

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

March/April 2020

N F A P A

NEVER PUNISH A CHILD FOR BAD BEHAVIOR OUTSIDE THEIR CONTROL

Your child's bad behavior is not personal. Make ADHD the enemy; not your child. Catch your child being good every day. Stop blaming others. And other rules for parenting a child with ADD that every family needs to hear.

by *Deborah Carpenter*

Medically reviewed by *Sharon Saline, PSY.D.*

on *September 19, 2019*

Positive Parenting Advice for Kids with ADHD

Most parents are good parents. But if your son or daughter has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, “good” may not be enough. To ensure that your child is happy and well-adjusted now and in the future — and to create a tranquil home environment — you’ve got to be a great parent to a child with ADHD.

Fortunately, it’s easier than you might imagine to go from good to great ADHD parenting. All it takes is a few small adjustments to your parenting strategies and the way you interact with your child — and react to their bad behavior. Here’s what works, and why:

1. Accept the fact that your child — like all children — is imperfect.

ADHD in children is common — but not straightforward. It’s not easy to accept that there’s something atypical about your child. But a child who senses their parents’ resentment — and pessimism about their prospects — is unlikely to develop the self-esteem and can-do spirit he’ll need in order to become a happy, well-adjusted adult.

“For a child to feel accepted and supported, he needs to feel that his parents have confidence in his abilities,” says Ken Brown-Gratchev, Ph.D., a special education instructor at Kaiser Permanente in Portland, Oregon. “Once parents learn to look at the gifts of ADHD — things like exceptional energy,

creativity, and interpersonal skills — they can see the shine inside their child.”

Carol Barnier, of New Fairfield, Connecticut, certainly sees the “shine” in her child with ADHD. “My child is destined for something wonderful, something that would be impossible for those calmer, regular-energy level children,” she says. “I can think of several occupations where boundless energy would be an incredible asset. I’m even jealous of his tireless enthusiasm for life and wonder what more I could accomplish if I were so blessed.”

Do your best to love your child unconditionally. Treat him as if he were already the person you would like him to be. That will help him become that person.

2. Don’t believe all the “bad news” about your child’s ADHD.

It’s no fun to hear school employees describe your child as “slow” or unmotivated; it’s not productive to hear only about the bad behavior. But don’t let negative remarks

deter you from doing everything in your power to advocate for their educational needs. After all, kids with ADHD can succeed if they get the help they need.

“While it’s true that your child’s mind works differently, he certainly has the ability to learn and succeed just like any other kid,” says George DuPaul, Ph.D., professor of school psychology at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. “Look at it this way — if your child was diabetic or had asthma, would you, for one single minute, hesitate to advocate for his benefit?” Just as a diabetic needs insulin and an asthmatic child needs help breathing, a child with ADHD needs their

(Continued on page 3)



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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

NFAPA Staff

- Felicia Nelsen, Executive Director:** 877-257-0176 or Felicia@nfapa.org
 - Corinne O'Brien, Program Coordinator:** 402-476-2273 or Corinne@nfapa.org
 - Tammy Welker, Northeastern/ Eastern Area RFC:** 402-989-2197 or Tammy@nfapa.org
 - Robbi Blume, Northwestern Area RFC:** 402-853-1091 or Robbi@nfapa.org
 - Terry Robinson Central RFC:** 402-460-7296 or Terry@nfapa.org
 - Jolie Camden, Western RFC:** 308-672-3658 or jolie@nfapa.org
- *RFC=Resource Family Consultant

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Attention Foster Parents!

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

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

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Corinne@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MarApr2020> 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. What three rules should you follow when you're discussing our child's diagnosis, or traumatic past, with them, or with them in earshot.
2. Fill in the blanks. You must pay close attention to the things you say in front of your kids. AND to them about them. Particularly when it comes to _____ or _____ or _____.
3. True or False. For a child to feel accepted and supported, he needs to feel that his parents do have confidence in his abilities.
4. Fill in the blanks. Parents are a child's _____, so think carefully about your behavior.
5. Fill in the Blank. Staying too long in a home which is an ill fit can be just as _____ as leaving too soon for breaking the rules.
6. What is the question? When they test us, seemingly they are asking, _____.
7. Fill in the blanks. There is a difference between leading and _____, between teaching and _____, between connecting and _____.
8. True or False. Time outs are another tactic that are sold to parents as being less hurtful than spanking. That may be true but it's like comparing two competing brands of fast food – neither are healthy choices.
9. True or False. Since the cognitive brain is still being formed, the need for your teen to be attached to your family is just as important now as when they were younger.
10. 10. Fill in the blank. It is easy to detach from them: Teens can be annoying! But attaching to family allows them to

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

(Continued from page 1)

learning environment regulated.

Sue Greco of Warwick, Rhode Island, is adamant about being her 11-year-old's strongest advocate. "My son has a great brain," she says. "He's a leader, with great ideas, but he's been labeled 'unable to succeed' at the local public school. Because I know he's capable of more, I've enrolled him in a Catholic school, hoping the higher academic expectations and greater structure will challenge him in a positive way."

3. Don't overestimate the importance of ADHD medication.

There's no doubt that, for many children, the right ADHD medication makes a huge difference in improving bad behavior. But by no means is medication the only thing that makes a difference, and talking about it as if it were will leave the child feeling that good behavior has little to do with her own efforts. When you catch your child doing something you've repeatedly asked her not to do, fight the urge to ask, "Did you forget to take your medication this morning?" And don't ever threaten to increase your child's dosage because they did something inappropriate.

"Statements like these give your child the impression that her behavior is controlled solely by external factors," says Dr. Brown-Gratchev. "It's a parent's responsibility to send the clear message that, while medication will improve the skills she already possesses, it won't magically fix all of her troubles."

As Sara Bykowski, a mother of two sons with ADHD living in Angola, Indiana, puts it, "I tell my kids that their medicine is like glasses. Glasses improve eyesight that the person already has. My kids know that their self-control, no matter how limited, is the main factor in their behavior management."

4. Make sure you know the difference between discipline and punishment.

How often have you complained to friends or family members (or even a therapist), "I've yelled, lectured, threatened, given time-outs, taken away toys, canceled outings, bribed, begged, and even spanked — and nothing works!" Do you see the problem with this approach? Any child exposed to such a variety of "sticks" would be confused. And one of the most effective approaches to discipline — the "carrot" of positive feedback — isn't even mentioned.

