

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

July/August 2024

N F A N P A

OVERCOMING NIGHTMARES AND CREATING SLEEP

Sleep is vital for our health, mood and development. Having adequate sleep is just as important as eating well and exercising. Sleep is directly linked to immune function, growth, concentration, memory, mood, the ability to learn and even coordination. Sleep is so incredibly important to well-being but it is also one of the biggest issues parents have with their children. When a child can't sleep it impacts the whole family. Tired parents become even more stretched, frustrated and exhausted. Nobody functions at their best when they lack sleep.

Typically issues around sleep involved difficulty getting kids to go to bed, getting to sleep, having them wake up during the night, nightmares and keeping them in their own bed. Most children will struggle with these at some point. It is normal but there are things that we can do to help.

Sleep Hygiene.

To get the best sleep possible we need to put in a foundation. This won't fix everything but it is a good place to start.

Routine: sleep needs to happen at the same time every night. Our body gets into a rhythm when it comes to sleep. Have a calm time before bed so that the body is able to wind down. Have bath, teeth, stories etc. and try and do them at the same time and in the same order. I know this isn't always going to work, but if you can do it their body will automatically calm with the routine. The research shows that children who have a regular

bedtime fall asleep quicker, wake less during the night and sleep for longer.

Limit screen time: we know that the blue light from screens inhibits the body from producing melatonin which helps regulate sleep. Screens also stimulate the brain even though we think kids are calm watching the ipad, their brains are actually overstimulated which is going to make it very difficult to sleep. There should be no screens at least

an hour before bed and definitely no screens in the bedroom

Give them a way to calm their brain: kids that are anxious often have difficulty calming their thoughts enough for sleep. When all is quiet, that is when their thoughts seem to come flooding in. These are the kids that come out 10 times because they have to tell you something. When they are overwhelmed by feelings it will come out as behaviour. They might be defiant, aggressive, teary, clingy or any other expression of emotion.

If we spend connected time with our kids before bed then they will feel less need to come out of bed and be able to sleep peacefully. Try and avoid the bedtime rush. I know parents may be desperate to get their kids into bed so they can finally have some time alone. But if we invest a little more time in keeping things calm as the kids go to bed we are more likely that everyone will get a better night sleep.

(Continued on page 3)



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 & Southwest RFC:** 402-460-9177 or Terry@nfapa.org
 - Jolie Camden, Western RFC:** 308-672-3658 or Jolie@nfapa.org
- *RFC=Resource Family Consultant

NFAPA Board of Directors

President

Tammy Wells
308-928-3111
tammy3wells@gmail.com

Northern Representative

Kelly Muchmore
402-270-9951
Kellym246@gmail.com

Vice-President

Amanda Neal
402-804-0147
mandafaye75@yahoo.com

Eastern Representative

Kathi Plato
402-680-9565
kplato10@gmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer

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

Western Representative:

Southwest
Vacant

Southeast Representative

Tracy Wright
402-730-1576
twright1@lps.org

Western Representative:

Panhandle
Vacant

Central Representative

Vacant

At Large Board Members

April & Sean Brozak
402-250-0088
aprilbrozak@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 Administration for Children and Families and Nebraska DHHS.

Attention Foster Parents!

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

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

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Corinne@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/July-August2024> 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. Kids that are anxious often have difficulty calming their thoughts enough for sleep.
2. Fill in the blanks. If your child wakes during the night from a nightmare, remember that they will probably be in "____ / ____ mode."
3. Six ways to stop whining:
4. True or False. Why do parents hate whining so much? Because whining is your little one's more mature form of crying. She's letting you know she needs your attention.
5. What was the rule they had for their son's to follow with his phone?
6. True or False. While this interaction with a creepy stranger was unsettling, it was a great reminder (and a huge wakeup call) of what lurks around online or in our kids' phones.
7. What are Six Simple Tips to Mitigate Teenage Disrespect
8. Fill in the blanks, And when we sink to their level by getting _____ and _____(and throwing things), it only adds fuel to the flames of their teenage rage.
9. True or false. Kids need the chance to see that they can attend school and their worst fears will happen.
10. Fill in the blanks. I have worked with families that describe getting ready for school like it's a _____ with _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

(Continued from page 1)

Spend time having snuggles and talking about the day. It is a good idea to add gratefulness to your bedtime routine. Even though things might be scary in the world, there are always things to be grateful for. Everyone, including parents can take turns saying what they are grateful for. This will turn their attention to the positives which is particularly important before sleep. Also don't skip story time. Reading a story together, even for older children will help them activate their imagination in a positive way and help them dream.

Nightmares

Nightmares are really common for children particularly aged between 4 and 12 years of age. Research suggests that about a quarter of children will have a nightmare at least once a week. The reason that nightmares are so common in children is that their imagination at this age is so vivid and it can be difficult to make a distinction between fantasy and reality.

Our brains dream for a reason. It is through dreaming that our brain takes what has happened during the day and forms them into memories. It can take things that you have learnt or it can take feelings that you have had and try and make sense of them. Anxiety about starting a new school could turn into a hairy monster with fangs, but the feeling is the same. When you are asleep the logical part of your brain is resting and the more creative part of your brain takes over, there are no rules or limitations. This is why dreams can be amazing, but they can also be terrifying.

As parents, when our child comes in to our room frightened by some sort of fanciful dream, it is tempting for us respond through bleary eyed exhaustion and say "it's just a dream", "it's not real", "don't think about it". While we do this with the best of intentions, the truth is it simply won't work. Telling a child that the dream isn't real simply doesn't fit with their experience. Their heart is racing, they saw the monster, they smelt it, their feet hurt from running for their life in their dream. To them that dream was very real. Similarly, if you tell them not to think about it, I guarantee that will be ALL they can think about. If I tell you not to think about chocolate, what did you think about? You can't help it, it is automatic.

