

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

September/October 2019

N F A P A

CHILDREN GLUED TO SCREENS SHOW ALARMING DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

By Katherine Martinko

A new study emphasizes the importance of minimizing young children's exposure to screens.

One in four children starting school in Canada is not developmentally prepared for it. They show delays in language, communication, motor skills, and emotional resilience, which makes it challenging for them to cope with the academic requirements. If developmental gaps are not addressed early on, they tend to widen with age, which places a burden on the school system to offer specialized support for these children.

The question of why such a high percentage of children are delayed should be front and foremost in any discussion about this issue. Of course every child will have different factors contributing to his or her unique situation, but researchers at the University of Calgary have found a common thread – and it's one that might be upsetting to many parents today.

In an open-access study of over 2,400 children, just published in *JAMA Pediatrics*, Professor Sheri Madigan and her colleagues found that the more time young children spend glued to screens, the worse their score on tests of cognitive and emotional development (the widely-used 'Ages and Stages Questionnaire,' or ASQ-3).

But this leads to the question of what comes first – delays in development or excessive screen time viewing? Kids with developmental delays might be more likely to spend time in front of a screen than those who are not delayed. Madigan explored further and found that the opposite is not true:

"Results suggest that screen time is likely the initial factor: greater screen time at 24 months was associated with poorer performance on developmental screening tests at 36 months, and similarly, greater screen time at 36 months was associated with lower scores on developmental screening tests at 60 months. The obverse association was not observed."



This is troubling because child development is rapid and crucial in the first five years, and screens – a mostly avoidable factor – are clearly undermining it. Screens hinder a child's ability to develop normally. They disrupt conversations with caregivers and siblings, causing the child to miss out on verbal and non-verbal social exchanges. They cause a child to be more sedentary and miss out on motor

skill development.

The study authors urge medical professionals to take a stronger stance on media use for young children. First, they should discourage its use and emphasize the need for moderation. Second, they should help families create individualized media plans that "balance and allocate time for online and offline activities to ensure that physical activity and family interactions are prioritized."

It seems that every week there's yet more evidence that screens and kids are a bad combination. This isn't something to mess around with. Parents need to take action, limit exposure, and give their kid the best chance at succeeding in life, even if it isn't as convenient as handing over an iPad. Pay attention to studies like this and your kid will thank you someday.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.treehugger.com/family/children-glued-screens-show-alarming-developmental-delays.html>

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
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/Treasurer

Kathy Wagoner-Wiese
402-752-3712
okwiese@windstream.net

Southeast Representative

Kristine Ray
402-613-3409
KristineRay01@live.com

Central Representative

Luke Kliewer
402-705-8971
ragetoroyalty@gmail.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

Amanda Neal

402-804-0147
Mandafaye75@yahoo.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/SeptOct2019. 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. Fill in the Blank. Anxious brain is a strong, healthy brain that is a little
2. True or False. Big emotions live in the right side of the brain. The words that make sense of those emotions live in the left. Sometimes, there is a connect between the two. It can happen in all of us.
3. At what age do children start to test out the act of lying?
.....
4. True or False. Children may not really care about the specifics of what they're wearing, eating, or doing, when they're in public amongst same-aged peers, they will care very much.
5. Fill in the Blank. In the A.C.E.S. study, the participants were given a score based on how many adverse experiences existed in their lives before the age of _____.
6. True or False. A child who acts out might be unable to verbalize the real issue (fear, stress, uncertainty), as his or her communication skills are done developing.
7. Fill in the Blanks. The first step to serving as a mentor is to form a _____ with the parents of the children in your care.
8. Fill in the Blanks. The most important thing you can do to mentor parents is to _____
.....
9. True or False. When the pre-frontal cortex of the brain is damaged, logic and reasoning go out the door.
10. Fill in the Blank. Parents need to take action, _____, and give their kid the best chance at succeeding in life, even if it isn't as convenient as handing over an iPad.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

Anxiety or Aggression? When Anxiety in Children Looks Like Anger, Tantrums, or Meltdowns

by Karen Young



Anxiety can be a masterful imposter. In children, it can sway away from the more typical avoidant, clingy behaviour and show itself as tantrums, meltdowns and aggression. As if anxiety wasn't hard enough to deal with!

When children are under the influence of an anxious brain, their behaviour has nothing to do with wanting to push against the limits. They are often great kids who don't want to do the wrong thing, but they are being driven by a brain in high alert.

If we could see what was happening in their heads when anxiety takes hold like this, their behaviour would make sense. We would want to scoop them up and take them away from the chaos of it all. Of course, that doesn't mean that they should be getting a free pass on their unruly behaviour. Their angry behaviour makes sense, and it's important to let them know this, but there will always be better choices they are capable of making.

Once kids have a more solid understanding of why they do what they do, they will be well on their way to finding a better response. Here's where the adults in their lives will make a critical difference. Parents, grandparents, teachers – anyone who is able to understand and respond to their behaviour as something driven by anxiety, rather than 'naughty' behaviour, will be helping them to find healthier, stronger, more effective ways to respond to the world. All kids have it in them to do this, but anxiety can have a sly way of stealing the attention from their strengths. Now to put an end to that.

Anxiety or Aggression?

Anxiety happens when a part of the brain, the amygdala, senses trouble. When it senses threat, real or imagined, it surges the body with hormones (including cortisol, the stress hormone) and adrenaline to make the body strong, fast and powerful. This is the fight or flight response and it has been keeping us alive for thousands of years. It's what strong,

healthy brains are meant to do.

An anxious brain is a strong, healthy brain that is a little overprotective. It is more likely to sense threat and hit the panic button 'just in case'. When this happens often, it can create 'anxiety about the anxiety'. One of the awful things about anxiety is the way it launches without warning, and often without need, sending an unsuspecting body unnecessarily into fight or flight.

For kids with anxiety, any situation that is new, unfamiliar, difficult or stressful counts as a potential threat. The fight or flight response happens automatically and instantaneously, sending neurochemicals surging through their bodies, priming them for fight or flight. Every physical symptom that comes with anxiety – racy heart, sick tummy, clammy skin, vomiting, shaky arms or legs – is because of the surging of these neurochemicals. The natural end to the fight or flight response is intense physical activity. If the threat was real, they'd be fighting for their lives or running for it. When there is no need to fight or flee, there is nothing to burn up the neurochemicals and they build up, causing the physical symptoms of anxiety.