"Many parents use the terms 'discipline' and 'punishment' interchangeably," says Sal Severe, Ph.D., the author of *How to Behave So Your Preschooler Will Too!* "In fact, they're vastly different." Discipline, he says, is preferable because it teaches the child how to behave. It includes an explanation of the bad behavior and redirection to acceptable behavior — along with positive reinforcement each time the child makes a good behavior choice. Punishment, on the other hand, uses fear and shame to force the child to behave.

Punishment certainly has its place. However, it should never involve physical or verbal abuse, and it should be used only as

a last resort. For example, if your child continues to yank the cat's tail despite being repeatedly told not to — he should be punished.

Often, the best way to discipline a child with ADHD is via a simple program of behavior modification: Define age-appropriate, attainable goals and then systematically reward each small achievement until the behavior becomes routine. By rewarding positive behavior (rather than punishing negative behavior), you help your child feel successful — and further increase their motivation to do the right thing.

5. Never punish a child for bad behavior that he is unable to control.

Imagine telling your 10-year-old to make their bed. Now imagine finding him, minutes later, lying on their unmade bed playing cards. What should you do? Give him a sharp word and put him in time-out?

According to Dr. Severe, that's probably not the best approach. In many cases, he says, a child with ADHD fails to comply not because he is defiant, but simply because he becomes distracted from the task at hand (in this case, making the bed). Distractibility is a common symptom of ADHD — something that he may be unable to control. And when you repeatedly punish a child for behavior he can't control, you set him up to fail. Eventually, their desire to please you evaporates. He thinks, "Why bother?" The parent-child relationship suffers as a result.

The best approach in situations like this might be simply to remind your child to do what you want him to do. Punishment makes sense if it's abundantly clear that your child is being defiant — for example, if he refuses to make the bed. But give him the benefit of the doubt.

6. Stop blaming other people for your child's difficulties.

Are you the kind of parent who finds fault with everyone except your child? Do you say things like "That driver has no control over the kids on the bus," or "If only the teacher were better at behavior management, my daughter wouldn't have so much trouble in school?"

Other people can contribute to your child's problems. But trying to pin the blame exclusively on others encourages your child to take the easy way out. Why should they take personal responsibility for their actions if they can blame someone else (or if they repeatedly hear you blame someone else)?

7. Be careful to separate the deed from the doer.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me?" Don't believe it. Kids who repeatedly hear bad things about themselves eventually come to believe these things.

No matter how frustrating your child's behavior, never call him "lazy," "hyper," "spacey," or anything else that might be hurtful. And stop yourself if you start to say something like

“You’re such a slob — why can’t you keep your room clean?” or “What’s wrong with you? If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a thousand times.. .”

Carol Brady, Ph.D., a child psychologist in Houston, explains it this way: “Parents must make ADHD the enemy — not the child. When you personalize a child’s ADHD-associated problems, her self-esteem plummets. But when you team up with your child to problem-solve various negative behaviors, you create a climate where your child feels loved and supported despite her shortcomings.”

Next time your child’s room is a disaster, tell her, “We have a problem, and I need your help to solve it.” Tell her it’s hard for you to tuck her in at night because you’re afraid you might trip over the toys on her bedroom floor — or that leaving food in her room attracts bugs. Ask for her input. The more involved your child is in the solution, the better the outcome.

8. Don’t be too quick to say “no.”

All children need to be told “no” at certain times — to keep them from doing something dangerous or inappropriate. But many parents say “no” reflexively, without considering whether it might be OK to say “yes.” And a child who hears “no” too many times is apt to rebel — especially if he is impulsive to begin with.

Why are parents so quick to say “no”? Often, it’s out of fear (“No, you cannot walk to school by yourself.”), worry (“No, you can’t sleep over at Jake’s house until I meet his parents.”), a desire to control (“No, you can’t have a snack before supper.”), or a competing need (“Not tonight, kiddo, I’m too tired.”). Smart parents know when to say “no,” and when it makes more sense to take a deep breath and answer in the affirmative.

In many cases, a small change in the way you use the words “yes” and “no” with your child can mean the difference between a pleasant interaction and a nasty confrontation.

Let’s say your child wants to go outside to play but you want them to sit down and do their homework. “Instead of automatically saying no,” suggests Dr. DuPaul, “ask him to help you brainstorm a workable solution.” That way, he feels that he has at least some measure of control over the situation and that you are trying to accommodate their wishes. He will feel less frustrated and be more cooperative.

9. Pay more attention to your child’s positive behavior.

In their quest to quash behavior problems, many parents overlook all the positive ways in which their child behaves. The resulting negativity can cast a pall over the household that affects every aspect of life.

“Retrain yourself to look at the positives,” says Dr. Severe. “Catch your child being good or doing something well, and praise her. When you point out and praise desirable behaviors, you teach her what you want — not what you don’t want.”

According to social psychologist Barbara Fredrickson, Ph.D., research shows that a ratio of three positive comments

for every one critical comment results in the best outcomes in terms of fostering well-being, building resilience, and maintaining healthy relationships. This Losada ratio has been covered extensively in Fredrickson’s 2009 book, *Positivity* and her 2013 follow-up *Love 2.0*.

Bear in mind, too, that some of the problem behaviors you ascribe to ADHD may be common to all children of that age. It’s helpful to read up on the stages of childhood development — especially if your child with ADHD happens to be your first-born.

Make happiness and laughter the cornerstones of family life. Spend fun time with your children. Go with them on bike rides. Play with them at the park. Visit museums together. Take them to the movies. Sure, life with ADHD can be challenging. But the rewards are great for parents who really connect with their children.

10. Learn to anticipate potentially explosive situations.

Imagine that your daughter has been invited to a party. That’s good news, especially for a child who isn’t very popular with her peers. Now imagine that the party is hosted by a girl with whom your daughter recently quarreled. Do you simply cross your fingers and hope for the best?

“Absolutely not,” warns Dr. DuPaul. “Parents spend a lot of time in reactive mode instead of thinking ahead and planning ahead.” A simple plan, he says, is all it takes to keep a positive experience from turning negative for all concerned.

“In our house, we have ‘the plan,’” says Sara Bykowski. “Before we go into a store or to a friend’s home, we talk about the behavior that is expected and possible pitfalls. We also have a routine for any problems that arise. I might say, ‘Can I talk to you for a minute?’ and then take him away from the group. We discuss what’s happening and try to come up with a solution. Sometimes we still have to leave early, but that happens much less often now.”

Whatever you do, be consistent. “All kids benefit from consistency,” says Dr. DuPaul, “but ADHD kids, in particular, need consistency. It’s not a luxury for them.” A last-minute change in schedule or an interruption of a familiar routine can wreak havoc with a child who already feels like they spend most of their time off-balance and “catching up.” Better to have set routines and plans and do all you can to stick to them.