What you can do

Dreams can make us feel like we are out of control. It can be petrifying going to bed knowing that you could have a scary dream and feeling like there is nothing that you can do about it. While it might seem strange, the best thing that you can do it talk about and imagine those scary dreams. But instead of being helpless and out of control, take that control and create the ending of the dream that they want. Research has shown that when we think of new endings to our dreams while awake, the dream can change when we go back to sleep.

If your child wakes during the night from a nightmare,

remember that they will probably be in "fight/flight" mode and as a result they may not be able to think of new ending to their dreams straight away. Help them calm first, give them hugs and reassurance that they are safe. Then when they are calm, have them tell you about their dream. Be careful not to dismiss their dream as silly. They need to know that you understand how they feel. Say things like "that does sound scary" or "I would be scared by that too". When they are calm and supported they will feel safe to brainstorm with you a new ending.

When we dream our brain uses pictures so make sure you use a lot of imagery in your new endings. Think about the colours, the taste, smell and feel. You want to make it as real as possible. The thing that I have found that works the best is to make the new ending funny. When we laugh our body automatically becomes relaxed. So fart monsters away, turn vampires into chocolate and eat them, whatever is fun. There are no rules with dreams so make it as crazy as your imagination will allow. Sometimes kids have a recurring dream. In that case it can be helpful to draw the new ending out and go over it again when they are going to sleep at night.

When I wrote my children's book "The Dream Director" I found that so many children were struggling with nightmares and parents were at a loss as to how to manage them. However, if we give control back to our kids in how their dreams should end, we take the power away from the fear and give them confidence to sleep. The story in my book give examples of how this strategy can be applied to common childhood nightmares. It gives children the chance to practice this skill when they aren't in the moment and before going to sleep to that if they do wake is is easier for them to take control of their dream and sleep.

Sleep is something we often neglect and take for granted, but sleep is just as important for our health as eating well and exercising. If we want our kids to grow, develop, learn and be happy, we can't overlook the importance of sleep. Nightmares are a common cause of disrupted sleep in most families if we give kids the tools to change their dreams they will grow in confidence to sleep without fear.

Reprinted with permission from:

https://www.thetherapistparent.com/post/overcoming-nightmares-and-creating-sleep?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR0qx1YckI7ZF0SRGe209IzAWHyvuf311IMEugFCoR_yBicyd5B6ZEp8oA_aem_ARL9toGpHjINqYEUyIluRw9QLjY9dDeERtFB_OJP6ZI5wcMM0rU4VoZExOHGS_URPAFdSQqfYsbXeldoH

EFFECTIVE PARENTING: EMBRACING DISCIPLINE OVER PUNISHMENT

Children can learn to self-regulate, handle their emotions, and be in control of themselves, which ultimately leads to self-discipline. Offering punishment, rather than taking the time to teach a child right from wrong, is doing them a disservice in numerous ways.

Many adults mistakenly equate punishment and discipline, assuming they are interchangeable terms. However, a closer examination reveals that they hold distinct meanings and approaches.

Children are inherently prone to making mistakes, testing boundaries, and occasionally defying instructions. These behaviors are entirely normal aspects of childhood development. It is essential for adults to recognize that young children do not possess an innate sense of right and wrong. This moral compass is cultivated through a series of complex cognitive skills that evolve over time, and its development is greatly influenced by role modeling and positive reinforcement.

As responsible adults and loving care providers, we bear the crucial task of guiding children toward a sense of morality and ethical behavior as they evolve into the best versions of themselves.

Punishment

Punishing a child for doing something wrong is never the answer. Some may argue there are forms of positive punishment, but I would simply call this discipline. Punishment means to make the child suffer. Examples of punishment include scolding, spanking, enforcing even more household rules, and demanding an immense amount of labor from a child. Each of these examples has one main theme in common; they hurt instead of teach the child. Punishments hurt children... physically, yes, but also mentally and emotionally.

Children can learn to self-regulate, handle their emotions, and be in control of themselves, which ultimately leads to self-discipline. Offering punishment, rather than taking the time to teach a child right from wrong, is doing them a disservice in numerous ways.

Children are growing at such a fast pace, and we cannot expect them to remember all the many things they are learning. They are learning new things at school, from their friends, from their extracurricular activities, and from their families. We often assume a child is being willful in their acting out, while many times, children are simply feeling overwhelmed and dysregulated, unable to access the new social-emotional skills they are still learning.

As adults, we are still learning as well. Give yourself some grace if you slip up and resort to punishment rather than discipline with your child. Instead, stay curious about your

own parenting triggers, and remember that learning how to use discipline instead of punishment in your parenting is a journey, especially if these skills were not modeled for you when you were a child.

Discipline

Discipline, which originates from the root word “disciple” focuses on teaching right from wrong by leading and guiding by example. By teaching rather than punishing, adults can turn challenging moments into teaching moments, with the added benefit of strengthening a child’s sense of trust, safety, and connection. For example, going with an upset child to a calming corner when he/she is overwhelmed or having a tantrum in order to help calm their body is an affirming way for children to learn how to manage frustration, disappointment, and ultimately, to form the neuro pathways they will need to be capable of self-regulation in the future.

Creating a space for children to practice calming down during a heated moment is the perfect example of positive discipline. The Calming Corner Bundle is a helpful set of guided resources for caregivers who are new to these concepts and could benefit from step-by-step support in shifting from punishment to positive discipline methods.

Communication is another key life skill children benefit from having modeled for them when they receive discipline rather than punishment. Once a child has calmed their body, it is crucial to talk to them about their feelings. Keeping this communication simple, concrete, and affirming is most conducive to their formative learning. For this reason, having a feelings chart and/or other tangible tools is ideal, assisting children as they practice putting words to their feelings, as well as the many thoughts and needs that often live underneath big feelings.

Discipline and consistency go hand-in-hand, therefore using familiar tools with young children again and again as you grow their capacity to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions is ideal, and opens up the space for children to both think and talk about what they want to do differently next time. Once calm and regulated, children can be guided through self-reflection for the learning and the growth the moment has to bring.