If anxiety is having a hand in the angry behaviour, the signs of anxiety will still be there in some way. Look for any type of avoidant behaviour, sick tummies, headaches, sensitivity to new or unfamiliar situations. Any of these might be a clue that anxiety is hard at work. Take note of when the meltdowns or tantrums happen. Is there a pattern? Do they seem to happen more in unfamiliar situations or situations that might overspend your child's emotional resources?

Why do some kids show anxiety as anger?

Anxiety is often associated with avoidance or clinginess but it doesn't necessarily present itself in this way. The physiological driver is the same – a brain under threat – but instead of flight, it initiates fight. It doesn't matter that there's nothing at all there to worry about. When the brain thinks there's trouble, it acts as though it's true.

Think of this like a smoke alarm. A smoke alarm can't tell the difference between a real fire and burnt toast, and it doesn't care. All it wants to do is keep you safe. It does this by making enough noise to get a response. Better safe than sorry. The brain works the same way. An anxious brain is a very protective brain, and it will be quicker to hit the alarm, even when there is no need. This could happen in response to unfamiliar situations or people, playground scuffles, criticism, disappointment, threat of embarrassment or failure – anything that could potentially trigger the feeling that something bad may be about to happen.

The fight response is the brain's adaptive way of giving a young body the physical resources it needs to deal with a situation that feels potentially harmful. Remember, this reaction happens automatically and instantly. It's so quick that there's no time for any conscious consideration as to whether or not the threat is real.

As part of growing up, children regularly find themselves in unfamiliar situations where they have to negotiate and learn strategies for dealing with the world and its people. This is how they learn emotional and social skills that will move them towards being strong, healthy adults. In the meantime though, for an anxious brain, it's trouble at every turn! Any situation that puts expectations on them and demands that could exceed their own developing resources will have the potential to trigger anxiety.

Like the flight response (avoidance, clinginess), the fight response is an automatic, hardwired response from a brain that thinks it's under threat. That doesn't mean that kids can't be taught to control it – they absolutely can – but first they need to understand what's happening.

As the adults in their lives, it's important to be open to the possibility that beneath an aggressive, disruptive child, is an anxious one looking for security and comfort. If anxiety is at play, dealing with aggression as bad behaviour will always inflame the situation. On the other hand, dealing with it as anxiety will give them the strategies and support they need to find their way through, as well as teaching them vital skills that will hold them well for the rest of their lives.

Practical ways to deal with anxiety-driven aggression.

What kids need to know.

- **Explain where anxiety comes from.**

Kids can do amazing things with the right information, and it's important not to underestimate their potential for understanding. When it is something that is personally relevant, their capacity for understanding is immense. Here's what they need to know, but it doesn't need to happen all at once. Giving them the information over lots of small, incidental chats will be just as powerful.

‘Those times you get really angry are probably confusing for you. I know you don't want to do the wrong thing and I think it will help if I explain what happens when you get angry like that. First of all, you need to know that everyone gets angry for all sorts of different reasons. Your reason is a really good one – it's because your brain is working hard to protect you.

There's a special part of your brain called the amygdala. We all have one. The amygdala's job is to warn you of danger and keep you safe. Think of it like your own little warrior, there to protect you. Yours works especially hard. When it thinks there might be danger, it surges your body with a type of superhero fuel – oxygen, hormones, and adrenaline – to make you strong fast and powerful enough to deal with the danger.

This could be anything that your brain thinks might hurt you or make you feel uncomfortable – new people, new places, too much noise, having to do something that feels risky. Everybody has something that makes them feel anxious. We're all the same like that.

Your brain doesn't care if there actually is something there that could hurt you. It just wants to keep you safe, so it fuels you up just in case. There's a really cool name for this – it's called fight or flight – fight the danger or run from it. Guess which one your brain gets you ready for. It's getting you ready to fight the danger.

This happens really fast – so fast that you won't even realise it's happening until you have the angry feelings inside you. Your brain is super speedy and it surges you with fight or flight fuel before it has even thought about whether or not the danger is real. This happens in all of us, but in some people it happens more, especially at times when there's no need for it. More than anything in the world, your brain wants to protect you and it works really hard to do this – even at times you don't really need protecting.

Here's something important you need to know: The same part of the brain that has the very important job of keeping you safe and ready to deal with trouble, also deals with your emotions. When it thinks you might be in danger, it switches on. When it's on, your emotions will be switched on too. Sometimes they will be switched on big time! This is why you might feel like you want to burst into tears or get really angry.

None of this means that you can blame your brain for losing your temper. What it means is that you have a really strong healthy brain that works hard to look after you. It wants to be the boss of things, but everything will run smoother when you're the one in charge of your brain!

There's something else about brains that you need to know. Brains can change. They're pretty amazing like that. At the moment, your brain tends to be a little overprotective of you but you can train it so that it doesn't react as much when there's no danger about. It will still protect you by letting you know when there's trouble and it will still be awesome at getting you ready to deal with it, but it won't do it as much when it doesn't need to.

There are a few things you can do to be the boss of your brain and train it to relax more. It will still be ready to fuel you up if there actually is danger, but if you're the boss of your brain, you get the final say. What this means is that when there is no danger, you'll be able to settle your brain much quicker. Let's talk about some ways to do that.'

- **Breathe – but you probably haven't breathed like this before!**

‘Strong deep breaths will always calm an anxious brain (and an angry one!) but that's not so simple when your brain is busy trying to keep you safe. The last thing it wants to do when it's in protective warrior mode is to take time out to relax. It thinks that there is some serious work to be done to keep you safe! First let's talk about why strong deep breaths work, then some special ways to get your breathing perfect.

Strong breathing calls up the front part of your brain, called the prefrontal cortex, which is a part of your brain that is able to calm things down and think things through. When your

amygdala thinks there's danger, it gets bossy and tells this part of the brain that it's not needed. This is why it's so important for you to learn how to be the boss of your brain. When you're in charge, you can get the front part of your brain involved in deciding whether or not to fight or flee.

This is really important. The front of your brain is great at calming your amygdala – the part that's triggering your fight and the angry feelings.

How do you get the front of your brain involved? By breathing. Breathing is like a lullaby for your amygdala. It helps it to realize that there's nothing to worry about. When this happens, the amygdala will calm down and so will you. But – you have to practice breathing when you aren't angry. It's too hard to do new things when you're really upset. We all struggle with that! Breathing strong breaths is like any new skill. The more you do it, the better you'll get.

