exaggerating). Now remember: this is NOT your kid. You just stopped your entire life for a child who will eventually go home... for \$372 a month. So how much is your time worth? Think anyone would do all that, and give up life as they knew it, for \$372? Bottom line: anyone who thinks foster care is profitable hasn't thought it through.

(FYI, the kid is a respectable 5'7" tall now and totally fine medically.)

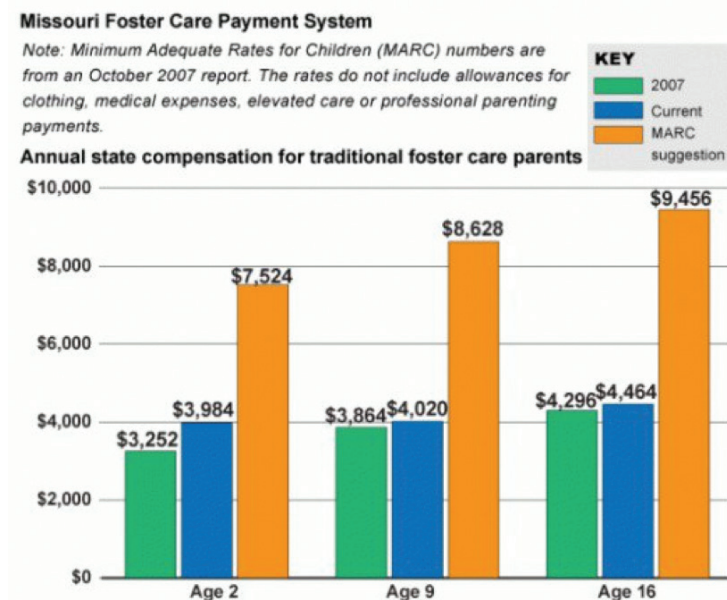
A Few Other Considerations

Did you know that, if you need a babysitter, you will have to get their social security number and have a background check done on them first? Same thing for the kids going to sleepovers. Can you imagine how awkward that conversation is? "Oh, little Johnny wants to spend the night. Can I just get you to fill out this form and wait one to three weeks for the results?" That's right, a foster kid who has lost everything cannot even hang out at their friend's house without you.

If your mom wants to come spend the weekend with you... yep, any adult staying the night in your home will need a background check as well.

There are so many other ways to make much more money that is not nearly as emotionally taxing as being a foster parent. Money should not be (in any way, shape, or form) a consideration in becoming a foster parent.

Missouri Foster Care Payments Fall Short



Sources: Children's Rights, National Foster Parent Association, University of Maryland School of Social Work, Missouri Department of Social Services

Foster Care Reimbursement Rates

I live in Missouri, so we'll use that as an example. According to the Columbia Missourian, a survey was conducted by Children's Rights, the National Foster Parents Association and the University of Maryland School of Social Work. The study identified the "minimum adequate rates for children"

specific to each state and based on an analysis of the real costs of providing care. This includes food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, insurance and travel.

The average amount of reimbursement across all ages in Missouri for 2007 was \$227 per month. The average minimum adequate rate across all ages was \$711.

Let's Recap...

So in addition to feeding, clothing, and housing a child, you also get to pay for:

- Any damage they may do.
- All toys, games, and hobbies.
- Music lessons, scouts, or any other activities.
- Sports and all the equipment.
- Transportation.
- Daycare or babysitters.

Plus, your time is now their time, so cancel all plans.

Maybe I'm using old-school math here, but I see no possible way to even break even in this equation. I have yet to figure out how to keep a human alive, fed, housed, happy, educated, cultured, and dressed for less than \$13 a day.

So Why Do This?

Simple: for the kids.

If anyone wants to do foster care for any other reason, then they shouldn't bother.

Have you ever seen the face of a child light up because those new shoes you bought were their first new pair EVER?

Have you ever seen a child almost cry when they saw their "new room?" Or ask you how many people they had to share their bed with?

How about that surprised face when Santa actually came, when he never once remembered that kid before... and the follow up heartbreaker of "Do I get to really keep the toys or are they going to get sold?"

Those moving moments when a child gets something they need and truly deserve are amazing. In those moments, the hassle and expense are truly worthwhile.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://wehavekids.com/adoption-fostering/making-money-off-foster-care>



A big thank you to News Link for all the donations for our Kits for Kids bags. They collected through their annual fundraiser socks, pajamas, onesies and diapers. Thank you for your wonderful support!

Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child's Needs

by *Anonymous*

All children need homes that are safe and full of love. Children who have experienced severe trauma may need more. Early, hurtful experiences can cause children to see and react in different ways. Some children who have been adopted or placed into foster care need help to cope with what happened to them in the past. Knowing what experts say about early trauma can help you work with your child.



Forms of Trauma

An event is traumatic when it threatens the child or someone the child depends on for safety and love. Abuse may be traumatic, but trauma may take many forms. It includes:

- Neglect
- Separations
- Violence between caregivers
- Natural disasters
- Accidents

A frightened child may feel out-of-control and helpless. When this happens, the body's protective reflexes are triggered. This can make a child's heart pound and blood pressure rise. The "fight or flight" panic response can kick in.

Some children are more sensitive than others. What is traumatic for one child may not be seen as traumatic for another child. It can be hard to tell what will affect a child. Fear is guided by a child's perception of what is frightening. It might be hardest for children who are neglected, even if they are not bruised and battered. These children worry about basic needs like food, love, or safety.

Trauma Has More Severe Effects When...

- It happens again and again.
- Different stresses add up.

- It happens to a younger child.
- The child has fewer social supports (healthy personal relationships).
- The child has fewer coping skills (language skills, intelligence, good health, and self-esteem).

How the Brain Reacts to Trauma

When something scary happens, the brain makes sure you do not forget it. Traumatic events are remembered in a special way. They are often experienced as a pattern of sensations with sounds, smells, and feelings mixed together. Any one of these things can make a child feel like the whole event is happening again. These things or sensations are called "triggers."

Triggers

Triggers can be smells or sounds. They can be places, postures, or tones of voice. Even emotions can be a trigger. For example, being anxious about school may bring up the memory of being anxious about violence at home. This can cause dramatic and often unexpected behaviors like physical aggression or withdrawal. Triggers can be hard to identify, even for a child. Children will try hard to avoid them.

Remembering a traumatic event can cause some of the original "fight, flight, or freeze" reaction to return. This might look like a "tantrum." It might also look like the child is overreacting. Sometimes anxiety can cause a child to "freeze." This may look like defiance. A child who sees the world as a place full of danger may do this. Many children who have been abused or neglected go through life always ready to flee or to fight.

Associated Disorders

Being ready to flee or fight shows up in many ways. Children who are always on guard may have trouble concentrating. This is called "hyperarousal." This

is a classic sign of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and children may receive this diagnosis. They may experience frequent anxiety and be overwhelmed with emotions. Children who have experienced trauma may have trouble with the unexpected. Their need for control may be seen as "manipulative" or as always wanting things done their way. Going from one activity to another may be hard.

When behaviors are extreme, it is sometimes called an "oppositional defiant disorder" or "intermittent explosive disorder."

Learning to Trust After Trauma

All newborn babies are helpless and dependent. Consistent and loving caregivers help babies learn to trust others, and to feel valuable. This is important for healthy development. We cannot thrive without the help of others. This is most true when times are hard.

Supportive, caring adults can help a child recover from traumas. Some children may not know that adults can help

or that they can be trusted. They may resist the help of others. Not trusting adults can be mistaken as disrespect for authority. This can cause problems at home and at school. It can also make learning harder.

It can be hard to tell who is affected by trauma. Mistreated children may withdraw from people and seem shy and fearful. They may also be very friendly with everyone they meet. They may cross personal boundaries and put themselves at risk for more abuse. They are choosing between “trust no one” and “trust everybody, but not very much.”

What Foster and Adoptive Parents Can Do to Help

Usual parenting practices may not work. So, be careful! First, know and respect that your child may perceive and respond to the world in ways that you do not.

Remember:

- Children who have been adopted or are in foster care have often suffered trauma, and live with more anxiety. They see and respond to threats that others do not.
- Their brains might always be “on guard.” It might be hard to ignore things or focus on a book or a lesson.
- It may be hard to earn their trust and respect, even over time. Many children have never learned to depend on consistent, reliable adults.

Parents may need to seek help and this is common. Pediatricians, developmental specialists, and therapists can give you effective ways to respond. They can help you see how your child relates to the world. Therapists may give insights to you and your child. Sometimes medications, used appropriately, will help to control symptoms and make learning new ways possible.

