

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

November/December 2025

N F A P A

CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS IN FOSTER CARE: A GUEST POST

Children in foster care need a warm safe place to land, no matter the time of year they come into care, but the holidays can be especially painful and lonely for them. Foster parents and kinship caregivers can serve these precious ones more fully and respectfully when we take the time to understand the unique struggles that holidays present for them. This is one former foster youth's story of years of holiday seasons before one foster mother changed everything.

The Holidays Before Foster Care

I grew up poor, in the 'hood. Christmas, for my parents, meant choosing between paying bills and buying food or buying us gifts. Sometimes we got toys from the dollar store or thrift shop. Sometimes we got expensive toys from Toys R Us when it was in business. Sometimes my parents would find good deals and stock up. Sometimes my aunt or grandmother would help. Most of the time, we didn't have a tree or Christmas lights. My siblings and I would create a tree out of paper and tape it to the wall. We would ask for stuff and hope we would get it.

I didn't even know I was poor because my parents did a good job of trying to provide for us and shielded us from this realization. I thought every family celebrated Christmas like this. The best thing was when my mom and grandma would cook things from scratch. Especially Christmas pudding,

Bueno, cake, and cheese. They only made them at Christmas. I remember watching the Christmas parade and movies on TV. We created our own Christmas. This was my Christmas.

Losing My Dad Was Just the Start.

Then my dad died. Christmas wasn't the same. Life became harder. Christmas became harder. The year that he died, I didn't even care about anything else. He died suddenly from cancer. It rocked my world. "Here today, gone tomorrow," as

the saying goes.

My mother also got sick. I feared losing my mother and the ones closest to me. If my dad can die from cancer suddenly, then everyone else can die too, right? Then I did lose everything suddenly as well.

The Losses Kept Piling Up.

I lost everything within one day. They took me from everything I loved and everything I knew. I entered the foster care system. Christmas in foster care wasn't like

Christmas at home. In fact, my foster parents stuck their noses up at not only my parents but the Christmas I had at home. They felt bad and sorry for me. They stuck their noses up and judging by the tone of their voice, my Christmas wasn't acceptable to them. They wanted me to acknowledge and accept Christmas in their home — their traditions and their gifts if I was lucky enough to not be placed in respite



(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

Sabrina Nelsen, Program Coordinator: 402-476-2273 or

Sabrina@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

Vicki Chandler-Smith, Western RFC: 308-352-6079 or

Vicki@nfapa.org

*RFC=Resource Family Consultant

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

Western Representative:

Panhandle

Vacant

Southeast Representative

Tracy Wright

402-730-1576

twright1@lps.org

At Large Board Members

Kimberly Barnes

402-612-1595

kbarnes0102@yahoo.com

Central Representative

Vacant

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/NovemberDecember2025>

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. List FOUR New Year's Resolutions for Adoptive Parents
2. What is one of your goals as you continue your adoption journey?
3. Fill in the blanks. Critical to being a successful foster and adoptive parent is understanding the challenges these children have faced and not taking their _____.
4. True or False. Even when siblings have been separated in foster care, the goal is to find them a safe, permanent home where they can grow up together.
5. True or False. Fostering first has the disadvantage of reducing the number of moves the child who may be placed in your home and allowing the child to live with the family before an adoption is finalized.
6. Fill in the blanks. Fostering first has the _____ of _____ the number of moves the child who may be placed in your home and allowing the child to live with the family before an adoption is finalized.
7. List 6 strategies for getting on the same page as your co-parent.
8. True or False. According to Parent Coach Nicole Schwarz, "When parents are on the opposite ends of the parenting spectrum, kids may show more big feelings with one parent and not the other – often the parent they feel safer with."
9. List four signs of teenage Depression. .
10. List three things you can do to help your teen if they are depressed.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

Families First Newsletter Issue: November/December 2025

(Continued from page 1)

care for the holidays. The different foster parents I had never even asked what my family did for Christmas. They didn't acknowledge how hard Christmas was for me. Disruptions at Christmas time are common.