Here are some fun ways to practice – and it will take some practice, so be patient and keep doing it every day.

Is that hot cocoa you're holding?!

Pretend you are holding a mug of hot cocoa. Breathe in for three seconds through your nose, as though you are smelling the delicious rich chocolatey smell. Then pretend to blow it cool, by breathing out through your mouth for three seconds. Keep doing this four or five times, then you'll start to feel yourself relax.

Find yourself a breathing buddy.

Put a soft toy on your belly. Breathe in for three, hold it for a second and then breathe out for three. If the toy is moving, you're breathing deep into your belly – just like strong breathing is meant to be. You've got it.

Remember we talked about changing your brain? Every time you breathe through your anxious feeling, you're helping to change and strengthen your brain. You're doing something pretty amazing and the more you do it, the better you'll get – but you do have to practice!

- **Have your powerful thoughts ready.**

'When you start to feel yourself getting angry, this is the time to let your brain know you're the boss. Here's the secret – you'll have to work out what to think, and practice thinking it, before you get angry. The more you practice, the easier it will get. After you've been practicing it for a while, you'll be able to find your powerful thought without any effort at all. Just like your breathing though, it will take practice. Work out what your powerful thoughts will be. Pretend that you are speaking to your amygdala – that fierce little warrior of yours that is trying to keep you safe. It will always be ready to listen. Practice it out loud or quietly in your head. It's up to you. 'It's okay warrior dude. We're all good here. You can relax. There's nothing that can hurt us here.' Then, keep practicing your strong brave thoughts until they become automatic, which they will.'

And other things to do with them.

- **Mindfulness.**

The research on the effectiveness of mindfulness could fill its own library. Mindfulness has been proven over and over to have enormous capacity to build a strong body, mind and spirit. Building the brain against anxiety is one of its wonders.

Anxiety happens when the brain spends too much time in the future. This is where it grabs on to the 'what ifs'. Mindfulness strengthens it to stay in the present. It's simple, and kids take hold of the concept beautifully. They are mindful little beings anyway, but the more they can strengthen this skill, the stronger they will be. It's a wonderful skill to have, anxious or not.

Mindfulness is about stepping back and seeing thoughts and feelings come and go, without judgement, but with a relaxed mind. It has been shown to strengthen the connection between the instinctive, emotional back of the brain (the heartland of the fight or flight response) and the pre-frontal cortex (the part of the brain that soothes it back to calm).

Mindfulness for children generally works best it's kept to about five minutes or less but let them keep going for as long as they want to.

- **Name it to tame it.**

Big emotions live in the right side of the brain. The words that make sense of those emotions live in the left. Sometimes, there is a disconnect between the two. It can happen in all of us. When there is a disconnect, there are big feelings, but they feel overwhelming and they don't make sense.

Think of it like this. The left part of the brain is 'this is what's happening'. It is the literal understanding of the world – the concrete data, the facts. The right part of the brain is 'this is how I feel about what's happening'. It's a more emotional, intuitive understanding of the world. If we only had our left brain, we would have great detail ('this happened and then this happened'), but it would be a colder, more detached way of responding. If we only had our right brain we would have a sense of how we felt about an experience, and there would be plenty of emotion, but the more rational understanding would be missing. The detail of the world is important ('this is what happened') but so is the bigger picture ('this is how I feel about it').

For kids, a powerful way to bring calm when they are in the midst of a big feeling is to name the feeling. As put by Mark Brackett from the Center for Emotional Intelligence, 'if you can name it, you can tame it.' When your child is in the thick of a big, angry feeling, name the feeling you see. 'I can see that you're really angry right now.' 'It has really upset you that you weren't allowed to run through the supermarket. I get that. It's hard having to be still sometimes isn't it.'

Hearing the words that fit with their feelings will help to strengthen the connection between the right and left sides of their brain. When this happens, the emotion will start to

'tame'. It will feel less like an ambush from a big woolly feeling and with your words, it will start to make sense. Be patient. It won't happen straight away, but it will make a difference. It will also help to expand your child's emotional vocabulary. This is a powerful part of developing their emotional intelligence, which is vital for any child as they grow.

- **Lift them up.**

Kids who find themselves regularly throwing tantrums or being aggressive will probably have a lot of focus put on their bad behaviour. Lift them up by focusing on their strengths.

And finally ...

If your child seems quick to anger, be open to the possibility that anxiety might be the culprit. The most powerful way to turn any type of anxiety around is to explain to children the driving force behind their behaviour. This will help to empower them and put the focus on their strengths in managing their behaviour and help lift them to full flight.

Reprinted with permission from:

https://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-or-aggression-children/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=email_this&utm_source=email

Don't Panic: Your Kid's "Bad" Behavior Is Probably Normal!

by *W.R. Cummings*



As a parent, it's so tempting to overanalyze every choice we make and try to figure out whether or not we've messed up our kids. It's also tempting to overanalyze our children in an attempt to either put them IN the box of "normal" or out of it.

In reality, there's no such thing as normal. There is only "typical" or "common," and you would probably be surprised by what is common amongst kids.

Here are some of the most common behaviors we worry about in our children that are **TOTALLY NORMAL**.

- Most kids start to test out the act of lying around age 2

- or 3 for the first time, but it generally continues until age 6 or 7. This is a natural way for them to figure out where their boundaries are, how much power they have by using their voice, and whether or not the truth is important.

- When we tell our kids no to toys or snacks that they really want, it's common for them to try sneaking them a few times. If they continue this behavior, it could be a sign of other things, but it's completely normal for them to try it a time or two.

- Most kids in their pre-adolescent years experiencing a return of tantrum-type behaviors. They might not be throwing themselves on the ground, kicking and screaming, (or maybe they are) but they are probably yelling and crying for almost no reason. Their emotions are as out of control as a toddler's.

- This probably goes without saying, but teenagers ALL roll their eyes at their parents, groan in frustration, and sigh more than a leaky tire. The surprising thing is that the eye-rolling and sighing starts in about mid-elementary school, which seems entirely too early. It's so common.

- Although kids generally stop trying to lie to their parents around ages 6 or 7, they usually begin to lie to their friends around this time due to a growing understanding of peer culture and social construct.