Kids are doing the best they can, with what they have been given. It is our job to provide them with the tools they need and to guide them as they grow. It may be a slow process with many setbacks, but the rewards are worth the effort. By understanding that your child’s past experiences have affected the way she sees and responds to her world, you have taken the first steps to building a safer, healthier one.

Tips:

- Learn to notice and avoid (or lessen) “triggers.” Find out what distracts or makes your child anxious. Work to lessen these things.
- Set up a routine for your child so she knows what to expect.
- Give your child a sense of control. Give simple choices. Respect your child’s decisions.
- Do not take your child’s behaviors personally.
- Try to stay calm. Find ways to respond to outbursts that do not make things worse. Lower your voice. Do not yell or show aggression. Do not stare or look directly at your child for too long. Some children see this as a threat.

- When your child keeps you at a distance, stay available and responsive.
- When you can, stay away from discipline that uses physical punishment. For a child who was abused, this may cause panic and out-of-control behavior.
- Let your child feel the way she feels. Teach your child words to describe her feelings. Show acceptable ways for her to deal with feelings. Then, praise her for expressing her feelings or calming down.
- Be patient. It may have taken years of trauma or abuse to get the child in his current state of mind. Learning to trust again is not likely to happen overnight—or any time soon.
- Be consistent, predictable, caring, and patient. Teach your child that others can be trusted to stay with him and help him.
- Ask for help when you have concerns, questions, or are struggling. There are proven therapies to help children and parents adjust to trauma’s effects. You do not have to do this by yourself.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/adoption-and-foster-care/Pages/Parenting-Foster-Adoptive-Children-After-Trauma.aspx>

THANK YOU FOSTER PARENTS! YOU ARE APPRECIATED!

In honor of Foster Care Recognition month the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association would like to thank you for your commitment to the foster children of Nebraska.

Every day, children and youth in Nebraska are living in foster care because their own parents are in crisis. Foster families address the needs of these children by providing a stable and secure home. Foster families also play a key role in helping birth families in crisis heal and be reunited. Foster families provide youths involved in the juvenile justice system with structure and stability and an opportunity to demonstrate responsibility.

Foster Care Month is an opportunity to recognize the thousands of foster families who care for and support the foster children in Nebraska. Too often your hard work goes unrecognized.

Although May is National Foster Care Recognition Month, we appreciate foster parents throughout the year. Thank you again, for opening your hearts and homes to children. You DO make a difference.

This mother's description of her tween son's brain is a must-read for all parents.

by Annie Reneau

It started with a simple, sincere question from a mother of an 11-year-old boy.

An anonymous mother posted a question to Quora, a website where people can ask questions and other people can answer them. This mother wrote:

How do I tell my wonderful 11 year old son, (in a way that won't tear him down), that the way he has started talking to me (disrespectfully) makes me not want to be around him (I've already told him the bad attitude is unacceptable)?

It's a familiar scenario for those of us who have raised kids into the teen years. Our sweet, snuggly little kids turn into moody middle schoolers seemingly overnight, and sometimes we're left reeling trying to figure out how to handle their sensitive-yet-insensitive selves.

A mother of two with an uncanny amount of wisdom gave a solid gold answer all parents need to read.

Jo Eberhardt, a fantasy writer and mother of two from Australia, penned a reply that is so spot on that it keeps repeatedly popping up on social media. When you nail it, you nail it—and this mother nails it.

"Ah, puberty," she wrote, "It changes our sweet, wonderful little boys into sweet, eye-rolling, angsty, accidentally disrespectful, but still wonderful young proto-men." Yup.

Eberhardt then described a discussion she had with her 11 1/2 -year-old son when he started going through this stage—a conversation they had in the car, which is usually the best place to have potentially uncomfortable discussions with kids.

She told her son that she'd messed up in the way she'd talked to him about puberty, then explained exactly what was happening in his brain.

"I've spent all this time talking to you about the way puberty changes your body," Eberhardt told her son, "and what to expect as you go through the changes, but I completely forgot to talk to you about what's going on in your brain right now. Puberty is the time when your brain grows and changes more than at any other time in your life — well, except for when you're a baby, perhaps. So I really let you down by not preparing you for that. I'm so sorry."