When we respond to the source of children’s “mis” or unwanted behaviors, rather than react to the behavior (aka the symptom) alone, children naturally stop repeating the same challenging behaviors over and over.

With positive discipline, young children learn the life skills they need to grow into compassionate and resilient adults, rather than being punished for not having been born with a mastery of them.

Adult Behavior Determines Child Behavior

Children are going to do wrong from time to time, but having the idea of making them “pay” for what they have done

wrong is not okay. This can result in a negative observation of themselves, being frightened of others, or never truly learning how to actually behave. Truthfully, it teaches the child it is okay to inflict pain, embarrassment, and suffering. If a child sees their parents spank their sibling, they are going to be extremely confused when they get in trouble for hitting their sibling. Adults must behave toward the child in the same way they want the child to behave. This is one of the exact reasons it is important to focus on positive parenting, rather than punitive parenting.

UNICEF has an interesting article called *How to Discipline Your Child the Smart and Healthy Way*. In this article, the author goes into great detail regarding the ins and outs of discipline and punishment. It states, “The evidence is clear: shouting and hitting simply do not work and can do more harm than good in the long run. Repeated shouting and hitting can even adversely impact a child’s entire life. The continued “toxic stress” it creates can lead to a host of negative outcomes like higher chances of school dropout, depression, drug use, suicide, and heart disease.”

The evidence is clear: when adults display aggressive behavior toward children, it inevitably has a detrimental impact on them. However, we possess the power to break this cycle. Instead of resorting to the punitive methods, such as corporal punishment, that many previous generations employed, we can choose more effective approaches. Raising a well-rounded child hinges on providing proper discipline, guidance... and love.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://genmindful.com/blogs/mindful-moments/discipline-versus-punishment>

THE CURE FOR WHINING

Written by: Dr. Laura Markham.

Any parent who has ever had a toddler or a preschooler knows that whining is common at those ages -- and can drive any parent crazy. Parents are usually advised to tell their kids to ask in a “nice” voice, because they can’t hear the whiny voice. But whining is a symptom of a deeper issue. So if you want to eliminate whining, you have to address what’s underneath.

If your child’s whining is driving you crazy, here are six parent-proven secrets to stop the whining. Which secret you use depends on why your child is whining.

1. Whining because he doesn’t have the internal resources to cope with what’s being asked of him.

When humans feel overwhelmed, they get whiny. As a toddler, he would have thrown himself howling to the ground, but by three or four he can often whine instead. Meet his basic needs for food, rest, down time, run-around time, and

connection with you, or you can count on whining. He may not tantrum as much as he used to, but he will certainly whine if you force him to endure that shopping trip while he’s hungry and tired. Why create a negative situation that stresses both of you and contributes to the habit of whining?

2. Whining because she needs more connection.

Be pre-emptive. Make sure that your child gets enough of your positive attention, unprovoked. Pre-empt whining by giving attention BEFORE she gets demanding. Anyone who’s had to ask a romantic partner “Do you love me?” knows that attention that’s given after you ask can never really fill the need. The secret is to take the initiative and give attention the child hasn’t asked for, often, so she feels your support and connection.

And of course it’s particularly important to connect when she shows the first sign of needing your emotional support, before that quick downhill slide. No, you’re not rewarding “bad” behavior by giving her attention when she’s whining. If she were whining from hunger, would you think you were rewarding that by feeding her? It’s our job to meet kids’ needs so they have the internal resources to cope. Connection is a basic human need, and children can’t function well without it.

3. Whining because she doesn’t like what’s happening but feels powerless to get what she wants.

Lawrence Cohen, author of the wonderful book *Playful Parenting*, says:

“When children whine they are feeling powerless. If we scold them for whining or refuse to listen to them we increase their feelings of powerlessness. If we give in so they will stop whining, we reward that powerlessness. But if we relaxedly, playfully, invite them to use a strong voice, we increase their sense of confidence and competence. And we find a bridge back to close connection.”

Remember, you’re not out to manipulate her, but to connect. Start by letting her know that you hear what she wants, and you see her point of view: “You really want to go to the playground, and you keep telling me that, and here I keep stopping at all these stores that you aren’t expecting, and you’re disappointed, right?” Sometimes just feeling heard is enough to stop whining in its tracks.

Then, if she keeps whining, you can say playfully “You don’t sound like yourself. I wonder where your usual strong voice went?”

Express confidence that your child can use her “strong” voice and offer your assistance to help her find it, by making it into a game:

“Hey, where did your strong voice go? It was here a minute ago. I LOVE your strong voice! I’ll help you find it. Help me look. Is it under the chair? No... behind the door? No.... HEY!

You found it!! That was your strong voice!! Yay! I love your strong voice! Now, tell me again what you need, in your strong voice.”

This will only work if your child has a few inner resources left. And it will only work a second time if your child tries it and sees that you listen and try to help with the problem they're having.

You'll also want to give your child alternate tools to ask appropriately for something and negotiate with you. Since whining is so often a function of powerlessness, helping your child to feel that she can get what she wants through reasonable measures will carry over into the rest of her life.

In other words, you don't want her to learn that she gets her way in life by whining or tantrumming, but you do want her to learn that she can get what she wants through managing her emotions, seeing things from the other person's point of view and setting up win/win situations. (And of course, that's what you always try to model.)

So if you simply don't have time to go to the playground today, then don't. Be empathic about his desire, and nurture him through the meltdown, as described in #4 below. But if your objection is to his whining, rather than his request, and he manages to pull himself together and ask in a reasonable way for what he wants, then you'll be able to engage in the kind of conflict resolution that finds a win/win solution.

“Ok, you want to go to the playground, and I need to stop at the hardware store. Let's do this: If we're really quick at the hardware store, we'll have time to stop at the playground on the way home. Think you can help me be quick? And if you are really fast about getting in and out of your car seat, we can stay a bit longer at the playground.”

Are you “rewarding” whining? No, you're empowering him by demonstrating that finding solutions that work for both of you is the way to get what he wants in life.