- There is often a return of children lying to their parents around age 14 or 15 when they start high school. Developmentally, they've reached the age of puberty, and their biological clock is trying to get them to separate from their parents. Their brains are hard-wired around this age to start moving toward independence, much like a baby bird is hard-wired to leave the nest around a certain age. We think it shouldn't start until they're seniors in high school, but it actually starts with puberty.

- Almost every child I've ever met has become incredibly superficial around the second or third year of elementary school. They only want certain styles of clothing, certain snacks for their lunch, and certain event places to host their birthday parties. As they grow, the superficiality leans more heavily toward expensive brands. Although children may not really care about the specifics of what they're wearing, eating, or doing, when they're in public amongst same-aged peers, they will care very much.

- Around late elementary school to early middle school, kids start to sexualize a lot of the world around them. For one, they've hit puberty (or are about to), but for two, they're hearing a lot of things at school that make them curious. You might notice an interest in skimpier clothing or more sexualized dancing. Limited access to media significantly helps this problem, but even in the generations before us that had no access to media, this was still a developmental milestone around this age.

- Sometimes our families grow, whether by birth, adoption, marriage, or simply a rearranging of family structures, but that's really hard for kids. If your child seems to get angry with their new sibling for absolutely nothing at all, that's totally normal. It's an outward manifestation of the stress they're

feeling on the inside.

– At literally EVERY AGE (probably until they turn twenty-one), kids want to be older than they are. When they're young, they use fantasy play to pretend that they're older. They draw about it, write about it, and play with their siblings in ways that discuss it. When they move into preteen years, they still have this fantasy, but often start to act in ways that they think will make them seem older, as well. By the teen years, they're not only reaching "up" in social situations to feel older, but they're also making choices that will age them faster than they should be aging.

Obviously, this is not an all-encompassing list of behaviors that our children can have, but it is some of the most commonly worried about.

We don't need to accept these behaviors as okay—they're still unhealthy and show us that our kids need guidance—but we can rest in the peace that other families are going through the exact same problems.

They're probably not screwing their kids up, and neither are we.

What have your kids gone through that you used to worry about but have since realized is normal?

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/childhood-behavioral/2019/07/dont-panic-your-kids-bad-behavior-is-probably-normal/#.XVozj5KuuR8.mailto>

A NOTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT:

As you may be aware, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has contracted with Saint Francis Ministries to assume case management services currently being performed by PromiseShip (formerly Nebraska Families Collaborative) in Douglas and Sarpy counties. This new contract will take effect January 1, 2020, but you may notice changes prior to that.

The contractor change resulted from the State's procurement process with the intended outcome to provide exceptional services for children in Sarpy and Douglas counties, DHHS' Eastern Service Area. The change will create new opportunities to further strengthen families through a shared vision and strong collaboration designed to improve outcomes.

The DHHS team has developed a comprehensive transition plan in conjunction with Saint Francis Ministries that incorporates consideration for every open case in Douglas and Sarpy counties. The plan includes elements such as addressing services, a robust readiness review process and case transfer migration approach.

The Department, PromiseShip and Saint Francis Ministries share the same goal of providing a smooth transition with no disruption of services or support for caregivers.

If you would like additional information about the transition, including upcoming meetings and Frequently Asked Questions, visit DHHS' website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/ESAtransition.

DHHS is committed to an open transition process that keeps all interested people, agencies, service providers and stakeholders well informed. Any questions or feedback about the transition can be submitted to DHHS by email at dsatransition@nebraska.gov.

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, September 9, 2019

from 9 am – 4 pm: Lincoln

Monday, September 16, 2019

from 10 am – 4 pm: Omaha

Saturday, September 21, 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.

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

Foster parenting is HARD! It takes a special person to care for hurting children. Many of you have decided to no longer provide foster care. 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/nfapaxitsurvey>

Waiting for a Forever HOME!

The following are children available on the Nebraska Heart Gallery.



Name: Amari T

16 years old

Amari is an amazing teen girl with a big smile and a huge heart. She has been able to overcome many obstacles in her life and is on a journey for success. She is very smart and does well in school. She loves to read books/autobiographies and her favorite author is James Patterson. She likes to be crafty and enjoys knitting, painting, drawing and coloring. She is very creative

and has worked on some impressive projects. She also likes sports! She played football and soccer when she was younger. She's interested in cooking and says this is something she enjoys doing in her spare time. She is looking for a forever home that will help her transition into adulthood, but that can also be nurturing and supportive of her goals for the future.



Name: Brandon Z

16 years old

Brandon is described as a very quiet and thoughtful teen. At times, he presents much more mature than his age but does enjoy having fun and being a kid. He enjoys playing video games, doing puzzles and thrifting. He loves all kinds of animals but dogs are by far his favorite animal. He takes his time when speaking with people and may be a little shy when first meeting someone,

but once you get him engaged, he will chat and he becomes very inquisitive. He is responsible and gets his chores done. He doesn't even mind lending a hand to earn a few extra bucks! He recently got a job at a fast food restaurant to help him earn some extra money. He has been thriving in a home that provides him with opportunities to be independent, but also provides structure and guidance. He has been working on his communication skills and does a great job taking time for himself when he is upset and needs a break. Brandon would do great with a family that is willing to take some time to get to know him so he can open up and feel comfortable. He would respond well to a structured home with clear expectations, however, like most teenagers, it is important that his voice is heard and that he plays an active role in helping to develop the rules and expectations in the home.

Connections

Brandon needs to maintain his relationship with his current foster home and some contact with biological family members.



Name: JaVonn

10 years old

JaVonn is an energetic and smart ten year old boy. JaVonn enjoys spending time outside and being active. JaVonn's favorite sport to play is basketball and he would like to play on a

team some day! JaVonn likes to be creative and enjoys doing arts and crafts. JaVonn is a hands on child and enjoys spending time in a garage working on cars. JaVonn loves to play video games and enjoys technology. JaVonn has a love for animals and loves playing with dogs. JaVonn enjoys helping take care of the dogs by helping to feed them or letting them outside. JaVonn would love if his forever family would have animals! JaVonn has a significant relationship with his siblings and is looking for a forever home that will continue to support his relationship with his siblings.

Connections

JaVonn has two sisters that he needs to maintain contact with.

For more information on these children or others on the Heart Gallery please contact Sarah at:
Email: scaldararo@childsaving.org
Phone: 402-504-3673

Foster Parents Survey

A collaboration of older youth serving agencies are coming together to build helpful trainings that support both foster parents and youth in care. These trainings will focus on skills and important topics related to young people gaining skills and providing tools to assist foster parents in teaching young people in their home. The first step is to complete a needs assessment, we are asking for foster parents voice on what topics would be beneficial. This survey will take less than 15 minutes to complete. We really appreciate your assistance!