Her son accepted her apology, then asked why his brain was changing.

"That's the amazing thing," she told him. "Did you know that your brain grew and developed so quickly when you were little that by the time you were about five or six, your brain was

almost as big and powerful as an adult's brain?"

"But here's the thing," she continued, "Even though your brain was super powerful, the instructions were for a child's brain. And all the information about building an adult's brain was a bit... let's say fuzzy. So your brain did the best it could, but it didn't really know what kind of person you were going to be back then, or what shape brain you were going to need."

"Now we come to puberty," she went on. "See, puberty is amazing. Not only is your body being transformed from a child's body to an adult's body, your brain has to be completely rewritten from a child's brain to an adult's brain."

"That sounds hard," her son responded.

"Yeah, it is," Eberhardt replied. "That's why I wish I'd warned you first. See, it takes a lot of energy to completely rewrite a brain. That's one of the reasons you get tired quicker at the moment — and that, of course, manifests in you being crankier and less patient than normal."

Eberhardt paused, then added, "That must be really frustrating for you."

Her son looked over at her, wiping his eyes. "It is," he responded. "Sometimes I just feel really angry and I don't know why."

It's amazing what happens when we explain to kids the physiological reasons for what they're going through.

Eberhardt continued, "The other thing is that one of the first parts of your brain that gets super-sized to be like an adult is the amygdala. That's the part that controls your emotions and your survival instincts. You know how we've talked about fight/flight/freeze before, and how sometimes our brains think that being asked to speak in public is the same level of threat as being attacked by a sabre tooth tiger?"

Her son laughed. "Yes. So you have to tell your brain that there's no sabre tooth tiger to help you calm down."

"That's right," Eberhardt replied. "Well, that's what the amygdala looks after: sabre tooth tiger warnings and big emotions. So, the thing with puberty is that all of a sudden you've got an adult-sized amygdala hitting all your emotion buttons and your sabre-tooth tiger buttons. That must be really hard for you to manage."

Her son nodded and said, "Sometimes I don't know why I say the things I do. They just come out, and then I feel bad."

This is the moment where what a parent says can make or break a kid's spirit. But Eberhardt handled it with empathy and expertise.

"I know, Sweetheart," she said before explaining:

"See, the last part of your brain that gets rewritten is right at the front of your head. It's called the frontal cortex. And that's the part of your brain that's good at decision making and understanding consequences. So you've got this powerful adult amygdala hitting you with massive emotions, but you've still got a fuzzy child frontal cortex that can't make decisions or understand consequences as quickly as the amygdala wants

you to. It pretty much sucks.”

“So it’s not my fault?” her son asked.

“No, it’s puberty’s fault your brain works the way it does,” Eberhardt answered. “But that doesn’t mean it’s not your responsibility to recognize what’s going on and change your actions. It’s not easy, but it’s not impossible, either. Your feelings are your feelings, and they’re always okay. But you get to choose your actions. You get to choose what you do with your feelings. And, when you make a mistake, you get to choose to apologize for that mistake and make amends.”

Eberhardt said she then paused for dramatic effect. “That’s how you prove that you’re becoming an adult.”

It’s also remarkable what happens when we empathize and communicate with our kids instead of simply chastising them.

Her son responded with a perfectly understandable and relatable, “Puberty sucks.”

“Puberty absolutely sucks,” Eberhardt responded. “I’m not in your head, but I can only imagine that it’s a mess of confusion and chaos, and you don’t know from one minute to the next how you feel about things.”

Her son looked at her in surprise. “Yes! Exactly!”

“If it’s confusing for you living inside there,” Eberhardt continued, “imagine how confusing it is for me, when I only see your actions.”

“That must be really confusing,” her son agreed.

She nodded. “Do you know what that means?”

“What?”

“It means sometimes I’m going to make mistakes. Sometimes I’m going to get upset at things you do because I don’t understand what’s going on in your head. Sometimes I’m going to forget that you’re halfway to being a man, and accidentally treat you like a child. Sometimes I’m going to expect more from you than you’re able to give. This is my first time parenting someone through puberty, and I’m going to make mistakes. So can I ask you a favor?”

“What is it?”

“Can you just keep telling me what’s going on in your head? The more we talk, the easier it will be for both of us to get through this puberty thing unscathed. Yeah?”