I often hear from parents that this “empowering with the strong voice game” strategy works like a charm the first time or two, but that after that the child refuses to play and just continues whining. That's a signal that your child actually needs something else -- to cry. Which brings us to:

4. Whining because he needs to cry.

He has a lot of pent-up emotions about things that are stressing him -- the new babysitter you left him with on Friday night, that kid who grabbed the truck away in the sandbox, potty training, the new baby -- there's no end of stressful developmental challenges! Toddlers let off stress by simply having a meltdown, but as they get older they gain more self-control, and begin to whine instead. Be kind in response to his whining until you get home and have a few minutes to spend with him. Then draw him onto your lap, look him in the eye and say

“I notice you were feeling so whiny and sad, Sweetie. Do you just need to cuddle and maybe cry a bit? Everybody needs to



cry sometimes. I'm right here to hold you.”

5. Whining because it works.

Don't reward whining, meaning don't give in and buy the candy. But there is never a reason to be less than kind about it. Responding to his desire with empathy (“You are so disappointed that I said no; you really wish you could have that candy...”) helps him feel less alone with his disappointment. And there's nothing wrong with finding something else that will make him happy, like a shiny red apple or a trip to the playground. That teaches him to look for and propose win/win solutions. If, by contrast, he feels like he only gets what he wants by whining, he'll become an expert whiner.

6. Whining because you'll do anything to stop it.

Why do parents hate whining so much? Because whining is your little one's more mature form of crying. She's letting you know she needs your attention. And human grownups are programmed to react to whining much as we do to crying, so the needs of tiny humans get met. So the minute you hear that whine, you react with anxiety. You'll do anything to stop it.

But if you can take a deep breath and remind yourself that there's no emergency, you'll feel a lot better, and you'll parent better. Don't let your automatic crisis mode of fight or flight kick in. Don't feel like you have to solve the problem, or do anything at all except love your child. Just smile at your child and give her a big hug. Most of the time, the whining will stop.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.peacefulparenthappykids.com/read/Life-Preschooler-pre-empt-whining>



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

FREE VIRTUAL IN-SERVICE TRAINING

**RSVP
Required.
Register
Today!**

**Credit hours on
each training!**

**For Foster,
Adoptive,
Guardianship,
Kinship &
Relative
Parents**

**Registration
closes the day
before training.**

**Free Virtual
Training!**

**Questions?
402-476-2273
Corinne@nfapa.org**

**Workshop
descriptions:
nfapa.org**

2-credit hours on each training!

9:00 am-11:00 am Central Time



- **July 20, 2024**
Child Abuse Hotline and Reporting Abuse & Neglect
By Susan Ward, Hotline Deputy Administrator

- **August 10, 2024**
**Strategies for Advocating for Children's Needs and
Recognition and Intervention for Bullying**
By Cami Bergman, PTI Nebraska School-Age Information Specialist

- **October 19, 2024**
The Impact of Brain Injury on System-Involved Youth
By Peggy Reisher, MSW, Brain Injury Alliance of NE
Note: This is the same training offered on June 29, 2024. Please do not register for this workshop if you already attended. For those that attend this workshop and the one in June, Peggy will offer a "Part 2" on February 22, 2025. Save the date!

Register by clicking on the link below or use the QR code.

[HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/NFAPAIN-SERVICE2024](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFAPAIN-SERVICE2024)

**Spaulding: Making the Commitment
to Adoption**



12-credit hours

Fridays: 6:00 pm-9:30 pm & Saturdays 8:00 am-5:30 pm (CT)

- **September 13 & 14, 2024**

Register by clicking on the link below or use the QR code

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SpauldingRegistration2024>

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

ANXIOUS STOMACH ACHES AND HEADACHES

Physical symptoms are often the way children experience anxiety

Writer: Caroline Miller | Clinical Experts: Amanda Greenspan, LCSW, Janine Domingues, PhD

All kids get an occasional headache or stomach ache — think not enough sleep or too much Halloween candy. But when children get them often, they may be signs of anxiety.

Stomach aches in the morning before school. Headaches when there's a math test on the schedule. Butterflies before a birthday party. Throwing up before a soccer game. These physical symptoms may be the first evidence a parent has that a child is anxious. In fact, the child may not even know they are anxious.

“Especially with kids who may not be able to verbalize what they're feeling anxious about, the way their anxiety manifests can be through physical symptoms,” explains Amanda Greenspan, LCSW, a clinical social worker at the Child Mind Institute.

Physical symptoms of anxiety

In fact anxiety is associated with a host of physical symptoms, including headaches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, along with a racing heart, shakiness or sweating — symptoms older people experience when they're having a panic attack.

All these physical symptoms are related to the fight-or-flight response triggered when the brain detects danger. All of them have a purpose, notes Janine Domingues, PhD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. When she talks to kids about anxious headaches or stomach aches, she explains the role of each. For instance, she says, “your stomach hurts because your digestive system is shutting down to send blood to other areas of your body. You don't want to be digesting food at that moment because you're trying to either flee danger or fight danger.”

Dr. Domingues assures children that these symptoms are not harmful — they're just their emergency system responding to a false alarm. But it's important to understand that kids aren't necessarily inventing their symptoms, and the danger may feel very real to them. Don't assume a child who spends a lot of time in the nurse's office at school is doing it intentionally to get out of class. Their acute anxiety may be causing them pain.

“Headaches and stomach aches related to anxiety are still real feelings, and we want to take them seriously,” says Ms. Greenspan.

Check with your pediatrician

When a child develops a pattern of physical symptoms before school, or other potentially stressful moments, experts recommend that you visit your doctor to rule out medical

concerns. But if the child gets a clean bill of health, the next step is to help the child make the connection between their worries and their physical symptoms.

“We help them understand in a very child-friendly way that sometimes our body can actually give us clues into what we're feeling,” explains Ms. Greenspan.