“Set your home up in a way that encourages organization and responsibility, then run it like an army barracks,” suggests ADHDer Shirley McCurdy, an organizational expert and the author of *The Floor Is Not an Option*. “Think easy and accessible — clear storage bins for clothes, zippered pouches for homework, and a large, color-coded family calendar.”

Make sure you and your spouse are in agreement on matters of organization and discipline. “Parents who aren’t on the same page in their general approach to motivation and discipline with their child with ADHD can cause problems,” says Stephen Grcevich, M.D., a child psychiatrist in Chagrin

Falls, Ohio. “Behavioral interventions for kids with ADHD are unlikely to be successful unless applied consistently.”

When parents present a united front, their children know exactly what to expect. Ultimately, the more predictable and consistent your child’s environment becomes, the happier the whole family will be.

11. Be a good role model.

Parents are a child’s most influential role model, so think carefully about your behavior. If you’re unable to control yourself, how can you expect your child to exercise self-control?

“Yelling sets a poor example of how your child should handle his emotions,” says Dr. Brady. “Parents tend to think that, the louder they get, the bigger the impact on the child — but it doesn’t work. The only thing the child hears is the anger. The situation quickly spirals out of control.”

It’s perfectly normal to feel angry at your child from time to time. It’s not OK to continually shout at her. You wouldn’t dream of screaming and swearing at friends or coworkers, so you know you can control your anger if you must.

Next time your child does something that causes your blood to boil, leave the room, take a few deep breaths, or do something else to calm yourself. When you demonstrate self-calming techniques in this way, you teach your child the importance of managing her emotions.

If you do lose your temper, do not hesitate to apologize to your child.

12. Seek help from others.

Some things in life simply cannot be done well alone, and raising a child with ADHD is one of them. “If you take the Clint Eastwood approach, you’ll wind up exhausted mentally, emotionally, and physically,” says Dr. Brown-Gratchev. “Build a NASA-worthy support system. That way, when your own ‘system’ overloads or fails, as it inevitably will from time to time, there’s someone to put you back together again.”

Ask your pediatrician for the name of a psychologist or other mental-health professional who specializes in ADHD. Or contact CHADD — chances are, there’s a chapter in your community.

Sue Kordish, of Tyngsboro, Massachusetts, knows the value of a reliable support system. “For years, my husband and I worried that no sitter would understand our son’s special needs,” she says. “We tried hiring a teenager, but it didn’t work out, and the experience left us even more wary. With no family members living nearby, the situation was hard. We just didn’t go out. Then we found a sitter who works with special-needs kids. We were finally able to relax and enjoy some seriously overdue couple time.”

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<https://www.additudemag.com/behavior-punishment-parenting-child-with-adhd/>

Punishments, Time Outs, and Rewards: Why Conditional Parenting Doesn’t Work (And What Does)

by Tracy Raised Good Blog



The science is in.

It’s consistent and compelling.

If we want to raise kind, compassionate and cooperative children, there is simply no place for traditional discipline techniques.

It is time to move on from short-sighted strategies that erode the parent-child connection; from tactics that are designed to shape, mold and tame our kids. It is time to challenge the status quo of modern discipline that elevates obedience over learning.

Yet, by rejecting these traditional techniques, others may accuse you of being a passive parent. Family members may suggest that you’re soft. Friends may judge your parenting “style” and think that you’re weak.

As a new (or not so new) parent, these judgments can be hard to hear. They may tempt you to parent differently in public, to be seen as being in control, to not allow yourself to be manipulated by your child. After all, you were a child once too – and you’ve most likely been conditioned to seek external validation, to look to others for approval, to believe that you are loved and accepted most when your behavior aligns with the expectations of others.

But the further you venture into this journey, the more you will realize that taking these judgments seriously is dangerous; they make your love conditional, they’re rooted in childism and they stem from a lack of awareness of healthy child development while perpetuating a disrespectful social hierarchy.

Because, the reality is that those who believe that parenting is about doing to, rather than being with our children are missing the entire point of parenthood. The sacred nature of the parent-child bond lies in the fact that it is the strength of our connection that determines the level of influence we have over our children.

Pause and ponder that statement for a moment. Losing the power to parent. It's a terrifying thought, isn't it?

Because our children need us to be their strong leaders. But, there is a difference between leading and dictating, between teaching and forcing, between connecting and coercing.

Traditional discipline techniques destroy connection. They turn our homes into battlegrounds. They make parenting about "winning" and "losing". And through this approach, a parent's influence is lost. Our natural power to parent wanes before we've even realised how to use it and so, we may feel there is no option but to turn to heavy-handed authoritarian tactics to "make" our kids behave.

These techniques also threaten to transform us into lazy, disconnected and unconscious parents. Why? Because traditional discipline is easy...for the adult.

It has become a one-size-fits-all, cookbook style of parenting; asking almost nothing of the adult in terms of their own mental and emotional evolution and spiritual growth.

So, let's dig a little deeper into the science of traditional discipline. Let's seek to understand why it doesn't work and what's really happening when we discipline our children in these ways. Let's cultivate your confidence so that you can stand beside your child, guiding them with compassion on this adventure called growing up.



WHY PUNISHMENT DOESN'T WORK

At its core, punishment is designed to hurt a child either physically or psychologically, in order to avoid "bad" behavior, while gaining compliance and establishing authority.

In his must-read book, *Unconditional Parenting*, Alfie Kohn describes punishing children as, "to make something unpleasant happen to them – or prevent them from

experiencing something pleasant – usually with the goal of changing their future behaviour. The punisher makes them suffer, in other words, to teach them a lesson."

Conventional parenting experts justify this mean-spirited approach as being for a child's own good. Yet, studies show the complete opposite is true. The sad thing is that we have known this for generations.

Kohn reports on a classic parenting study involving kindergartners and their mothers from the 1950's in which the investigators found that "the unhappy effects of punishment have run like a dismal thread through our findings." Punishment proved to be counterproductive regardless of whether the parents were using it to inhibit aggression, excessive dependence, or something else. The researchers consistently found that punishment was "ineffectual over the long term as a technique for eliminating the kind of behavior toward which it is directed." (1)

More recent and well-designed studies have only served to strengthen this conclusion, finding, for example, that parents who "punish[ed] rule-breaking behavior in their children at home often had children who demonstrated higher levels of rule-breaking when away from home."

Common sense supports these findings because punishment, by design, prevents children from taking personal responsibility for their actions. When an authority figure hands out punishment, children begin to believe, consciously or not, that they can't behave well on their own; they begin to rely on the authority figure to "make" them behave.