“Yeah,” her son said.

When we let our kids know that we’re going through these various phases together, it’s easier to work with them instead of against them.

Eberhardt said they “had a cuddle” before they got out of the car. She also said this conversation didn’t magically make her son always speak respectfully or make her remember that he’s not a little boy anymore. However, it did open up lines of communication and gave them a shared language to use.

For example, she wrote, “He knows what I mean when I say, ‘Sweetheart, I’m not a sabre tooth tiger.’”

Eberhardt wrapped up her excellent answer by saying that

she and her son are “muddling through this crazy puberty thing” together, and that she’s “completely confident that he’ll come out the other end a sweet, wonderful young man.”

It’s always so helpful to see examples of good parenting in action.

Ms. Eberhardt’s response is something all parents can tuck away for the appropriate time. It’s also a great reminder that our tweens aren’t trying to try us—they’re just trying to get used to their new and improved brains.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.upworthy.com/this-mother-s-description-of-her-tween-son-s-brain-is-a-must-read-for-all-parents?>

NEBRASKA FRIENDS OF FOSTER CHILDREN CAN HELP YOUR CHILD IN FOSTER CARE LEAD A NORMAL LIFE

Imagine you are 10 years old. Today, you are taken to a new neighborhood to live with a new family—with parents, brothers and sisters you have never met. Your only possessions are the clothes on your back and what has been stuffed into a plastic bag. You will never see your favorite stuffed animal or toy again. You are not sure if you will ever see your mom or dad, siblings, friends or pets again. You are scared and want to be a normal kid again. In Nebraska, children in foster care face this situation often, sometimes several times a year. It can be frightening for a child of any age. They want to appear normal to their friends on the outside however, inside they are hurt, confused and on an emotional roller coaster. With the help of NFFC, foster parents can help a child fit into the normal pattern of sports and school activities that may put a financial burden on that parent.

Founded in 1992, NFFC is on a mission to provide for unmet needs and enhance opportunities for Nebraska children in foster care. NFFC aims to improve the lives of children in foster care by accepting and funding requests for items and experiences normally out of reach for families with limited budgets. As an all-volunteer and non-profit organization, NFFC ensures that the money it raises reaches the children it is meant to serve. Since its inception, 95% of funds raised have been given directly to those in need.

All children under the age of 19 who are currently state wards and in out-of-home care are eligible for NFFC grants. Caseworkers, foster parents, or service providers may apply for grants on behalf of children in their care. Most frequently funded items include: summer camp tuition, drivers education classes, music lessons, sports and recreational fees, equipment and uniforms, and senior items such as graduation fees, senior pictures and prom attire. NFFC board members strongly encourage foster families seeking assistance to submit grant requests well in advance as it may take 4-6 weeks for processing and approval. In some instances, within reason, foster care providers may submit receipts for services purchased on behalf of a child for reimbursement. To submit a grant request, visit NFFC’s website at www.ne-friends.org to complete a form online. Once you are in the website, click on “view grants”. The next screen will display “apply for grants”. Click on “apply for grants and you will see the application form. Fill out the required fields and hit the submit button. If you have questions about NFFC, please send us an email at grants@ne-friends.org.

What You Need To Consider Before Sending Your Child With Developmental Trauma Disorder

by Annie Reneau

My son Devon was 10-years-old when I dropped him off at a residential treatment facility (RTF) for the first time. I knew almost instantly it wasn't going to work. They didn't believe in consequences. School work was optional. With unlimited dessert and no rules, it was more like a summer camp than a program for kids with severe behavioral problems.

I called my sister for advice and my words came out with a sob, "He'll see this as a reward."

"I don't care if it's Disney World," she said, without hesitation. "You have to get him out of your house. Nothing else matters right now."

"But he's going to get worse here—"

"We'll deal with that later. Leave him," she said.

And I did.

Devon's behavior had been growing increasingly unmanageable and dangerous over the previous 18 months. He was having violent outburst every day and the stress level in our house was toxic for everyone. My youngest son, who was 4, was especially frightened and would tremble with fear when he sensed Devon's anger mounting. I was suffering from PTSD—even though I didn't realize it at the time.

I'd been trying to get help for Devon for years. We'd tried outpatient therapy, intensive in-home therapy and partial hospitalization. He wasn't getting better and I had no idea how to help him. I only knew what I was doing wasn't working.