There Was So Much Conflict and Inconsistency.

Not visiting your family for Christmas while in foster care is also common. Gifts? Well, that depended on many factors. One time rent wasn't paid, and my mother spent the rent money on gifts. Stupid? Sure, but she wanted us to have a Christmas. This caused so much conflict in my foster homes.

I remember being told to write down the things I wanted. One holiday, I got everything I put on the list. This created a conflict because the biological children in the home didn't get these things and it "was unfair." The foster parents brought up that they "treat them all equally and foster kids shouldn't get more than bios." So, I had to share or give some gifts away. Sometimes I knew Christmas was just put together at the last minute and that no thought went into the gifts for me. Other times I was punished and didn't get any gifts or Christmas celebrations.

My Traditions Didn't Matter.

I was just expected to follow my foster families' ways to celebrate Christmas and ignore my own. Things I wanted or gifts I got were "unfair" to the bio kids. It didn't matter if Christmas triggered me or if I had my own traditions. As a foster kid, you're expected to fit right in and be grateful. Heck, my caseworker told me I was lucky I didn't have to spend Christmas in a group home or shelter. My foster parents showed me (their feelings about this) and I could feel they wanted some gratitude from me, too. I wasn't dumb.

I Didn't Matter.

When you are a foster kid, your inner senses are kicked in overdrive. I remember one foster home couldn't wait to get rid of me. She packed my things, called my worker, and said my Christmas gift is being removed from her home. She wanted me out now because I "ruined everything" for her family.

Sometimes I would just stay in my room and cry, wondering how my life ended up in foster care. What did I do so bad to deserve this? I was alone with nothing. I was being punished for things I had no control over. I had to be part of a family that wasn't mine. They were foreign to me. It didn't help that I'm shy and reserved. It didn't help I couldn't just be myself with these strangers. Only one foster parent actually gave a damn.

Ms. Harris Changed it All.

Ms. Harris was my 24th foster home. She was the only one – I mean, THE ONLY ONE – who asked me directly what I would like to do for Christmas or if I celebrated Christmas. Even after I acted out, there was still Christmas in her home. She even called my mother and asked how to make the special Christmas pudding and Banuelos. She googled it too. Was it



perfect? Nope. But it was mine. She tried. She went out of her way to get the ingredients and cook them for me.

She acknowledged Christmas might be hard for me and asked if I even wanted a tree. She asked if I wanted anything. I knew to say "no." The things I wanted were either too expensive in the eyes of foster parents and caseworkers, so I knew I wasn't getting them anyway. Or they would be taken away anyway, so why bother? Nobody cared what I wanted, and I knew my own family couldn't afford the things I wanted. It's still crazy to me that she didn't take my "no" for an answer.

You Fit the Kids, the Kids Don't Fit You.

Ms. Harris took me shopping and asked me to pick out the things I liked. Things that I wanted. I thought it was a joke. I knew the money she got for me didn't come in yet. She noticed the small things which even surprised me: nobody notices the small things that mattered to me.

Christmas with Ms. Harris wasn't Ms. Harris' Christmas. She wanted it to be MY Christmas. I had never had eggnog before, or cornbread dressing either. She made both from scratch and asked me if I wanted some. In my previous experiences, nobody asks you what you want when you are a foster kid. You just take it and fit yourself into the foster family. The foster family doesn't fit you.

Ms. Harris acknowledged and accepted how hard Christmas would be for me. Maybe it was due to her own background (she grew up poor too). Maybe it was her way of acknowledging "you fit the kids, the kids don't fit you."

The Power of One

We're thankful for the vulnerable and candid memories of the holidays this former foster youth has shared with us. It's a vital reminder that welcoming a child into our home – no matter the season – means making space for all that the child brings with her – hard and glorious both. May we all be mindful of the need of every child to be cherished, sometimes felt even in the smallest of thoughtful gestures.