Dr. Shefali Tsabury, Clinical Psychologist and author of *The Conscious Parent*, describes this as a "prisoner-warden" approach to parenting. The "warden" is required to closely monitor the "prisoner's" actions, which are either "right" or "wrong". The "warden" then dishes out either a punishment or reward. Sadly, the prisoner becomes dependent on the warden to regulate their behavior. (2)

At best, this approach is reactive and superficial as it attempts to deal merely with behavior, rather than seeking to uncover the hurt, unmet need or lacking skill a child is trying to communicate. Children become puppets who adjust their behavior based on what they predict their parents, teachers or other adults want to see. It impedes healthy moral development by teaching children that when we want someone who is smaller, younger or weaker to do something, we simply use our size, privilege, and power to make them cooperate.

Psychologist Elizabeth Thompson Gershoff analyzed more than 80 studies and found a strong correlation between corporal punishment and negative behaviors, including increased aggression and antisocial behavior. (3) Among her findings Gershoff reported a 2009 study, which concluded that children who were frequently spanked "had less gray matter in certain areas of the prefrontal cortex that have been linked to depression, addiction, and other mental health disorders." (4)

There are few parents reading this who would argue that

corporal punishment is justifiable under any circumstances, yet techniques like time outs, consequences, threats, and bribes may be gentler, but they are to the same ends – control.

Barbara Coloroso, parenting consultant, says parents of teenagers often say, “He was such a good kid, so well behaved, so well mannered, so well dressed. Now look at him!”

She offers the following reply: “From the time he was young, he dressed the way you told him to dress; acted the way you told him to act; he said the things you told him to say. He’s been listening to somebody else tell him what to do...he hasn’t changed. He is still listening to somebody else tell him what to do. The problem is, it isn’t you anymore; it’s his peers.” (1)

Whether we have the right to control another person is a moral judgment. Personally, I don’t believe we have the right to control any living being, no matter how immature they may be. The question needs to be asked – when we try to control a child, an immature child whose brain is still developing and whose sense of self is still unfolding, what long term impact does an adult’s controlling behaviour have on them? Will they come to expect (and accept) others controlling them? Will this set the stage for unhealthy relationships with peers and partners?

TIME OUTS, CONSEQUENCES AND MODERN FORMS OF DISCIPLINE

The original meaning behind the word discipline is a good one. It derives from the Latin word disciplina, which means ‘instruction’, which in turn derives from discere, meaning ‘to learn’. The modern approach, however, as defined by the Oxford Dictionary is “The practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.”

Unfortunately, this is the definition that is more in line with conventional discipline. Methods like timeouts, consequences, and rewards may appear to be relatively benign, but they’re not. Why? Because they are just different ways of pulling the same puppet strings. Let’s look at two examples, consequences and time outs.

Parents are told to use consequences instead of punishment. The term “consequences” sounds less offensive and more intellectual, but it is punishment repackaged. Consequences involve a parent announcing in advance how they plan to punish their child if their child doesn’t behave as they wish. So, in addition to punishment, consequences add threats and mistrust, by telling a child that we don’t believe they’re capable of making the “right” choice without the threat of a punishment.

Time outs are another tactic that are sold to parents as being less hurtful than spanking. That may be true but it’s like comparing two competing brands of fast food – neither are healthy choices. Time outsmay seem like a progressive idea; giving children some time out to cool down, to think about what mistakes they’ve made and how to make it right. Only, this is a fantasy. The reality is that we’ve forced our kids into

isolation. We’ve withdrawn our love, empathy and attention when they need it most and using it as a weapon. They’ve learned that their emotions are too much for us to handle. They’ve learned that they are only welcome in our presence when their behaviour is pleasing to us.

When we leverage something that should be sacred – unconditional love – communicating through our actions that we love our kids more when they’re good and less when they’re bad, we’re causing our children to experience unnecessary emotional distress. It doesn’t matter if that is our intention or not, it doesn’t matter what message we think we’re sending; it only matters what message our kids receive.

When we participate in these kinds of parenting, we have become conditional parents.

THE DAMAGING IMPACTS OF CONDITIONAL PARENTING

A 2004 study by two Israeli researchers, Avi Assor and Guy Roth, in collaboration with Edward L. Deci, a leading American expert on the psychology of motivation asked more than 100 college students whether they felt the love they had received from their parents, when they were children, depended on whether they had succeeded in school, practiced hard for sports, been considerate toward others or suppressed emotions like anger and fear.

They found that those children who experienced love as conditional approval were more likely to act as the parent wished. But, at a high price. These children tended to resent and dislike their parents and they reported that the way they acted was often due more to a “strong internal pressure” than to “a real sense of choice.” (5)

In 2009, a further study interviewed ninth graders. In this study, the researchers teased out the nuanced difference between children feeling more approval when they did what parents wanted compared to less approval when they did not. They found that positive approval was associated with getting children to work harder on academic tasks, but at the cost of unhealthy feelings of “internal compulsion.” They also found that negative conditional parenting was completely ineffective, only serving to increase the teenagers’ negative emotions about their parents. (6)

In a 2013 paper, the same researchers summarized that, “while parental conditional regard might lead to enactment of expected behaviors, this practice has the following costs: (1) stressful internalization of parental expectations, (2) rigid and low-quality performance (3) self-esteem fluctuations and poor well-being, and (4) negative affect towards parents.” (7)

What these studies and an empathic approach to relationships tell us is that it’s not that negative judgments (criticism) are bad and positive judgments (praise) are good – it’s judgment itself that is the problem. Unconditional love, acceptance and parenting is the answer. We need to show that we love our children for who it is they are, not what it is they do.

(Continued on page 10)

Waiting for a Forever HOME!

The following are children available on the Nebraska Heart Gallery.



Name: Jayden
12 years old

Jayden is an active young man with a great sense of humor. Jayden has dreams of becoming a police officer some day. When he's not in school, Jayden likes to play

basketball, play video games, go fishing, and relax by watching TV. Jayden loves working with his hands and staying busy. He has an eye for the arts and enjoys making things and drawing with his favorite color being pink. Jayden loves animals and would especially love to have a pet dog or lizard.

Connections:

Jayden has a large support system that he would need to remain connected to.



Name: Kobe
12 years old

Kobe is an active boy who likes to stay busy. He enjoys basketball and playing video games. Kobe is described as a young man who is funny, charismatic, and smart. Kobe enjoys music and has written and recorded his own rap songs with the help of 402 Arts Collective. Kobe has shown his ability to be respectful and follow the rules. Kobe has a plan for the

future which involves graduating school, attending college, and becoming an engineer. Kobe has been working with his team to do better at accepting consequences and taking responsibility for his actions.