Here is the link:

<http://bit.ly/FosterParentsSurvey>



12-hour in-service credit!

"Making the Commitment to Adoption"

Sponsored by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Facilitated by Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

**Spaulding/In-service Training offered at two locations!
Choose the location that works for you!**

Cobblestone Hotel & Suites
960 'M' Street
Gering, NE

September 7, 2019 – 9am -5pm

September 8, 2019- 1pm-5pm

Lunch is on your own – 1 hour

North Platte Harvest
Christian Fellowship
1501 South Dewey
North Platte, NE

September 28, 2019 – 9am-5pm

September 29, 2019 – 1pm-5pm

Lunch is on your own – 1 hour

The Spaulding program is offered to prospective adoptive families. Spaulding training offers families the tools and information that they need to:

- Explain how adoptive families are different
- Importance of separation, loss, and grief in adoption
- Understand attachment and its importance in adoption
- Anticipate challenges and be able to identify strategies for managing challenges as an adoptive family
- Explore the lifelong commitment to a child that adoption brings

Gering: September 7, 2019

North Platte: September 28, 2019

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

(with break for lunch)

1) Exploring Expectations—Defining adoption, the process, and the key players. Participant's hopes and fears about the adoption process are recognized and empowerment strategies are identified to assist them in the process.

Participant's explore their fantasies about children they might adopt to become aware of the possible influence on their decision about adoption.

2) Meeting the Needs of Waiting Children—Assist prospective adoptive parents in focusing on the needs of children awaiting adoption. Explore the issues of separation, loss, grief and attachment. Plus the unique issues related to parenting a child who has been sexually abused.

3) Exploring Adoption Issues—Identify supports within their family and introduce them to common issues that all adoptive families face. Help develop strategies for dealing with these issues; explore crisis periods in adoption; explore their own strengths, needs and challenges as they consider adoption

Gering: September 8, 2019

North Platte: September 29, 2019

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

4) Making the Commitment—Assist prospective adoptive parents in considering resources they may need, what they need to know, what they need to do, and what they need to explore about themselves as they consider adopting a particular child or children.

Register online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SpauldingTraining2018-2019>

You will be notified if Spaulding is cancelled due to low attendance. Please note times of the training.
Questions? Please contact NFAPA at: 402-476-2273 Toll-Free 877-257-0176

Working with Parents

by *Laura Hutton*



Foster parent training provides a lot of information regarding how to work effectively with children in foster care but it usually includes little information about how to work effectively with their parents. Many foster parents view working with parents as the caseworker's job and avoid it altogether.

However, a 2017 bulletin from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families entitled "Supporting Successful Reunifications" states that, "When foster parents support or mentor birth parents, they can enhance the ability of birth parents to stay informed about their children's development while they are in out-of-home care, improve parenting skills, increase placement stability, and lead to more timely reunifications."

Foster parents may be fearful of interacting with parents of the children placed in their homes. They may worry that the parents will kidnap their children, abuse them during visits, or even physically attack the foster parents. While extreme incidents like these may sometimes occur, they are exceedingly rare. Neither I, nor any foster parent I know, has ever had a situation more serious during a visit than a parent showing up under the influence, making inappropriate promises to a child, making negative statements about a foster parent, or allowing a child to engage in inappropriate behaviors. While all of these are difficult situations, they are situations that foster parents can best address through a combination of open communication with the child's caseworker and through serving as a mentor to the child's parent.

The first step to serving as a mentor is to form a positive relationship with the parents of the children in your care. This starts with changing your mindset. It is important to see the child's parents as the child's "parents" not as "biological parents" or "birth parents." Putting such qualifiers on the role of the child's parents attempts to minimize their importance. While you may be a phenomenal foster or adoptive parent and your child may love you dearly, you will still never replace the child's parents. Even after we adopted our children, we did

not attempt to change what our children called their parents. In our house, we treat "Mommies" the same way we treat "Grandmas." We simply say "Mommy" if the person we are talking about is clear and add the first name if we need to differentiate. Thus, I am "Mommy" when my son is talking to me but I am "Mommy Laura" when my son is talking about me to his other mother.

Changing your mindset goes beyond the names you use. It is important to understand families as an important part of their children's lives both while they are in foster care and after adoption. Love multiplies. Children who have a strong attachment to one adult find forming a strong attachment to another adult easier. Thus, foster parents have nothing to lose by encouraging a strong relationship between children and their parents even if the permanency plan is adoption.

My husband and I think of our children's families as extensions of our own family. We send them holiday cards and invite them to family birthday parties and outings. We have been blessed with families who embrace this approach and reciprocate by reaching out to the other children in our home and including them in activities. This family-style approach has the added benefit of ensuring that there are always plenty of people involved in visits and that supervision is rarely an issue.

While we are fortunate to now share a strong relationship with the families of several of our adoptive children, getting to this point did not happen overnight. When children enter foster care, their parents are usually concerned for their safety. Many stories abound about children who are mistreated in foster care. One way to alleviate parents' fears is to share pictures of the children in your care engaged in everyday activities and having fun. When parents see that their children have been truly welcomed into the foster family and are being treated well, they are much less likely to see the foster parent as the enemy. When foster care proceeds to adoption, these pictures allow parents to remain abreast of their children's lives and to experience the important milestones they might otherwise miss.

I've found that small things go a long way toward forming a positive relationship with parents. In addition to sharing photographs, having children give parents pictures they have drawn and school papers that would otherwise go on the refrigerator acknowledges that parents are still an important part of their children's lives. While parents' initial concern regarding foster care may be whether their children are being treated well, they may later worry that their children will stop loving them. By encouraging children to share special papers with their parents, foster and adoptive parents can help children demonstrate their continued love for their families. When holidays roll around it is also important to make sure that children have small gifts to share.

Another important step to working with families, particularly when the children's permanency plan is reunification, is to

allow parents to participate in decision making in regard to their children. To some degree foster care regulations already mandate this, but going beyond the minimum requirements will be appreciated by parents. For example, if a child expresses interest in playing both spring soccer and softball, you could ask the parents which they think the child will enjoy more. You can also tell the parents the plans that you have for the child's upcoming birthday party and ask their opinion. However, make sure that you are willing to abide by the parents' decision if you ask for their input.