Moreover, let us all remember that it only takes ONE adult to change a child's life — at the holidays, and every other day in between.

Every kid is ONE caring adult away from being a success story. ~ Josh Shipp

Foster parents and kinship caregivers, how do you welcome a child into your home and make room for all the child brings to that space? We'd love to hear from you in the comments!

****November is National Adoption Month. If you are interested in joining the voices that are raising awareness of the need for permanency for foster youth in care, check out Child Welfare Information Gateway's #NAM2021 resources.****

This article reprinted with permission from:

<https://creatingafamily.org/foster-care/fostering-blog/celebrating-the-holidays-in-foster-care-a-guest-post/>



CHRISTMAS AS A FOSTER PARENT IS A REMINDER OF THE CHILDREN I CHERISHED BUT NO LONGER SEE

Unpacking the ornaments means facing my grief, but I've learned to find hope through my daughter's positivity.

Written by Lana Cullis

One snowy day in November, my daughter Kit and I were sorting four boxes of tree ornaments and splitting them between ourselves. Now living independently, Kit wanted to put up her own Christmas tree. But for me, unpacking the decorations meant facing decades of loss and grief for children who were no longer present for the holidays.

For eight years, our family expanded and contracted with 23 foster children. Most placements were temporary, and while still fostering, our two children came to us by adoption. I was surprised to learn Kit had retained the origin stories of each home-made ornament — even for those makers she had never met. And I was shocked to discover many of her holiday memories were quite different from mine.

I opened a box to reveal a tree topper my husband and I

received on our first Christmas together as newlyweds. I turned over the iridescent angel, and my fingers traced the crack between its wings and body. Krazy Glue holds the angel together, but our marriage proved beyond repair. I passed the angel to Kit. Would she want it given its precarious condition? Her eyes lit up beneath her festive reindeer hat.

“Mom, do you remember how I always wanted to be the one to put the angel on top of the tree? I thought I would never be tall enough.” We laughed together. “You’ve grown enough now, eh?” And so it was decided, the angel went with Kit.

I popped the lid off another tin and found a Santa sleigh and reindeer combo.

An eight-year-old boy we fostered had constructed it from foam blocks and pipe cleaners at the annual foster family Christmas party held in our community. I felt a mixture of residual grief and anger. His social worker had argued for — and then lost — the motion in court for him to become a permanent ward after five years in our home. We were not permitted to see him after that. Nor were we allowed to speak with him on the phone. His parents were understandably reluctant. We hoped our former foster child knew how much we loved him — still love him.

Kit sensed a change in my demeanour and took the Santa decoration from my hands.

“You always put this one near the bottom of the tree so I could play with it. I love this guy. Look at the flames shooting out from the back of the sleigh — just like in the movie.”

I had always wondered why he had stuck all those bits of red pipe cleaner out the back of the sleigh. Kit put it together, though. Like our foster children, Kit preferred to watch National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation on Christmas Eve rather than drive into the city for church.

Learning how to make Christmas holidays inclusive for the foster children entrusted into our care was something my former husband and both our parents took to heart. They agreed to hold our family Christmas dinner on Dec. 23 or Dec. 27 so that our foster children could spend Christmas and Boxing Day with their families, and not feel like they were missing out on the festivities in our home. We initiated a simple tradition of buying each child unique tree ornaments to place on the tree or hang in their room as they wished. When moving out of our home permanently (either by being returned to their families or when they aged out of the system), we gave them the choice to leave the ornament with us to remember them in subsequent years or to take it with them as a keepsake of our time together. This is how the Santa and reindeer ornament our eight-year-old foster son crafted came to stay among my decorations.

I retrieved another reindeer ornament — this one a jumble of chocolate-coloured pompoms, ribbon, big googly eyes and pipe cleaner antlers — from beneath the final layer of packing paper. A recycled curtain hook and a substantial glob of glue enabled the matched set of wacky ornaments to hang upright

on the tree. “Big Balls!” I whooped, imitating my then nine-year-old son’s precocious nickname for the matching pair.