As I'd predicted, Devon's behaviors did become dramatically worse from the RTF. However, my sister had recognized what I could not – it was still the best option available to us. Unfortunately, if you've exhausted outpatient options and your child is becoming unsafe, it may be your only option too.

Why RTFs don't work

While an RTF may be the best – or only – option available, it's important to have realistic expectations. These facilities are rarely effective for kids with developmental trauma disorder. In fact, they can exacerbate the symptoms, and here's why:

- 1. The treatment is not specialized for developmental trauma.** Your child will be placed with kids who have a variety of issues including anxiety disorders, eating disorders and PTSD. The coping skills they will learn – like taking deep breaths, playing with a stress ball and counting to ten – are not enough to heal the brain injury caused by developmental trauma.
- 2. The workers are under-trained, overworked and underpaid.** Your child will work with a licensed clinician for therapy. Yet, the general supervision is typically provided by workers

who have a high school diploma and on-the-job training. Our kids are very challenging to deal and the chronic understaffing and inadequate training results in inconsistent quality of care.

- 3. The staffing structure lends itself to triangulation.** Because workers are rotated (and have high turnover) they are easily triangulated – especially against the therapist and parents. Unfortunately, your child is likely to gain a sense of control by behaving this way – a feeling they unconsciously crave – and will continue even when it sabotages their treatment.
- 4. The kids become institutionalized.** In these facilities, your child will be exposed to and influenced by kids with sexualized behaviors, horrific language and physical violence. They'll quickly learn the ropes and how to work the system to their advantage, for example, by making false allegations to retaliate against staff or peers. This is knowledge they'll ultimately use to manipulate the staff and you as well.

RTFs are intended to teach your child how to cope and let them "practice" good behavior for when they return home. Yet, the artificial environment and behavior-based modification techniques do not help them to truly heal.

"Kids with DTD learn to work within the external structure of residential treatment facilities. It doesn't get internalized for them though," said Institute for Attachment and Child Development Executive Director Forrest Lien. "Ultimately, most kids go back into their families and fall apart. Sadly, it's oftentimes the only option for parents."

Unless you are able to send your child to a program that is highly specialized for developmental trauma, your child is unlikely to get better.

When to consider an RTF anyway

Parents who are considering sending their children to an RTF often ask for my advice. It is a very personal decision and every child and family is different. However, the following are a few words of hard-earned wisdom I often share.

- 1. Consider an RTF if your child is unsafe to himself or others.** Remember to consider not only the physical, but also psychological well-being, of other children in the home.
- 2. Consider an RTF if you are at your breaking point.** You cannot help your child when you are unstable yourself. An RTF may be the breather you need to regain perspective.
- 3. Consider an RTF if your child engages in unlawful behavior.** An RTF is likely a better option than juvenile detention where your child will get a

criminal record and receive little treatment.

The decision to send your child to an RTF should be a last resort but you may be at that point now. You alone are not able to heal developmental trauma any more than you can set your child's arm or cure his leukemia. The best you can do is access the best possible treatments available and support and love your child through the process.

For us, an RTF was the best choice because Devon had become unsafe to himself and his siblings. And after years of giving it my all, I had nothing left to give. He's now 17 and in his ninth RTF. It's not the forever family I'd hoped for and not what any parents wants. Yet, it is often the best of the limited choices families like mine have. It is the best choice for us. And while my son doesn't live at home, he'll always be a part of our family.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.instituteforattachment.org/residential-treatment-facilities-what-you-need-to-consider-before-sending-your-child-with-developmental-trauma-disorder/>

Upcoming Training

Facilitated by the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Sponsored by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

The Kinship Connection

This six hour training will provide Relative & Kinship families with training on the following topics:

- The Legal Process
- RPPS/Respite
- Trauma & Attachment
- Safety
- Behavior Management
- Redefined Roles
- Loss & Grief
- Permanency Options for Children & Youth

Monday, June 3, 2019

from 9 am – 4 pm: Lincoln

Sunday, June 9, 2019

from 9 am – 4 pm: Scottsbluff

Saturday, July 13, 2019

from 9 am – 4 pm: Lincoln

Sunday, October 13, 2019

from 9 am – 4 pm: Scottsbluff

**Registration is required.*

Register online:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KinshipRegistration2019>

These informational classes are for Relative & Kinship families who have not taken pre-service classes to be licensed foster parents.