Connections:

Kobe will need to remain connected to his biological brother.

For more information on these children or others on the Heart Gallery please contact Melissa Plybon at:
Email: mplybon@childsaving.org
Phone: 402-560-1958

Counting Foster Children in the 2020 Census

United States
Census
2020

Every 10 years, the U.S. Constitution requires a census to count every living person in the United States. This will determine the number of seats in Congress, make decisions about community services and distribute federal funds. We need your help to make sure everyone in your community gets counted!

Did you know that children under the age of 5 were the highest undercount of any age group in the 2010 Census? Other young children missed in the count were foster children! **As a foster parent, you will need to remember to count all children who live in your home on April 1, 2020, including foster children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and those not related to you.** This will ensure that everyone in your home who should be counted is counted, even those staying with you temporarily.

The 2020 Census paper questionnaires will soon arrive in mailboxes and on doorsteps. You can respond online (look for URL printed on the questionnaire), by mail or phone. The census is important! Your information will remain confidential. You will include everyone's:

- Full name
- Gender
- Persons age and birth date
- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin
- Race
- Does person usually live elsewhere
- How they are related to you (yes, there is an option to mark "foster child")

The information you provide on the 2020 census can shape the future of your community.

Your voice can make a difference.

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

*St Paul Lutheran Church
1515 South Harrison Ave
Garden Room
Grand Island, NE*

Saturday, May 30, 2020
Time 9:00am—4:00pm
(lunch on your own)



**Do you know what to do and say when a child has some challenging behaviors?
Attend this FLIP IT training!**

It explains *FLIP IT*'s four simple steps for transforming challenging behavior in young children:

- F – Feelings
- L – Limits
- I – Inquiries
- P – Prompts

This straight forward and practical approach to addressing behaviors can help children learn about their feelings and gain self-control.

Instructor—Terry Robinson
Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
Central/Western Service Area Resource Family Consultant
402-460-7296

Register online at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Inservice2020>
or call the office at 402.476.2273 or 800.257.0176
Participants will receive up to 6-CEUs.

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



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

Harvest Christian Fellowship
1501 South Dewey
North Platte, NE

Saturday April 25, 2020
9:00am-4:00pm
(lunch on your own)

Register online: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Inservice2020>

Building & Empowering Family Connections

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

This training is for you if...

- Your child has outbursts of emotion
- Your child can get out of hand and out of control
- You would like to see growth and deeper connection in your home
- Your child has experienced trauma and you would like to find strategies to parent more effectively
- Traditional Parenting strategies are not working for your child

*You will learn how to handle challenging behaviors using the three principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)

*You will understand the meaning behind the behaviors, brain chemistry, and how to help heal and connect with your child.

Amy is the founder and owner of Connecting Kidz Pediatric Therapy and provides trauma informed solutions for families and professionals in a fun, nurturing, & supportive therapeutic environment while believing in a child's potential to flourish. She lives in Amherst, NE with her husband, Layne and children, Bentley & Sereniti.

Facilitated by the Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Sponsored by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Earn 6 hours of in-service credit!



CAMP CATCH-UP

Siblings are our first friends in life.

So what better way to spend a summer weekend than hanging out with your siblings at Camp Catch-Up? Together, you can enjoy everything camp has to offer: canoeing, ropes courses, water activities, hiking, and more — and it's completely free!

Camp Rivercrest, Fremont, NE: May 28-May 31
Nebraska State 4-H Camp, Halsey, NE: June 25-28
Eastern NE 4-H Center, Gretna, NE: July 30-August 2

New to camp? Go online to apply at campcatchup.org.
Attend camp last year? Log into your campdoc.com account to update your information.

Questions?

Contact Mona Tarin at 402-613-6357 or mtarin@nebraskachildren.org



(Continued from page 7)

WHAT IF WE FOCUSED ON RELATIONSHIP INSTEAD OF PARENTING?

Young kids mess up all the time. They drop things, break things, lose things and forget things. They're slow, impulsive, intense, explosive, unstable and inflexible.

In short, these little people, these amazing blessings, these children we dote on and buy too many things for, are pretty hard to live with at times.

But, they're our little people.

This is what WE signed up for.

As a parent to a toddler or a teenager, your primary responsibility is to ensure that your child feels safe – emotionally, physically and mentally. You are also tasked with the privilege of teaching them the skills they need in life, which don't include repressing emotions, becoming people pleasers and losing their true selves in order to "fit in".

Authoritarian (or traditional) parenting keeps children in a state of anxiety, anticipating the next mess up and subsequent punishment.

While passive parenting makes the child feel as though they need to be in charge, which makes them feel unsafe and uncared for. Clearly, neither extreme is a good option.

And the answer isn't to meet in the middle of two flawed ideologies. We need to reject both of these misguided approaches altogether and rather than devising new strategies, we need to accept that the idea of implementing a "strategy" itself is a problem when it comes to raising individual children with unique personalities, strengths and weaknesses and hugely variable timelines for development.

Rather, we need to focus on the relationship we have with our children. Because that's all parenting really is: a relationship between two people, albeit the most unique, sacred and influential relationship of your life.

As simplistic as it may sound, our relationship with our kids is nested in unconditional love. It isn't the "love" part we need to focus on – we all love our kids. It's the "unconditional" nature of our love that we need to direct our attention toward. It doesn't matter how much we love, it matters how we love.

Through unconditional love, we can set firm boundaries, we can hold limits, we can weather the cyclone of the emotions that follow and stand firm no matter the outcome.

Because we are parents who take responsibility for uncovering what our children need, for understanding the basics of brain development, for bravely leading our children, not blindly following the crowd.

As parents, it is easy to mistake the difference between being "in control" and being "in charge". Parents always need to be in charge. We have the responsibility to control the environment in which our kids operate. We have the obligation to set the stage for our child's success. It is encumbered upon us to maintain our own rational control, to help our kids regulate their emotions and to give our children healthy choices, but

not to make those choices for them.

Parenting in a conscious manner is hard. No two ways about it. Conditional parenting has been ingrained in us and it's not something we can change overnight, but just bringing our awareness to it is the first step.

If I could only give one piece of advice for you to implement today – and it is the advice I am trying to follow myself at the moment – it would be to take care of yourself. Because, how we react as parents has far more to do with how we're feeling than what our children are doing. Rather than reacting to our children, we want to be able to pause, pause again and respond. As cliched as it sounds, we can't do that if we're pouring from an empty cup.