This was not the first time I had been a participant in dividing Christmas ornaments; 20 years ago my former husband and I divided our household belongings, including holiday decorations. I had assumed our adopted son and daughter were too young (they were ages eight and five, respectively, at the time), and our older foster children were not yet mature enough to notice the care my husband and I took to be equitable and fair — right down to sharing the two silly reindeer ornaments.

Kit turned the pompom Rudolph over in her hands, “You know, Momma, I loved knowing that no matter where I spent Christmas, Rudolph would be on the tree, and he still is.” Her reflection caught me off guard. Clearly, she had taken important lessons from our divorce that I was unaware of.

Decorating the tree this year promises to be different for me. I sense my daughter’s cheerful narrative will supersede any sadness I had unwittingly ascribed to each ornament. I can hardly wait to see her tree.

This article reprinted with permission from

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/first-person-christmas-as-a-foster-parent-1.7060061>

FOUR WAYS TO HANDLE THE HOLIDAYS AFTER PLACEMENT

The holidays are a time of good cheer and celebration — family and friends come together in the spirit of the season to make memories, exchange gifts and carry on special traditions. But for birth parents who are not spending the holiday with the child they placed for adoption, the holiday season can also bring difficult feelings of grief and loss.

If you are struggling to stay upbeat this holiday season, know that you are not alone. Here are four suggestions to help you manage difficult emotions during the holidays after you’ve placed a child for adoption.

Take Time to Grieve

Even after you’ve moved through the grieving process, difficult feelings often resurface during the holidays. Whether you need to turn down an occasional event invitation or step outside during a holiday party to take a few deep breaths, there is nothing wrong with allowing yourself to be alone and acknowledge your loss — but it is important not to isolate yourself entirely. Consider joining a birth parent support group, or confide in a close friend or family member who can be your support throughout the holiday season. Recruit someone who will understand if you’re feeling less-than-festive and who can stay close by in case you need encouragement, distraction or a

caring confidant during a holiday get-together.

Stay Busy

While you might not entirely feel up to a night of caroling or a day of shopping for holiday gifts, getting involved in the season’s festivities may help you get into the holiday spirit. Make plans to spend the holidays with family and friends, or give back by volunteering your time at a local charity. Bake holiday treats and deliver them to friends and family. Carry on old traditions and begin new ones. Scheduling these activities in advance will give you something to look forward to and will help keep you active and involved in the celebration.

Write a Letter

If you have contact with your child and the adoptive family, send a holiday card or letter letting them know you are thinking of them during the holiday season. Tell them about your own holiday plans and the family traditions that you’d like to share with your child. While you may not be able to physically celebrate together, exchanging letters and photos can become a new, special holiday ritual that you share.

Remember Your Reasons for Choosing Adoption

While it may be painful to think of your child spending the holidays without you, it may also help to think of all of the love and joy they are surrounded with this holiday season. Remember your reasons for choosing adoption in the first place and the important role your choice played in making the holidays so special for another family. The parents you chose for your baby likely waited a long time to celebrate the holidays with a child of their own. You gave them, and your child, the most precious and selfless gift that they could ask for — a gift that will endure not only for this holiday season, but through every holiday season from now on.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://consideringadoption.com/four-ways-to-handle-the-holidays-after-placement/>

FOUR NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS

At the beginning of a new year, many people set goals for various areas of their lives: health and fitness, friends and family and work-life balance are just a few of them. For adoptive families, adoption is a lifelong journey and another aspect of life that requires ongoing attention and commitment.

As you begin the new year, consider setting adoption goals and making adoption a priority in your life. Here are some resolution ideas to help you get started:

1. Make adoption a frequent topic of conversation

— Weaving adoption into everyday conversations at home is a great way to promote a positive view of adoption and acknowledge the beautiful way your family was created. There are many ways to incorporate adoption into family conversations and activities. This year, make it a goal to mention adoption once a week at family dinners or have a monthly adoption movie night.