Once you have developed a positive relationship with the parents of the children in your care, you can truly start to serve as a mentor. The most important thing you can do to mentor parents is to model effective parenting techniques. When parents respect you and believe that you are taking good care of their children, they are likely to imitate your behaviors. By communicating effectively with children, lovingly setting limits, and staying calm when tantrums occur during visits, you are helping to teach these skills to parents.

Advice is another technique that can be used to teach parenting skills but this must be done carefully. Advice is most likely to be taken if it is given in the moment, is provided as an option, and is given sparingly. For example, when a child tantrums and falls to the floor, you might say, "I've found that if you ignore him he'll usually stop in a few minutes. Would you like me to show you the pictures I have of his last baseball game?" This type of approach is much more likely to be effective than a command like, "You need to ignore him and he'll stop."

The advice that is least likely to be followed is advice which includes criticism such as, "The only reason he throws himself on the floor and tantrums like that is because he knows it will get your attention."

It can be difficult to determine the right way to give a parent advice in the heat of the moment. A good way to start giving advice is with the phrase, "Sometimes it works when." You can also try using the word "I" instead of the word "you." Say, "I've found that," instead of "you should."

Advice should be used sparingly. Avoid giving advice to a parent more than once during most visits. When a parent is inundated by a lot of advice, the parent is less likely to absorb and use any of it. Focus on one or two techniques that you think would be beneficial for the parent and refer to them sparingly over multiple visits. Be patient and understand that habits are difficult to break. It may be months before you see a parent begin to incorporate the techniques you are sharing.

It is also important to understand that parenting is art, not science. As such, not every good parent uses the same parenting techniques. The technique that you are sharing may not work for that parent or may not fit well with the parent's personality. If the parent never uses the technique that you are sharing, it is important not to believe that either you or the parent has failed.

When foster parents take the time to work effectively with parents, children benefit. Children in these families feel free to express the love they have for all the adults in their lives. They feel supported and are more likely to be able to talk about the complicated feelings that they likely have surrounding being removed from their home. These children are much more likely to heal and grow into healthy adults whether they return home or are adopted. While working with families takes time and effort, the benefits are well worth it!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Laura Hutton is an associate professor of teacher education at Hartford Community College. She and her husband Mark were foster parents for more than 10 years and have adopted five children from foster care.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://fosteringfamilies.today.com/fostering-families-today-feature/working-with-parents/>

Is It Ever Okay To Leave The Toxic Relationship Of Family Or Friends?

by Michelle McKinney

When we begin the foster or adoptive journey, we need support. Often, we find it through family and close friendships. But sometimes, we don't. What do you do when you realize it's time to walk away from those relationships?

I've heard a lot of stories through the years about drama and pain caused by friends and family. There are many reasons this happens in adoptive families. And some, including me, have struggled with the decision to walk away from others and chosen the health of our children over the toxic relationship.

As an international adoptive parent, I've learned that generational beliefs of "bad blood" due to taboo beginnings and breaking the blood line causes grief and misguided prejudice in the cultural acceptance of adopted children in families. Just because something is cultural acceptable or unacceptable, doesn't make it right. Slavery was culturally acceptable at one time, but certainly not right. And we are still living with these devastating consequences today.

Some family members can only give conditional love. Or hold the belief that love is a feeling and not an action. Some believe that non-biological children are not worth fighting for because, they're not "their own." Seems like an absurd belief. And yet, reality for some families.

Sometimes multi-racial families face racism. Sometimes blatant. Sometimes disguised in the form of joking. Sometimes others refuse to learn and grow with the adoptive family about what trauma does to a child. Insisting that all children behave badly and just need better parenting. They refuse to accept

that behavior is not just that. It's a survival skill and a call for help. A simple conversation may curb both of these and help to bring more understanding and awareness. But maybe not.

And then there's the misunderstandings that arise when adoption causes us to live our lives differently now. Birthday parties, church, large family gatherings are all just too much for our sensory-deprived and anxious children. Our sudden change in lifestyle causes the other end to take it personally, as they expect us to keep up with the same pace of life. But the truth is, we can't. Our children can't. Not physically, mentally or emotionally. We are spent.

Some of these I've heard about. Some of them I've experienced. So I chose to walk away.

It was a process. Not something we acted on impulsively in a rage. There was no screaming or calling of names (although there was on the couch with my husband). It was a time-honored, prayer-filled, gut-wrenching decision to let the other person know that our family was in crisis and needed space and time to heal.

We didn't go into a lot of detail with them. I knew they wouldn't get it. All the energy I would spend in trying to get them to "get it," would just be too much on me emotionally. So we quietly slipped away.

I realize this approach may not work for everyone. You might have to confront the friend or family head-on. Walking away may be for a season only. Or permanently. For me, I think in this particular circumstance, it's the latter. Years have passed now. And I can honestly say, we made the right choice. Healing has happened. Both in our family and my feelings toward the other party. But I'm also confident in keeping that relationship in the past.

I've come to realize, unless someone has lived it, they are never going to get it. That's ok for them. But it's not ok for me or my children. I have to be my best for my kids. And if I can't be because of the inner turmoil someone else is creating in our family, I have to eliminate whatever is causing it. So I've chosen to surround our family with those who are safe. I don't have the time or the energy to dedicate to the emotional instability of someone else. My children, my immediate family, those currently in my home, are my priority.

The one thing I've struggled with the most regarding this separation was this: If both of us are believers, how can we think so differently and have all this turmoil between us?

In the Bible, Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement over Mark. Apparently Barnabas had more grace for Mark. Paul didn't. So they went their separate ways. And guess what? It seemed like God was okay with this. He knew they were both imperfectly human. They both went on to continue their work separately.

Our mission is big. Bigger than 1 relationship. And there's work to be done in the hearts of our children and our immediate families. Do your part to keep the peace in all relationships, but know there is much freedom in the way we

choose to live our lives. If this is something you need to do, move forward knowing it's certainly okay to do what's right for the stability of your family regardless of the reason.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://confessionsofanadoptiveparent.com/is-it-ever-okay-leave-the-toxic-relationship-of-friends-or-family>

Long-Term Issues For The Adopted Child

by Kathryn Patricelli, MA

Being an Adopted Child

A multitude of issues may arise when children become aware that they have been adopted. Children may feel grief over the loss of a relationship with their birthparents and the loss of the cultural and family connections that would have existed with those parents.