Parents can start by validating their child's experience and reframing it in a more helpful way. Instead of telling kids there's nothing wrong with them, the goal is to tell them that what they're feeling is worry.

“We give it a name,” adds Dr. Domingues. “We help them connect it to an emotion and label it. And after some practice kids are able to identify it,” she adds. “Yes, my stomach hurts and, oh yeah, I remember that's because I'm feeling worried.” And after learning some skills to help them calm down, I think they feel a sense of control. And that helps.”

What can parents do to help?

The first thing our experts suggest is something parents should not do, or at least try not to do: Let kids avoid things they are afraid of. It can be very tempting when children are complaining of a headache or stomach ache to let them stay home from school, or skip the party or the game they're worried about. But avoidance actually reinforces the anxiety.

“If we're allowing them to avoid it,” says Ms. Greenspan, “then they're not able to learn that they can tolerate it.” The message needs to be: “I know it hurts, I know it's uncomfortable, but I know you can do it.”

Another thing parents should not do is ask children leading questions like “Are you worried about the math test?” Questions should be open ended, to avoid suggesting that you expect them to be anxious: “How are you feeling about the math test?”

If the problems your child is having are disrupting their ability to go to school consistently — or concentrate at school, participate in activities, socialize with peers — they might have developed an anxiety disorder that should be treated by a mental health professional. The treatment favored by most clinicians for anxiety disorders is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT helps kids — as young as 5 years old — identify their anxiety and learn skills to reduce it.

The techniques clinicians teach children to calm down body and mind can also be deployed by parents, for children with less impairing symptoms.

Techniques for calming down

Here are some of the techniques clinicians teach anxious children, adapted from CBT and mindfulness training:

Deep breathing: Drawing in air by expanding the belly, sometimes called belly breathing, helps kids relax by slowing breathing, and reducing the heart rate, blood pressure and stress hormones. It can also help relax tense stomach muscles.

Mindfulness exercises: Techniques such as focusing on what’s around them, what they see and hear, can help pull children away from the anxiety and ground them in the moment.

Coping statements: Children are taught to “talk back to their worries,” Ms. Greenspan explains. “They can say, ‘I’m feeling scared and I can handle it.’ Or something along the lines of, ‘I’m bigger than my anxiety.’”

Coping ahead: Children are taught that when you have to do something that makes you nervous, it helps to anticipate that you might have some discomfort, and plan what you can do to counteract it, knowing that if you can push through it, it will get easier.

Acceptance: This involves acknowledging the discomfort without fighting it. “Instead of trying to push the feeling away and get rid of it,” Dr. Domingues explains, “we ask you to hold onto it and tolerate it and get through it.”



The parents’ role is key

It’s only natural that parents don’t want to see their kids in distress or make them go to school when they’re worried that they’ll throw up. That puts parents in a difficult spot. “What we hear from parents is, ‘We just let them stay home one day — and one day led to three months,’” says Dr. Domingues. It’s a slippery slope — the child may ask to stay home more and more.

“So we work with parents a lot around how to find that balance between enabling anxiety and meeting a child where they are,” she adds. “And we also give them statements that they can use to be empathic and encouraging at the same time. For instance: ‘I know that this is really hard and you feel like you’re sick. But we also know that this is anxiety, and you can get through it.’”

Sometimes setting up a reward system can help by giving a lot of positive reinforcement for kids pushing through their anxiety.

Parents also face the challenge of tolerating their own anxiety about pushing a child who says they are ill or worried about vomiting. “If your kid is in distress and talking about not wanting to go to school or feeling sick or thinking they might throw up,” says Dr. Domingues, “then you’re, as a parent, also anxious that that might happen.”

Working with the school

The school plays an important role when kids develop physical symptoms of anxiety. Clinicians work with the school nurse — and sometimes the psychologist or school counselor — to set up a protocol for keeping the child’s absences from class as short as possible. For instance, the recommended amount of time to wait before encouraging the child to go back to class might be as short as five minutes.

“As much as we can, we urge them not to contact the parent or send the child home if they’re saying that they’re nauseous,” adds Dr. Domingues, “if we know that they are feeling this way because they’re anxious.” The shorter the break can be, the better it is, because the longer they’re out of the thing that’s making them feel anxious, she says, the harder it will be to get them back in.

This sort of symptoms can appear in a wide-range of children, but they’re most common in the grade-school years, notes Ms. Greenspan. “As kids get older and transition into adolescence and adulthood, they are more likely to manifest their anxiety symptoms in other ways.”

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://childmind.org/article/anxious-stomach-aches-and-headaches/?fbclid=IwAR3wuQUICEyUmaT4MVir10VMvz2ToxoBvojMENSpmvsYLHtPbzdq1GnkRgo>

WHEN KIDS REFUSE TO GO TO SCHOOL

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

Writer: Rachel Busman, PsyD, ABPP | Clinical Expert: Rachel Busman, PsyD, ABPP

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

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

Problematic patterns

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

- How long a child has been avoiding school

- How much distress they associate with attending school

- How strongly they resist

- How much their resistance is interfering with their (and their family's) life

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

Suspicious sick days

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

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

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

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

More serious concerns

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

Understanding the problem

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



Listen up

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

Reaching out

Treatment providers working with kids who have school refusal will often use cognitive behavioral therapy, which helps kids learn to manage their anxious thoughts and face their fears. While kids who are anxious might disagree, the best way to get over anxiety is actually to get more comfortable with feeling anxious. Kids need the chance to see that they can attend school and their worst fears won't happen. Exposure therapy, which reintroduces kids to the school environment gradually, is very effective at this. In the very beginning of

treatment, this might mean driving by the school or walking through its empty halls on the weekend. From there kids can work up to attending one or two classes and then eventually attending a full day towards the end of treatment.

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

Reprinted with permission from:

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

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN A STRANGER MESSAGED MY TWEEN'S PHONE

Written by Karen Johnson

My 11-year-old has a phone. Judge me or not—we all do what's best for our own families. He's our youngest and because our teens are so busy with sports and extracurricular activities, he's home alone a lot. Also, he's old enough to get dropped off at the park to go fishing or walk to a friend's house and it's easier to get a hold of him if he brings a phone with him.