2. Get involved in the adoption community

— From adoption support groups to online forums to networking events, there are many ways to connect with other adoptive families. Ask your adoption professional about upcoming events in your area, and consult local adoption groups and resources to share advice, receive support, learn more about adoption and make new friendships.

3. Spread adoption awareness — If you are interested in becoming a more active supporter of adoption, the new year is a great time to start. There are countless ways to educate others about adoption. Begin by talking with friends and family about your experiences, and see some of our ideas for spreading adoption awareness.

4. Honor your child's birth family — Whether you have an open, semi-open or closed adoption, make it a point to continue honoring your child's birth parents this year. If you have an open or semi-open adoption, resolve to keep your child's birth parents informed of special milestones, achievements and events. Depending on the level of openness and everyone's comfort level, consider planning a visit or simply making more frequent contact. Even in closed adoption arrangements, you can make your child's birth family an important part of your new year by talking with your child about his or her adoption story and reminding them of their birth parents' love and sacrifice.

As an adoptive family, adoption will continue to shape your lives in the coming year. What are some of your goals as you continue your adoption journey?

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://consideringadoption.com/four-new-years-resolutions-for-adoptive-parents/>

DEAR STRUGGLING PARENTS, IT'S NOT JUST YOU. PARENTING TEENS IS HARD

We need to be far more honest and open about the challenges of raising teenagers...

I remember when my kids were little, the moms in my neighborhood would get together weekly for "Mom and me playdates." While



the kids played, us moms would pour our hearts out to one another about the exhausting challenges of raising toddlers.

The temper tantrums, the bedtime fits, the fear of them not meeting major milestones... we were there for each other.

But life shifts when your kids become older. Not only do parents get sidetracked by their kids' busy lives leaving little room for day-to-day friendship, but there seems to be a "hush" that comes over parents.

No one really wants to talk about their struggles, their kids' mistakes or failing grades, the fact that their kid got caught cheating or stealing or smoking weed, or how they're trying to deal with their kid's sudden defiance. No one really wants to let the world in on the fact that their kid isn't perfect. Oh, but we should... because NO teen is perfect and neither are we.

Whether we chat in person, on the phone, via text, or through social media, parents of teens still need the same support they needed when their kids were young... maybe more. We need to talk about how hard it is to parent teens a whole lot more... because this isn't easy.

We need to be more honest about how we're struggling, how exhausting it is physically and mentally, how much sleep we lose worrying about our teens when they're behind the wheel of a car, hanging out with friends facing peer pressure, and how we pray every single night that our words of wisdom and lectures will sink in and that they'll make the right decision when the chips are down.

We need to talk about how our sweet, clingy, "I love to be with you," child disappears into thin air when puberty hits and how dragging them away from their friends or out of their bedrooms takes an act of God.

We need to admit to one another how hard we're trying to connect with our teens, how many times we ask them places (and they turn us down), how they don't seem to need us that

(Continued on page 8)

**FREE
Virtual
In-Service
Training!**

In-Service Training!

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFAPA_In-Service_Oct_2025-Sept_2026 **Registration Link**

Identify Your Need

Gather Information

Weigh Options

Decide

Register

Attend!



**November 15, 2025
9:00 am-11:00 am**

Raising Resilient Children:

Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, is a term used to describe stressful or traumatic events experienced by an individual before the age of 18. ACEs can have a lasting effect on health and well-being for children and adults, including higher risk of chronic disease. However, ACEs can be prevented, and their effects can be lessened. In this training, you will learn about ACEs and the brain, acquire practical strategies for building resilience and improving wellness, and learn techniques for creating positive environments in your homes.