This feeling of loss may be especially intense in closed or semi-open adoptions where little or no information or contact is available with birthparents. Such grief feelings may be triggered at many different times throughout the child's life including when they first learn of their adoption, during the turbulent teen years, upon the death of other family members, or even as when becoming a spouse or parent.

There can also be significant concerns about feeling abandoned and "abandonable," and "not good enough" coupled with specific hurt feelings over the birthmother's choice to "reject" the child" to "give me away" or "not wanting me enough." Such hurtful and vulnerable feelings may be compounded should the child learn that the birthmother later had other children that she chose to raise herself.

Adopted Children: Tracing History

Adopted children may also suffer from a loss of access to important medical or genetic birth family histories. Although adoption agencies take pains to gather medical and family history information, it is often not possible to have full information for the entire birth family.

In a closed or semi-open adoption, there may be no way for an adopted child to ask questions or clarify vague or missing information that may only become relevant long after the adoption occurred. Even a simple doctor's appointment wherein an adopted child is quizzed about their family medical history can become a trigger for painful or awkward feelings, reminding the adopted child (or adult) that he or she is somehow different from others and doesn't have the same information available to share with the doctor.

Potential Psychological Effects

Adopted children may struggle with self-esteem and identity development issues more so than their non-adopted peers.

Identity issues are of particular concern for teenagers who are aware that they are adopted and even more so, for those adopted in a closed or semi-open circumstance. Such children often wonder why they were given up for adoption. They may also wonder about what their birth family looks like, acts like, does for a living, etc.

- They may struggle with the knowledge that they may have a whole other family “out there” including half-siblings or extended family members that they may never meet.
- These issues may still arise in open adoption circumstances, but in that case, adopted children may have the opportunity to form some manner of relationship with their birthmother so as to gain direct access to relevant information.

Guilt feelings may accompany such identity issues and concerns.

- Adopted children may feel as though they are betraying their adoptive family and/or that they will hurt their adoptive family by expressing their desire to learn about their birth family.
- In a best case scenario, adopted children do not have to wonder how their adoptive family members feel about their interest in their birthparents because adoptive parents will have addressed these concerns directly in previous conversation. Even in such a best-case scenario, the emotions may still be somewhat painful or difficult.

Receiving Questions and Comments from Others

It is not obvious that an adoption has occurred when adopted children physically resemble their adoptive parents since people are unlikely to spontaneously ask about adoption issues. When parents and children are visibly different (as with interracial adoptions), people outside the family may ask questions or (in an unsolicited manner) “share” their viewpoints on adoption and the appropriateness of adopting a child from another race or culture.

- This type of attention can quickly become annoying and even hurtful if adoptive parents do not take steps to shut it down.
- Ignoring such questions, or calmly and assertively stating that the topic is not something that is open for discussion are often good ways to quiet nosy strangers.
- A more nuanced approach is appropriate when touchy questions have been asked by people the family knows to be well meaning and sincere. In such a case, adoptive children need to look at the questioner’s motives for asking, which may stem from a genuine lack of knowledge rather than a desire to harm or take delight in others’ discomfort.

Sensitive adoptive children may also fall victim to teasing and bullying at school, where other children taunt them in an

attempt to make them feel ashamed for being adopted.

Ways of Moving Forward

Not every adopted child will express an interest in his or her birth family history. Some children become aware that most adoptions occur when birthmothers judge themselves financially and/or emotionally unable to raise a given child, and come to feel that there isn’t anything to gain by wondering about or seeking out their birth family. Such children prefer to just leave the adoption as a “done deal” and move on with who they are now, letting the past stay in the past. There is nothing wrong with adopted children who fail to show concern about their birth parents, and likewise, nothing wrong with adopted children who do show such interest. Both reactions are normal, if sometimes painful.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.mentalhelp.net/articles/long-term-issues-for-the-adopted-child/>

The Behavior Isn’t Manipulation, It’s Survival!

by Honestly Adoption

It’s easy to view your child’s behavior as manipulation, but there’s something deeper going on that is hard to see on the surface...

I press my fingers into the temples of my head because I’m so...unbelievably...done! I can’t take one more second of the manipulation...the lies...the conniving...the sneakiness!

It’s a mind-game of sorts. “What are you getting from this?” I want to scream at the top of my lungs! “Are you not happy unless you are mind-twisting me into a complete frustrated puddle of a parent?”

I want to run away. I want to send him to his room forever just so my mind can have a rest. I want to throw my hands up and conclude that this is the best it’s gonna get!

And then it hits me....this isn’t manipulation as it appears to be.

This is survival. This is, I’m afraid so I’m going to fight. This is, I’ve lost so deeply that all I know to do is work my charm to try and get something...anything...even if it’s not real.

This is, I’ll take any type of attention...even if it’s bad...to try and close the gapping wound on my heart.

This, my friends, is a child functioning from their brain stem...the place of survival...the place they’ve retreated to time and time again through the chronic trauma they’ve experienced.

I’ve become convinced after 5 solid years of researching trauma-induced behaviors, that this is not a kid behaving badly!

When the pre-frontal cortex of the brain is damaged, logic

and reasoning go out the door. When the child has experienced abuse...neglect...lack of felt safety...needs not being met... this child has not only retreated to the brain stem (survival mode) they've set up camp there.

Once they've done that, every single thought, emotion, reaction, behavior, and instinct come from that place of survival.

I know that understanding doesn't make us feel less frustrated. The understanding might help for a minute and then our emotions may boil too. We are human. You may begin to feel like you are going crazy. You may be asking yourself if you are a good parent. Listen, you are not alone. You are human, with human emotions. You can feel frustrated but you can also feel hopeful. You have the capacity to slow down and understand where our kids are coming from.

Hang in there, friend. I'm cheering for you. Keep loving those precious ones deeply. This is the road to healing.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://confessionsofanadoptiveparent.com/her-behavior-isnt-manipulation-its-survival/>

What is A.C.E.S. and Why Does it Matter?

by Lisa Smith, M.A. DEVM



The term A.C.E.S has been in the news lately with regard to two seemingly unrelated points: multiple recent mass shootings and an NBC News article titled “Kicking Kids Out of Preschool is Damaging... Why is it Still Happening?” Events such as these are not isolated and they can have a cascading effect on society. Families and children who have not suffered a recent loss or tragic event may still be traumatized and the effects can manifest in unlikely ways.