So when my older two got new iPhones for Christmas, we passed down an old phone to our tween boy and explained the tech rules he must follow to maintain this privilege.

One of them was to never give his name, personal information, or show his face to someone he doesn't know. And as it turns out, having that conversation saved him from a potentially dangerous situation.

A Message from an Unknown Person

"Mom, somebody I don't know is trying to talk to me," he said.

And when I looked at his phone, I was immediately alarmed. It was textbook creepy stranger behavior—and this creepy stranger was trying to get access to my kid.

"Do you want to play Roblox? Call me," the initial message read, followed by, "What should I call you?" The person then added two friendly avatar images—one with hands making a heart shape and one with him signaling the "call me" hand expression.

My son plays travel hockey year-round and has played on endless spring hockey and fall hockey teams as well as his regular winter team every year. Also, he's the most social kid I've ever met and tends to befriend anyone who will say more than three words to him. So, having someone unexpected reach out isn't alarming, as he makes new friends all the time.

What's alarming is what happened next.

Thankfully, My Son Knew How to Keep Himself Safe

When my son asked questions like "Who are you?" and "How do you know me?" the stranger offered no details and instead, began insisting that the two of them talk on the phone.

Statements like "I'm going to call you"... "Can I just call you please"... and "Just answer already" began flooding the conversation.

When my son said, "No" and "I'm not going to show you my face", he was met with the response "Yes you are." Also, unsettling statements like "wire it" and "I'm bigger, your little" appeared as well.

Next Came the Phone Calls

That's when the FaceTime calls started. The phone rang over and over, and the second he hit "decline", it rang again. They continued for a full minute or two, but my smart kid never answered, as he knew this creepy stranger really wanted to see his face.

We then blocked the number and haven't heard from this person since. Looking back, we probably should have blocked them within the first few seconds of contact, but honestly,

NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

Foster parenting is hard. You face challenges as you parent children and youth with a trauma history that your friends and family do not understand. Please join us in one of our support groups where you can find mutual support and opportunities to discuss parenting joys, challenges and strategies as you navigate the life of a foster parent.

Live Virtual Support Group *NEW DAY

- Second Monday at 6:30pm (MT)
- RSVP required: Contact Jolie, (308) 672-3658 or Tammy, (402) 989-2197

Faces: Online Foster Parent Support Group Chat on Facebook

- Meets Tuesday nights at 9:00 (CT).
- Contact Robbi at 402-853-1091. You must have a Facebook account.

Parenting Across Color Lines

- Fourth Tuesday of the month — for multi-racial families.
- 6:15pm at Connection Point, Lincoln. Pot Luck Supper prior to meeting.
- RSVP required — Contact Felicia, (402) 476-2273 or Jessica at <mailto:jessica@nfapa.org>

Meetup Adoptive Mom Support Group in Lincoln

- Second Friday of the month, for adoptive moms.
- 7:00-9:00 pm
- RSVP required, Felicia, (402) 476-2273

we were both a bit confused and trying to figure out what was going on. Did we know this person and they were just pranking my son? (11-year-old boys do stuff like that all the time, I've learned.)

And also, how would a stranger have gotten my child's phone number? And how would they know he was a minor? As we were both processing this in real time, the calls kept coming.

Until we stopped them.



A Reminder to Talk to My Kids About Phone Safety

I shared this story with my mom-friends and I'm sharing here as a reminder to talk to your kids about strangers online. Make sure they know the importance of never sharing their faces, never sending pictures, never sharing their names or personal information like where they live, never answering a call if they don't recognize the number, and—mostly importantly—telling you, their parents, or a trusted adult, when something seems off.

If my child had taken the bait from that very first text, “What should I call you?” and given this person their name, and then answered a FaceTime call through which this stranger could see his face, I'm honestly not sure what would have happened next. I am so grateful he sensed right away that something wasn't right and that he told me so I could help him through it.

It's Our Job to Empower Our Kids to Protect Themselves—Especially Digitally

The truth is, kids are getting phones at younger and younger ages, and I can't pass judgment as here I am, a mom of an 11-year-old who is holding such a big responsibility in the palm of his hand. And yes, while it makes our lives easier to have a direct line of communication with him as we move through our busy lives, it can also present dangers I must prepare him for.

While this interaction with a creepy stranger was unsettling, it was a great reminder (and a huge wakeup call) of what lurks around online or in our kids' phones. I naively thought the dangers would be people messaging him in video games—never actually contacting him directly through his actual phone number. But I was wrong, and now I know that it happens there too.

Kids, Trust Your Gut

This disturbing incident will serve, in our house, as a continued reminder to talk to my kids about how to protect themselves in the world and online. We've discussed again recently the power of trusting your intuition. If something feels off, it probably is, so get out of the situation. We've talked about how they have the right to walk away, run away, seek help, say NO, and set their boundaries if someone is making them uncomfortable. And we've again addressed the sad truth that there are bad people in the world who look to target kids.

I was proud of my son that day for how he handled this, how he remembered the online safety rules we'd set, and that he came to me for help. Because I know that this story could have ended much differently if he hadn't.

Reprinted with permission from:

https://parentingteensandtweens.com/what-happened-when-a-stranger-messaged-my-tweens-phone/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR1KP03rP42wRFH_6foC8EfbM1Dz34_VmJp6A7xZ2B3HxSIH0WLrasBLwC0_aem_

6 TIPS THAT WILL HELP YOU DEAL WITH TEENAGE DISRESPECT

Written by parentingteensandtweens

The door opens and in walks the tween or teen. You can feel their arrival before you even see them because the energy in your home completely changes almost instantly. The skin on your arms and the back of your neck begin to stand on end.

There are two ways this situation could go at this point.

There will either be the “disappearing act” where your tween or teen tries to escape to their room without having to make eye contact or have in any kind of human interaction.