So, go for a walk. Get outside. Eat healthy food. Drink more water. Get more sleep (even if that means going to bed at 7pm sometimes). Be kind to yourself. Stop criticizing yourself. Don't worry about how you parented yesterday, focus on the now. We all mess up at times, we yell and we lose our cool, and that's ok – our kids don't need us to be perfect (there is no such thing). Apologise. Move on. Be the parent your child needs you to be now.

Because, when you engage in a relationship with your child from a place of worthiness, of rest, of calm, of peace...you won't be rattled. You won't take "bad behaviour" personally. You won't see meltdowns as something to avoid or silence, but as opportunities for connection, for curiosity, for problem-solving. You will see them as windows into your child's inner self, giving you clues to what it is they truly need from you.

You will see your child for who it is they are, beneath the chaos of their passing mood. You will calm your nervous system and soften your heart. You will forget that traditional discipline techniques even exist and the very thought of them will seem completely foreign and strange to you.

And in years to come, when your children have a choice, they will want to spend time in your loving presence, because they won't remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel. Loved. Cherished. Accepted. Celebrated. Honored.

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<https://raisedgood.com/punishments-time-outs-rewards-conditional-parenting-doesnt-work/>

Why Social Media is Not Smart for Middle School Kids

by Anonymous

Twins' brains are simply too immature to use social media appropriately.

I really love middle school kids. I have two of them! If you have been through middle-school parenting, you may have noticed what I see: Strange things seem to happen to a tween's brain the first day they walk into middle school.



One might sum up their main goals in life this way:

- To be funny at all costs. (Hence, the silly bathroom jokes, talking at inappropriate times in class, and the “anything it takes to be popular” attitude.)
- To focus on SELF — their clothes, their nose, their body, and their hair.
- To try new things. They are playing “dress up” with their identity, trying on things to see what fits. They are impulsive and scattered, they are up and they are down, and it even seems that they have regressed in their development on their quest for independence.

As the parent, you are changing, too, as you enter the stage of parenting when you quickly depart from the naive platform of “My child would never...” to the realization that, “I’m sure my child did that. I’m sorry, and please excuse his behavior, he is going through a phase.”

Your list of daily parenting instruction may include statements like:

- “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all!”
- “How many times do I have to tell you not to use that word?”
- “Stop flipping that bottle!”
- “Stop burping the ABC’s!”
- “You’re acting like a 2-year-old.”
- “What were you thinking?”

Then it happens: Maybe because we are exhausted from their constant begging for a phone, or because we think that all their friends have one, or because we want to upgrade ours to the latest model...we cave. We act on impulse. Our brain seems to regress like theirs, and we give them our old smartphone.

And with that one little decision comes the world of social media access—something we haven’t thought about and something none of us is prepared for. Because the midbrain is reorganizing itself and risk-taking is high and impulse control is low, I can’t imagine a worse time in a child’s life to have access to social media than middle school. Here are just a few reasons why:

1. Social media was not designed for them. A tween’s

underdeveloped frontal cortex can’t manage the distraction nor the temptations that come with social media use. While you start teaching responsible use of tech now, know that you will not be able to teach the maturity that social media requires. Like trying to make clothes fit that are way too big, they will use social media inappropriately until they are older and it fits them better.

2. Social media is an entertainment technology. It does not make your child smarter or more prepared for real life or a future job; nor is it necessary for healthy social development. It is pure entertainment attached to a marketing platform extracting bits and pieces of personal information and preferences from your child every time they use it, not to mention hours of their time and attention.
3. A tween’s “more is better” mentality is a dangerous match for social media. Do they really have 1,456 friends? Do they really need to be on it nine hours a day? Social media allows (and encourages) them to overdo their friend connections like they tend to overdo other things in their lives.
4. Social media is an addictive form of screen entertainment. And, like video game addiction, early use can set up future addiction patterns and habits.
5. Social media replaces learning the hard social “work” of dealing face-to-face with peers, a skill that they will need to practice to be successful in real life.
6. Social media can cause teens to lose connection with family and instead view “friends” as their foundation. Since the cognitive brain is still being formed, the need for your teen to be attached to your family is just as important now as when they were younger. Make sure that attachment is strong. While they need attachments to their friends, they need healthy family attachment more.
7. Social media use represents lost potential for teens. While one can argue that there are certain benefits of social media for teens, the costs are very high during the teen years when their brain development is operating at peak performance for learning new things. It is easy for teens to waste too much of their time and too much of their brain in a digital world. We know from many studies that it is nearly impossible for them to balance it all.

How Can Kids Slow Down?

First, we need to slow down and rethink what we are allowing our kids to do. We need to understand the world of social media and how teens use it differently from adults. Here are a few tips that work well for many parents.

1. Delay access. The longer parents delay access, the more time a child will have to mature so that he or she can use technology more wisely as a young adult.

Delaying access also places a greater importance on developing personal authentic relationships first.

2. Follow their accounts. Social media privacy is a lie: Nothing is private in the digital world, and so it should not be private to parents. Make sure privacy settings are in place but know that those settings can give you a false sense of security. Encourage your teen to have private conversations in person or via a verbal phone call instead if they don't want you to read it on social media.
3. Create family accounts. Create family accounts instead of individual teen accounts. This allows kids to keep up with friends in a safer social media environment.
4. Allow social media only on large screens. Allow your teens to only use their social media accounts on home computers or laptops in plain view, this way they will use it less. When it is used on a small private phone screen they can put in their pocket there are more potential problems with reckless use. The more secret the access, the more potential for bad choices.
5. Keep a sharp eye on the clock; they will not. Do you know how much time your child spends on social media a day? Be aware of this, and reduce the amount of time your child is on social media across all platforms. The average teen spends nine hours a day connected to social media. Instead, set one time each day for three days a week for your child to check their social media. Do they benefit from more time than that?
6. Plan face-to-face time with their friends. Remember that they don't need 842 friends; four-to-six close friends are enough for healthy social development. Help them learn how to plan real, in-person, social get-togethers such as a leave-phones-at-the-door party, a home movie night, bowling, board games, cooking pizza, or hosting a bonfire. They crave these social gatherings so encourage them to invite friends over and help them (as needed) to organize the event.
7. Spend more real non-tech time together. Teens who are strongly attached to their parents and family show more overall happiness and success in life. They still need us now more than ever. It is easy to detach from them: Teens can be annoying! But attaching to family allows them to detach from the social media drama. Your child needs to feel like they can come home and leave the drama of their social world behind for a few hours. They want you to help them say no to social media and yes to more time with the family. They are craving those moments to disconnect, so make plans and encourage this at home.