A.C.E.S. is an acronym for Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. A collaborative study between Kaiser Permanente and the C.D.C. examined the effects of childhood trauma; such as loss, abuse, or neglect, and their effect on later-life health and well-being. The study, which included over 26,000 people, showed how childhood events can have profound life-long

negative effects. These events are not limited to a particular segment of society, as people from all walks of life can experience trauma. The study provided an assessment linking the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and future health risks; evidence that children are affected by the environment in which they live. Nature and nurture affect how each of us develops: however, one's home environment is an integral part of development, in part by the level of socio-emotional support available, on a spectrum ranging from healthy and supportive at one end to extreme neglect and family dysfunction on the other. Young children are not immune to the stress and emotional turmoil brought on by mass shootings, the loss of a close relative or other household challenges. Supportive environments give children the tools needed to provide clarity, to better understand and comprehend the change. Unfortunately, for some children, the home environment does not support healthy development.

In the A.C.E.S. study, the participants were given a score based on how many adverse experiences existed in their lives before the age of 18; each experience is one point. The “experiences” were varied and included the following: the loss of a parent (or other close relationship), divorce, growing up with an alcoholic or drug addict in the household, living with a family member suffering from mental illness, having a family member in jail, physical or emotional neglect, loss of adult job and the potential effect on the household, physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and “other” not listed. Any of these adverse childhood experiences could influence the healthy social, emotional and/or cognitive development of a child.

Each adverse experience, or life “event” in a child's world is awarded one point, the more points a child has, the more likely the risk for future health issues. Studies have shown those who have experienced four or more adverse experiences (4+ points) are at an increased risk for heart disease, liver disease, lung disease, and multiple types of cancer up to 20 years later. Additionally, these same people are at risk for increased alcoholism, smoking, depression, obesity, and early death. Fortunately, there are ways to minimize these health risks.

It is important to provide the tools for a healthy future in the early years of a child's life. While a child cannot be protected from all situations, such as their family or home environment, there are “protective” factors which can help a child towards a brighter future. Children fare better when raised in a supportive environment with engaged caregivers, one in which they can feel safe and secure, especially during turbulent times, to be able to grow and thrive. Part of this requires a greater awareness of what promotes healthy child development, and especially the role adults, teachers, and caregivers play in a child's emotional development. Children are not born with “emotional regulation” skills, such as the ability to effectively manage their emotions of sadness, anger, and frustration, or with the ability to verbalize some thoughts

or feelings, nor are children born with executive function skills such as self-control. In a supportive environment these skills are nurtured and developed; unfortunately, sometimes the home is the toxic environment where a child “earns points”. Without an outlet or a responsive caregiver to help make sense of a difficult situation, a developing young child’s stress, fear, or anxiety might be expressed by “acting out”.

According to the article “Kicking Kids Out of Preschool”, (National Survey of Children’s Health, 2016) an estimated 50,000 preschoolers had been suspended in 2015, with 17,000 expelled. Fifty thousand young children, ages two, three, and four-year-old, suspended or kicked out of preschool. Young children are often suspended or expelled when the behavior interferes or becomes too challenging to the classroom or preschool environment. For those children living in an environment which is considered a point on the A.C.E.S. scale, a stable environment away from home is even more important. Preschool is crucial for young children to build social-emotional skills, such as sharing and taking turns, building a range of emotional coping skills and play. Play supports all forms of child development from physical to cognitive to socio-emotional. Although most teachers have not had specialized training in how to support the social and emotional needs of children or in working with children who have experienced trauma, teachers can provide an outlet for children. Expelling children for acting out without investigation of the reason is harmful to the child, their family, and our communities.

Events in our world are not isolated, they have a cascading effect on society as a whole. The unseen effects of those living in adverse childhood environments, as seen in the A.C.E. study, as well as today’s news headlines can be a threat to society today and tomorrow. While not always visible, long term emotional effects can take their toll via health issues tomorrow. Families and children who have been spared from loss in the latest tragedy on a personal level may still be traumatized. Parents, caregivers, teachers... anyone in a child’s socio-emotional orbit needs to be aware a child’s outward behavior is not always as it appears. A child who acts out might be unable to verbalize the real issue (fear, stress, uncertainty), as his or her communication skills are still developing. Disruptive behavior may be the tip of the iceberg, with the larger problem still unseen. What is A.C.E.S. and why does it matter? Future generations of healthy adults depend upon our understanding of a child’s healthy socio-emotional development.

Lisa Smith, M.A. DEVM, Teachers College Columbia University, is an Educational Consultant specializing in customized workshops supporting child development through play. Ms. Smith is also an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at U.C.C. She can be reached at Ljs2198@TC.Columbia.edu or her website [Playlearn.net](http://www.playlearn.net)

Reprinted with permission from:

<http://www.playlearn.net/published-articles.html>

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
340 K Street, Gering, NE. Potluck, please bring a dish to share.
6:00-7:30 p.m.
September 10, October 8, November 12, December 10, 2019
- Chadron Support Group:** Meets the first Monday of the month. Registration is required.
Contact Jolie Camden to register: 308-672-3658
TBA
6:00-7:30 p.m.
September 2, October 7, November 4, December 2, 2019
- North Platte Support Group:** Registration is required.
Harvest Christian Fellowship, 1501 South Dewey, North Platte, NE
No childcare provided.
Contact Terry Robinson to register: 402-460-7296
September 26
- 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.
September 10, October 8 and November 12, 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
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.

WHAT IS INSIDE

Children Glued To Screens Show Alarming Developmental Delays	1
NFAPA Staff / Board of Directors.....	2
Attention Foster Parents!	2
Anxiety or Aggression? When Anxiety in Children Looks Like Anger, Tantrums, or Meltdowns	3
Don't Panic: Your Kid's "Bad" Behavior Is Probably Normal!	6
A Note From The Department.....	7
Upcoming Training	7
No Longer Fostering?.....	7
Waiting for a Forever HOME!	8
Foster Parents Survey.....	8
Making the Commitment to Adoption	9
Working with Parents.....	10
Is it Ever Okay to Leave the Toxic Relationship of Family or Friends.....	11
Long-Term Issues for the Adopted Child.....	12
The Behavior Isn't Manipulation, It's Survival!.....	13
What is A.C.E.S. and Why Does it Matter?.....	14
NFAPA Support Groups.....	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, \$ _____