OR

There will be feet stomping, loud sighs, and mumbled grievances followed by a theatrical dumping of their school books onto the floor or table. Next will be mean looks in the direction of siblings, pets, and any other living creature near them. Any attempts to engage will be met with eye-rolling or the silent treatment. Perhaps there might be an “ugh” or “whatever” muttered under their breath as they head straight for the fridge.

Dealing with disrespectful teens and tweens can be frustrating.

At any moment, you never know what kid is showing up and whether it's going to be another angry confrontation or a lot of worries for no good reason.

But honestly, half the time, they aren't sure either.

It's tough and confusing – for both of you.

Raising tweens and teens is complicated and frustrating and exhausting. You give your kids your very best, yet you're often left wondering how to deal with an ungrateful teenager. But we all have a better shot and not just surviving but even finding moments where we can truly enjoy these moody adolescents if we learn how to build bridges rather than burn them down.

Six Simple Tips to Mitigate Teenage Disrespect

Using these five tips to handle disrespectful teenage behavior can help keep the peace when your tween or teen is trying their best to turn your home into a battleground.

1. Recognize When They Are Trying To Pick A Fight

When your child is standing there in front of you with their face full of attitude and nonsense coming out of their mouth, it can be so hard to keep it together.

One of my favorite stories ever is from a mom with two teen girls who I thought was Disney princess patient. I was convinced nothing would make her ever lose it with her kids. Then one day, she and her family were sitting outside having dinner. Her oldest daughter was in a mood and was being unpleasant and rude to everyone else at the table and just making the whole meal unbearable. As the whole drama progressed, mom finally got so fed up she picked up her cup and hurled it right past her daughter's head and into their pool.

"I really wanted to throw that right at your head," she said. "You're lucky I love you enough to miss."

Now, this isn't to suggest that hurling things at our teens is any kind of solution, but it is an example of how good our children can be and really pushing our buttons. Sometimes, even the best of us won't always be able to be the adult in the room.

However, we need to do our best to remember that we ARE the adult. And when we sink to their level by getting angry and yelling (and throwing things), it only adds fuel to the flames of their teenage rage. It also puts us in the position of becoming an unintended role model, validating the same behavior and actions we're attempting to change in them.

2. Stay Calm, Cool, And Collected

Yeah, it's hard, really hard. But even though it may require enormous willpower and strength of heart on our part, when we can keep our voices at normal volume and tone, it puts us in charge of the rules of engagement and removes some of their power.

Just tell them that you'll be happy to listen or talk with them about whatever is going on when they can do so in a more reasonable way.

They want to be in control, and their goal is to get you to play the game on their turf, where they've got the upper hand. When you refuse to engage at their five-alarm fire of intensity, it disarms the situation.

Allow them some space and time to cool down. Then discuss the issue when everything isn't so emotional for them (and you). But be sure they know you're not blowing them off or letting them off the hook. You might even set a specific time, like after dinner or the upcoming weekend.

Either way, you've taken what they wanted to turn into a confrontation and enabled it to become something far more productive – a conversation.

3. It's Not Personal (No Matter How It Feels)

Tweens and teens know exactly how to wield words as weapons. They understand how to cause the most damage with even the simplest things they say. And because we are their parents, we become the most common targets in their ongoing battle of them against the world.

Wow, their words can be vicious, but we need to realize it really isn't personal.

The tween and teen years are filled with so much angst. Hormones are raging, bodies are changing in confusing and weird ways, and their brains aren't yet fully formed to help them cope with it all.

They are also caught in this place where adulthood is coming at them faster and faster so they really want more independence, but at the same time, they still crave approval from everyone in their life – from parents to peers.

While it was a million years ago, we were teens too. Try to think back to what it was like back then for you. You must have said some things, or maybe lots of things, to your parents that you regret. But as long as you came from a fairly healthy home, you and your parents survived and most likely have a good relationship now.

For the most part, the disrespect and bad attitude of our tweens and teens is a simple defense mechanism. They're insecure and afraid and often, this is when our kids lash out the most. They are testing us, looking for reassurance that we will love and support them, no matter what.

So, even at their worst, we need to meet them where they are with love.

4. Rules and Respect Are A Must

Now, we can show our teens love without allowing them to treat us like door mats. We should all take the following words to heart, "Unconditional Love Doesn't Mean That You Have To Unconditionally Accept Bad Behaviors."

Giving grace is an important part of these tween and teen years, but so is setting limits. They may look more and more

like adults, but they are still children in many ways. They not only need but believe it or not, they often want boundaries. It helps them understand expectations.

They should be allowed to have bad moods, and they can be angry with us. We, as adults, are allowed those things. So, we need to give them space for all those emotions. However, in the process, we need to guide them on how to properly express those emotions and what the rules are when it comes to their behavior.

Although TV shows, social media, and many other influences our older children are exposed often provide bad examples, we have to be the balancing voice reinforcing that speaking to others disrespectfully is not acceptable.

It's also more than okay for us let our tweens and teens know when they've hurt our feelings. Making them think about how the things they say and do impact others is vital when it comes to developing empathy.

If they want to be treated like adults, they have to act like adults. We show them how by defining what being disrespectful and hurtful looks like and by consistently enforcing the consequences when they cross the line.

5. Try Not To Lecture

When it comes to enforcing consequences, it can be SO tempting to full-on school them about all the reasons why the way they are acting is wrong-headed and immature.

Tweens and teens are often beyond sure that they are the smartest people in the world. The crazy thing is they think this way because their brains aren't fully developed. They are at a stage in life where they are more likely to engage in impulsive behavior and they really can't fully appreciate or even fully think through the long-term consequences of their decisions.

It can be beyond frustrating that our intelligent kids seem to have suddenly gone stupid, and their "I don't care" attitudes are just asking for a full-on reality check. But one way that is doomed to failure every time and will never ever persuade them to see things our way is lecturing them.