NFAPA Support Groups

Have you ever thought about attending a support group? NFAPA offers support groups to foster, adoptive and kinship families! This is your chance to gain understanding and parenting tips through trainings, discussions and networking with fellow foster families.

This is a great way to meet other foster/adoptive families in your area! In-service training is offered at most support groups for those needing credit hours for relicensing. Up to date information with each support group location will be on the calendar page on our website at www.nfapa.org. Support Groups will be cancelled for inclement weather.

Contact a Resource Family Consultant for more information:

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

Tammy Welker (Columbus): 402-989-2197

Terry Robinson (Central/Southwest Area): 402-460-7296

Robbi Blume (FACES): 402-853-1091

NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176

IN-PERSON SUPPORT GROUPS

- **Scottsbluff Support Group:** Meets the second Tuesday of the month. Registration is required.
Contact Jolie Camden to register: 308-672-3658
Sugar Factory Road-*please do not bring in Pepsi products.*
6:00-7:30 p.m.
May 14 and June 11, 2019
- **Chadron Support Group:** Registration is required.
Contact Jolie Camden to register: 308-672-3658
CHA Daycare and Home School, 237 Morehead
6:00-7:30 p.m.
May 6, and June 3, 2019
- **Columbus Support Group:** Meets the second Tuesday of the month (except June, July and December). Childcare available.
Contact Tammy Welker at: 402-989-2197
(Thank you Building Blocks and Behavioral Health Specialists for providing childcare!).
Peace Lutheran Church, 2720 28th St.
7:00-8:30 p.m.
May 14 2019

ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP

- **FACES:** Online Support Group: Every Tuesday 9:00-10:00 p.m. CT Contact Felicia at Felicia@nfapa.org to become a member of this closed group. Meets weekly to discuss issues foster parents are facing. Support only.

TRANSRACIAL SUPPORT GROUP

- **Parenting Across Color Lines:** This group supports and strengthens racial identity in transracial families. Support only. Meets the fourth Monday of the month.
Children welcome to attend with parents.
Newman United Methodist Church, 2242 R Street, Lincoln. 6:15-8:00 pm
Contact the NFAPA office to register for Family Events or any questions.
402-476-2273
For more information or to RSVP, contact Laurie Miller at Laurie@nfapa.org

Be sure to mark your calendars! If you have a topic you want discussed, please contact the Resource Family Consultant for that group.



A time to recognize that we each can play a part in enhancing the lives of children and youth in foster care. Help by celebrating all those that make a difference in a child's life.

WHAT IS INSIDE

How To Be Friends With A Foster Mom	1
NFAPA Staff / Board of Directors.....	2
Attention Foster Parents!	2
Back + Forth Journal: Building a Relationship with Biological Parents ...	4
Forgotten Friday/Letting Go.....	5
How To Help Your Children Advocate For Themselves.....	6
No Longer Fostering?.....	7
The Real Costs and Reimbursements of Foster Care.....	8
Thank You to News Link.....	9
Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child's Needs.....	10
Thank You Foster Parents! You Are Appreciated!.....	11
This Mother's Description of Her Tween Son's Brain is a Must-Read for All Parents.	12
Nebraska Friends of Foster Children Can Help Your Child in Foster Care Lead a Normal Life.....	13
What You Need To Consider Before Sending Your Child With Developmental Trauma Disorder.....	14
Upcoming Training.....	15
Nebraska Foster And Adoptive Parent Association Scholarship.....	15
NFAPA Support Groups.....	15
May is National Foster Care Month!.....	15
JOIN NFAPA.....	16



3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
Lincoln, NE 68521
www.nfapa.org

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LINCOLN NE
PERMIT NO 927



JOIN NFAPAyour support will enable NFAPA to continue supporting foster parents state-wide!

Benefits

- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- 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:
NFAPA, 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
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.

Name(s): _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

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

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

- Single Family Membership** (a single foster or adoptive parent), \$25
- Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), \$35
- Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), \$75
- Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
- Friends of NFAPA**, \$5 billed Monthly

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- Gold Donation, \$1,000
- Silver Donation, \$750
- Platinum Donation, \$500
- Bronze Donation, \$250
- Other, \$ _____