Don't give that smartphone all the power in your home; help tweens choose healthier forms of entertainment. They have the rest of their life to be entertained by social media, but only

a limited time with you.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mental-wealth/201703/why-social-media-is-not-smart-middle-school-kids?eml>

'Do I Have To Leave Now?': Our Foster Care System Makes It Too Easy To Give Up On Kids

by Carolyn Roy-Bornstein

It was our final therapy session with our youngest foster daughter, Janine. She was about to be discharged from the residential program where she had lived for 19 months. She would be coming home to live with us full-time. At the top of one of the office walls, her therapist had taped a piece of pink construction paper with the words "I have overcome..." written on it. He handed Janine her own stack of colored paper and a Magic Marker. She filled each sheet with challenges she had surmounted in her 14 years on earth. "The death of my father," Janine wrote on yellow paper. "My alcoholic mother," on green. "Being separated from my sister," on blue.

I squeezed my husband's hand and fought back tears.

Janine was just getting started.

"Having people I live with not be nice to me," Janine wrote on a purple square and taped it up to the ever-growing tower of sadness. "Being afraid to make a mistake," came next.

"What does that one mean, Janine?" I asked her.

"It's simple," she explained with a shrug. "If you do something wrong as a foster kid, DCF can make you go live somewhere else."

My heart broke. This was no way to live.

But this is exactly how nearly 443,000 children live in this country every day. Afraid to make a mistake. The average foster child is moved three times over the course of their placement. Some are moved more than 10. We were foster placement number 11 for both of our foster daughters. Luckily, we were also their last.

We have gone through a lot with our foster children over the years. School suspensions, car accidents, hospitalizations for drug overdoses, suicide attempts. We've been through the usual teenage maelstroms and then some. After one teenage house party that got a bit out of hand, Janine's first question to us the following day was, "Do I have to leave now?"

If foster children themselves get the idea that their placements are tenuous and temporary, the message foster parents get from the Department of Children and Families is parallel. "You only need to give us 10 days' notice if this gets to be too much for you," our caseworker told us one day. "No one would blame you if you did," said another.

But should it be that easy? By making it so effortless to re-home our foster kids, are we giving them all the same message

that Janine took away early on? Don't make a mistake or we will find someplace else for you to live. It is the belief so many foster children incorporate into their psyches. That they are only welcome if their behavior is impeccable. It is the option foster parents are presented as well. You can give them back at any time.

But it is a terrible message. And we've got to do better. Foster children need a sense of permanency. They need advocacy. Not just when they are honor students making us proud. But when they make mistakes. When they cry out for help. When they test us, seemingly asking, How ugly can my behavior get before you get rid of me?

In all the paperwork I had to sign to become a foster parent, the word love was never mentioned. I had to promise to get the children to the doctor regularly and keep their vaccinations up to date. Love was not a requirement. But maybe love is the key. Or at least a key. Love is basic. It is what keeps families fighting for each other. To be sure, not every foster placement is a perfect match. Love cannot be compelled. Staying too long in a home which is an ill fit can be just as detrimental as leaving too soon for breaking the rules.

Perhaps mediation before removal could be a consideration. More stringent training for families could also help mitigate expectations. By providing potential foster families with the "10-day notice" option, perhaps DCF assumes more parents would come forward to volunteer. But maybe a "worst-case scenario" approach would work better. More rigorous education in trauma-informed care may better prepare them for the challenges of working with abused or neglected kids.

More foster homes will be in demand as need expands. There has been a 147% increase in foster care entries attributable to the opioid epidemic from 2000 to 2017. Migrant children resettling in our area will need fostering as well.

Our foster daughters are in their 20s now and live with us still. One has a baby who is the joy of our lives. Foster placements need not be as permanent as ours has turned out to be. Reunification with children's biological families or placement in a permanent home is the goal for most foster children. But until that happens, these children need someone in their corner. Someone who will stick by them when they make the inevitable mistakes that all children do. Someone who might even take a chance on love.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2019/09/09/foster-child-abandonment-issues-carolyn-roy-bornstein?fbclid=IwAR0RSK2y2z7lQb89KMbh2arQUGwZbqmVc9G4t9Hb0AnNMiAHue2uuZVc>



Every child deserves a family

The Burnout that Special Needs Parents Experience

by Heather McCain



I think most parents probably feel burnt out at some point while juggling all of the responsibilities that parenthood brings. It seems there is always a never-ending list of things to do, but never quite enough time to get it all done. Parents of special needs children have lists that are a bit longer, but still have only 24 hours in a day.

Our lists include medication administration, regular appointments, multiple forms of therapy, paperwork, unending phone calls, IEP meetings, learning to use and then using medical equipment, and so on. We often need to feed, change, or bathe our children who are well beyond their preschool years. We need to make sure we don't run out of the medications that our child's life depends on, or diapers in a size that can't be bought in a store and must be purchased from medical supply companies. When we plan outings, we must make sure our destination will be accessible for our child. If you can imagine, I've only just put a dent in all the extra things a special needs parent must do, remember, or know.

Before anyone gets the idea that I'm complaining, I want to make sure to be clear that that isn't what this is about. I'm just sharing experiences. I understand that it can be hard for those who have not lived this life to grasp what our day-to-day routine consists of (I use the word "routine" loosely) so I wanted to try to paint a picture as I'm getting into what this is all about, which is the burnout that special needs parents experience. This is something that I personally experience, and that I hear or see other special needs parents talk about often.

I'm not talking about that exhaustion at the end of a long day.

I don't mean the needing a cup of coffee or two, or three kind of exhaustion.

I mean that deep down, all the way to your core exhaustion that creeps into your heart and mind, the kind that's already there when you wake up in the morning.

It's when you're so burnt out that you can't even bring yourself to open a piece of mail or check your voicemail because you

can't fathom adding one more thing to your list, not even a seemingly tiny task like returning a phone call.

It's the kind of exhaustion you feel as you wake up to change a diaper and bed sheet in the middle of the night, like you have for the past 9 years. Or 20. Or 42.

It's letting go of careers and plans.

It's feeling like you have little control over what happens to your child, when you desperately want to protect them.

It's handling meltdowns like a pro in public and hiding in the bathroom to cry later.

It's watching monitors until the sun rises, even though you've been awake for approximately 29 hours already.

It's waking up at 4 a.m. to make it to your child's appointment at the specialty doctor 5 hours away.

It's the heavy guilt of being away from your other children as you sit in the hospital with one, weighing on you like a boulder.

It's being afraid of the future but learning to live in the moment—Who will take care of my child if something happens to me? What if my child outlives me? What if I outlive my child? Breathe. My child is here with me now. Enjoy this moment.