No teen, since the dawn of time, has ever walked away from a parental lecture and suddenly experienced an epiphany about the value of doing chores or getting their homework done. We are not going to talk them into being less self-centered or responsible.

At the end of the day, it isn't about proving that we are right and they are wrong. It's about asking them the questions that will help them find the answers and solve the problems themselves.

Ask your teens what is really going on with them. Get them to see the root of their anger and identify the real enemy. It's generally not you. Then don't tell them how to fix it or worse yet, try to fix it for them. Instead, offer your help and your support, but let them determine what that looks like. A "lecture" is always going to pit us against them, even if we think we is for their own good. But what they really want is for

us to be on their side and not to fight their battles for them, but to empower them to fight them on their own, knowing we've got their back.



6. Don't Forget To Praise Them

Lastly, in all of this, let's not forget that there is a good kid behind all the disrespect, a kid that we love with our whole heart.

We need to ensure that they know that and that we're seeing the good and not just the bad. Because praise is truly powerful and they need to hear it from us on the regular.

When our kids show maturity in handling a situation, whether by initiating a respectful conversation or even knowing when they need a few minutes to calm down before talking with us, we should absolutely let them know that we are proud of them.

Our tweens and teens need us now, more than ever, even if they tell us otherwise. So, hang in there through the sighs and eye rolls and sarcasm. One day, the thank you will come, and it will be worth every battle both fought and walked away from.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://parentingteensandtweens.com/6-tips-that-will-help-you-deal-with-teenage-disrespect/>

HAIR SHOULDN'T BE AN OBSTACLE IN FOSTER PARENTING

Written by AdoptUSKids

Rolounda Hayes is a licensure specialist in Mississippi. She works with foster and kinship families to ensure they meet the state's requirements and, she says, "assists with any need the families might have."

A foster mother suggested that we feature Rolounda as an Outstanding Caseworker, writing:

"Our goal of being foster parents almost became a pipe dream with our first placement, a sweet African American girl. Since we are of a different race, we had no understanding of the requirements of a different hair type. When she came to us, the child hated her hairstyle. She would cry, and I honestly felt hopeless. Rolounda was the first person to come around and show me grace and compassion. She stayed well after hours and taught me how to wash and take care of the child's hair. She had patience with me as I learned and reminded me that I could do it. Hair shouldn't be an obstacle in foster parenting, and I am forever grateful that Rolounda taught me that...Over the years, Rolounda has helped me learn to say 'no' so I don't take on more than I can handle. She tells me I am doing a good job, which is important to hear. And she not only checks on my foster kids, but she checks on all of my children. She knows my family, and she cares."

We talked with Rolounda about her work with this family and the qualities of a good foster parent.

Were you surprised to read about the impact you had on this family?

It was good to hear that this mother appreciated me. And I would say that she is pretty amazing too! Her interest in meeting children's cultural needs goes far beyond learning about her hair care. She and her husband have also done things like decorating their home with African-type wall art and they spending time with other children who share her culture. And now she runs a group to help train and support other parents.

In addition to honoring a child's culture, what are some other qualities of a successful foster parent?

A good foster parent knows that the goal is always reunification, and they work toward that goal. They keep birth parents involved and updated through regular phone calls and emails and invite them to activities at school, church, and other places that are important to the child.

Basically, a good foster parent gives the birth parent opportunities to parent, even though they are not with the child on a daily basis. Because doing that helps motivate the

birth parent and makes for an easier, less traumatic transition back to the home.

Foster parents also have to be willing to maintain contact with children's siblings. That's not only the right thing to do, it's our state policy. The mother who wrote to you is doing a great job of that.

A quality that I really appreciate in foster parents is that they are willing to share information about the child with their worker. Foster parents see so much more of a child than a worker ever can, and they need to tell us what they are observing so we can offer assistance and suggestions. And then, they need to be open to hearing our advice!

To people considering foster parenting, I say: We have a lot of great workers and a lot of great kids who need someone to give them a chance. That person could be you.

What are some unexpected challenges that you see foster parents face?

When people think about becoming a foster parent, they think about what it will be like to have another child in their home. What they may not realize is that with that child come visits from a lot of adults! Each family has worker, a licensure specialist, and sometimes adoption specialist. The child has a worker, and maybe a CASA volunteer at least. There could be therapists and other professionals depending on the issues the child is dealing with. It can feel like someone is always coming into a foster parent's home. But experienced parents learn how to schedule visits to minimize the disruptions and mesh with their schedules.

What keeps you doing this work?

I love seeing children be reunified with a parent who has done everything the court asks them to do and can make a safe home for their child. That is a real accomplishment for a birth parent. I also get a lot of joy when I see children experience new things with a foster family. Simple things, like fishing or going to the movies.

And it might sound strange, but part of my job is listening to people complain, and I don't mind that at all! Because I want people to feel like someone is listening to them and to be the one to bridge the communication gap and get them what they need. That is very rewarding.

Final thoughts?

We need more foster parents! I understand that everyone has apprehension. And I know that there are challenges. But we can work through those apprehensions and challenges. To people considering foster parenting, I say: We have a lot of great workers and a lot of great kids who need someone to give them a chance. That person could be you.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://blog.adoptuskids.org/hair-shouldnt-be-an-obstacle-in-foster-parenting/>

WHAT IS INSIDE

Overcoming Nightmares and Creating Sleep.....	1
NFAPA Staff / Board of Directors.....	2
Attention Foster Parents!.....	2
Effective Parenting: Embrace Discipline Over Punishment.....	4
In-Service Training.....	7
Anxious Stomach Aches and Headaches.....	8
When Kids Refuse to Go to School.....	9
What Happened When a Stranger Messaged My Tween's Phone.....	11
NFAPA Support Groups.....	11
6 Tips That Will Help You Deal With Teenage Disrespect.....	12
Hair Shouldn't Be An Obstacle In Foster Parenting.....	15



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

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LINCOLN NE
PERMIT NO 927



JOIN NFAPA....your 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, \$ _____