With Libby Valerio-Boster and Sarah Dankenbring from BraveBe

**January 24, 2026
9:00 am-11:00 am**

Parenting with a Trauma History:

This course provides parents and caregivers the chance to learn about how their own trauma histories and adverse experiences might impact their parenting journey. Participants will learn the challenges that a trauma history may present in parenting, discuss strategies for parenting while facing these challenges, and learn how to maintain a regulated emotional and physical state.

With Libby Valerio-Boster from BraveBe



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

Facilitated by NFAPA

Sponsored by the

Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services

much anymore, and how hard it is to accept that our babies are growing up.

We need to talk about how much it hurts our hearts when they roll their eyes at us, sigh heavily, slam a door because we made a decision that's in their best interest, and how blindsided we were when they talked back disrespectfully the first time.

Oh, and can we please talk about how utterly difficult it is to NOT take our kid's sass, eye-rolls, and slamming door personally? How the hell is that possible? We bore these children from our wombs. They mean everything to us. Of course, we take it personally when they merely tolerate us, don't want to spend time with us, question our every parenting decision, or worse yet, act like they hate us.

We need to talk about how much we miss our kids long before they leave the nest, how much we wish we could wrap them in a big hug (without them running for cover), and how much we miss their littleness with a force that takes our breath away.

We need to share our stories about how lonely we feel at times, that the village we leaned on so heavily when our kids were young seems to have faded into the distance, and how we're faced with raising our kids during the most tumultuous times of their lives solo.

We need to admit, too, that it's not just moms who struggle with all of this. Dads feel just as deeply. And, although they may handle it differently, they battle with these intense changes and challenges just as much as mothers do.

We need to open our hearts to one another about how desperately we try to remove ourselves from the competitiveness of parenting and focus solely on our kids and their strengths and capabilities, but how we still get sucked into wanting our kids to succeed, hoping they'll pull good grades and get into a "good" college and make us proud.

We need to be far more honest about how difficult it is to watch our kids make (sometimes colossal) mistakes and allow them to face the natural consequences of their actions and how, as much as we'd like to protect our kids in bubble wrap and make important life choices for them, this is their life and we have to give them the freedom to follow their path, their goals, and their dreams.

And, can we please talk about how our kids are growing up in a completely different era than we did, and understanding and relating to what their life is really like takes a conscious effort on our part? Cell phones, social media, technology... the daily life of our teenagers is a far cry from our daily life when we were their age.

Let's also talk about how much we all question ourselves... are we being too hard on our kids, not hard enough, too patient, not patient enough, too protective, not protective enough. Are we raising them right? Will they turn out okay? Will they outgrow this stage? Will they EVER learn to pick up their wet towels, or put a dish in the dishwasher and will they grow up to be total slobes because if their bedroom is any

indication, there's literally no hope?

And, finally, we need to talk more about how hard we're trying, that we really are all in this together, and how we should be sharing our journeys with each other – the good, the bad, the wonderful, and the heart-wrenching challenges. We can gain so much strength from one another, so much insight and guidance and so much comfort when we hear, "Oh, I tried this and it worked," advice. And, how amazing it would feel to just get a hug from someone who's traveled the path before us or a phone call or text from another parent that says, "You're doing so much better than you think you are... don't question yourself!"

Please don't view me as negative or think I'm only focusing only on the "hard" of raising our teens. I could write 100 posts about how amazing it is to raise our teens.

How rewarding it is. How amazing it is to see them blossom into mature, capable, wonderful adults. How precious and fun it is to see their personalities unfold right before our very eyes with their own unique perspectives, opinions, and wit. How once you turn the corner with them they become not only your kids but beautiful, trusted, life-long friends.

Raising our kids is truly a gift and blessing... but it's also really hard.

If you're struggling,

if you're questioning yourself,

if you're finding yourself at a loss on how to parent this new defiant, independence-seeking kid,

if you're tired all the time because you're losing sleep worrying about, well... pretty much everything,

if you're in desperate need of a village that seems to have its doors shut,

if you whisper to yourself in the quiet of the night... "This is so hard and I'm not sure I'm getting it right."