It's falling into bed thinking, "how can I keep doing this every day?" Then, getting up the next morning to do it again.

It when our health suffers, mentally and physically. Depression and anxiety are common in parents of special needs children, and lifting a growing child and equipment such as wheelchairs takes a toll on one's body over the years.

The burnout is real. I'm not telling you about it for pity, I'm simply sharing the reality of many with you. And it has nothing to do with how much we love our children. Trust me, we love them so much that we put their every need above our own. We love them so much that we wouldn't trade being their parent for the world. Know what else? You will probably never recognize how burnt out we really are on the inside when you see us with our children. That's because you will see us playing peek-a-boo, or beaming with pride over them, or kissing their soft cheeks over and over just soaking in all the love they offer. You hear the praises we give them and how we gush over every little thing they do. The burnout is real, but so is the unconditional love between us and our children.

You see us in the moments that keep us going, the moments that make all of the hard parts worth every second. But rarely does anyone see us at our most vulnerable, so rarely does anyone notice how burnt out we are.

The next time you see a parent of a special needs child, instead of saying, "I don't know how you do it" (trust me, we're not even quite sure how we do it), or "I couldn't do what you do" (trust me again, you could if it were your child), consider smiling and telling us we are doing a good job. Sometimes, that's all we really need to hear to keep on keeping on.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://www.mombieneedscoffee.com/the-burnout-that-special-needs-parents-experience.html>

Should I Talk To My Child About Their Past Trauma?

by Mike Berry



It's a question many of us have wrestled over on this journey. Should we or should we not talk to our child about his or her past trauma? Here are some thoughts...

It's a conversation we've found ourselves in quite often. Many parents believe it's not a healthy topic of conversation to have with or in front of your children. Others lean on openness and honesty. We lean that way too, but with one big question first...

- Will an open conversation with my child, about their traumatic past, help them or become a trigger?

It's a question only you can answer because you know your kiddos better than anyone. You know what sets them off, what causes anxiety, depression, or rage. Proceed with caution. If you're unsure how they'll respond, consider waiting, or approaching the topic (whether they ask you, or you bring it up) in a more general manner than diving straight into the deep end.

With that question above in mind, here are some rules we follow when we're discussing our child's diagnosis, or traumatic past, with them, or with them in earshot...

- **RULE #1: Be honest, but cautious with details.** Obviously we're honest and open people. That may go without saying unless you're new to the site. We are equally honest with our children when they ask questions. We talk about what they went through. But, we proceed with caution when it comes to specifics, keeping in mind their age and stage of life, and silently asking ourselves if they are ready for these kinds of details.
- **RULE #2: Be honest, but respectful of biological parents.** We are BIG on showing our birth parents respect, and talking about them with dignity and honor to our children. And we believe you should too, even if they've made choices in the past that are less than desirable. Fact is, they're human. So are you. So are we! In that light, as you are talking honestly, make sure you're respectful of people who may or may not be present to speak on their

behalf.

- **RULE #3: Be honest, but encouraging & forward thinking.** We believe with all of our hearts that a person's past DOES NOT define their future. Period! We believe grace changes all of that. We don't believe our son's FASD diagnosis (while shitty and really dark at times), defines who he is today or who he'll become tomorrow. When we have these open discussions, we always try to leave the conversation with encouragement and a glimpse into a promising future (even if current circumstances don't seem all that promising). Encouragement, encouragement, encouragement! I can't say it enough. You must wrap your honesty in a blanket of encouragement. For your kid's sake, but also yours as their parent!

Whatever Brings Dignity.

At the end of the day, ask yourself a similar question as the one I posed earlier: Am I bringing dignity to my child through the words I say to them, or in front of them?

Do my words encourage and uplift, or are they confusing, discouraging or negative? Listen, we get it- you're immersed in this. We are too. You've been to a billion and 4 therapy appointments and left defeated. You've dealt with misunderstanding (or condescending) pediatricians who don't believe a word you say about the diagnosis your child has. You've got a case manager who makes you feel like the enemy...you name it. You're exhausted. You're fed up and tired of the games.

That makes you want to cuss. Loudly. Maybe you do. But more than that, it makes you want to dump your truck of emotions. Sometimes that happens in front of your kids. We get it. You're human. You make mistakes like we do.

But, here's the kicker...you must pay close attention to the things you say in front of your kids. AND to them about them. Particularly when it comes to where they've come from, or their diagnosis, or their current struggles. If you're frustrated, that's okay. We all get to that point. You must must must find another outlet. A close friend who gets it. A fellow adoptive parent, who's on this journey with you. Us. Our team. We're here to listen.

For your health as a parent, but also your child's health as they work through the past they've come from!

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<https://confessionsofanadoptiveparent.com/should-i-talk-to-my-child-about-their-past-trauma/>

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/nfapaexitsurvey>

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 first Monday 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. March 2, 2020, April 20, 2020, May 4, 2020 Be sure to RSVP if there is a location change.
- **Chadron Support Group:** Meets the third Monday of the month. Registration is required. Contact Jolie Camden to register: 308-672-3658 TBA 6:00-7:30 p.m. March 16, 2020, April 20, 2020, May 18, 2020 RSVP for location.
- **North Platte Support Group:** Meets the fourth Thursday of the month. Advanced Registration is required. Harvest Christian Fellowship, 1501 South Dewey, North Platte, NE No childcare provided. Contact Terry Robinson to register: 402-460-7296 We will resume in March 26, 2020. Contact Terry for future dates.
- **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. March 10, 2020, April 14, 2020

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. Connection Point, 1333 North 33rd, Lincoln. 6:15-8:00 pm For more information or to RSVP, contact Felicia Nelsen at Felicia@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

Never Punish A Child For Bad Behavior Outside Their Control	1
NFAPA Staff / Board of Directors	2
Attention Foster Parents!	2
Punishments, Time Outs, and Rewards: Why Conditional Parenting Doesn't Work (And What Does)	5
Waiting for a Forever HOME!	8
Counting Foster Children In The 2020 Census.....	8
NFAPA In-Service Training (Grand Island & North Platte).....	9
Camp Catch-Up.....	9
Why Social Media Is Not Smart For Middle School Kids.....	10
'Do I Have To Leave Now?' : Our Foster Care System Makes It Too Easy To Give Up On Kids.....	12
The Burnout That Special Needs Parents Experience	13
Should I Talk To My Child About Their Past Trauma?.....	14
No Longer Fostering? We Would Love To Hear From You.....	15
NFAPA Support Groups	15
JOIN NFAPA.....	16



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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): _____

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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.

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