You're not alone... this really IS hard.

Reprinted with permission from:

https://raisingteenstoday.com/dear-struggling-parents-its-not-just-you-parenting-teens-is-hard/?fbclid=IwY2xjawNji1ZleHRuA2FibQlxMQBicmlkETfhVhzZ1BzbUpVU0J5RU5mAR7X0PmYUY_AcVjmugb0M734AOkbRfIOFi8T0_WLAa54H-Oitwxwo1AirjAJtQ_aem_t7sedDyknAbBADYyb5Y0Bg



SIGNS OF TEENAGE DEPRESSION AND HOW TO HELP

Written by parentingteensandtweens

Being a teenager is not easy, especially in today's world.

They are feeling isolated like never before being cut off from school and friends and their normal activities. And even as things begin to return to some level of normal, there is still a considerable amount of uncertainty.

And even though teens are not currently dealing with typical social stressors, they are more active than ever on social media. These platforms are ripe for teens to fall into the comparison trap measuring themselves against their peers that they see as doing better at the things they struggle with.

While it's not uncommon, and completely understandable right now, for teenagers to get into a bit of a funk, how do you know if it's something more? And if you are worried that it is something more, how do you go about helping them with these complex issues?

The following are signs of depression in teens. If you read them over and think that your teen might be struggling with more than just this typical teen troubles, you'll also find resources to help you help your depressed teen.

What are the Signs of Depression in Teens?

While adults can seek help on their own, many teenagers have to rely on their parents or other adults to help them recognize that they have depression and to help them get the help they need. This isn't an easy process, and often depression doesn't present itself in obvious ways. For example, teenagers don't always appear to be sad, but may be irritable or angry instead.

Here are some signs of depression in teens:

- Hopelessness
- Hostility or anger toward others or themselves
- Changes in either or both sleeping and eating habits
- Frequent crying
- Withdrawal from others
- Loss of interest
- Poor school performance
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Trouble concentrating
- Suicidal thoughts

You can find a full list of symptoms and more details here.

How Depression May Affect a Teenager

It's a common misconception that depression merely causes a person to be sad. The reality is that depression lies dormant and strikes when you least expect it. If your teenager has depression, they may be fine for weeks at a time, and then suddenly have a day so bad they can't get out of bed.

It's important to understand that depression affects everyone differently and that just because a symptom seems

to have disappeared doesn't mean it won't come back again. Sudden changes in your teenager's character or how they act can sometimes be a clue that they may be depressed as well.

How You Can Help If Your Child Suffers from Teen Depression

It's normal for kids to feel sad over the loss of a loved one or irritated when they lose their soccer game or do poorly on a test. Bad moods will happen, and especially as your teenager enters puberty.

However, when those negative thoughts, feelings, and emotions start to linger for long periods of time and change your teenager's ability to function normally, it might be time to consider the possibility that your child has depression.

If you think your teenager might be suffering from depression or is showing one or more signs of depression in teens, then there are a few things you can do to help:

- **Talk with your teenager about depression and their mood swings**
- **Schedule a visit to your teenager's doctor:** Sometimes, mood swings can be a sign of an underlying health problem.
- **Contact a mental health specialist:** You can get a referral from your teenager's doctor.
 - Explore other resources that may be available to your teen here: Society for Adolescent Mental Health

If you or a loved one is suffering from depression, reach out to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Hotline. This service is completely confidential and free to call. This hotline can be used to get help or for family members who are caring for someone with depression or mental illness.

Having a teenager with depression doesn't mean that you as a parent have done something wrong and there is no reason for you or them to feel ashamed. Many people struggle with mental health issues, but just like any other health problem, you need to seek out medical help and treatment to ensure the most successful outcome.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://parentingteensandtweens.com/signs-of-teenage-depression-and-how-to-help/>

MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH BIOLOGICAL FAMILY AFTER FOSTER ADOPTION

Your child is in a new environment, and they finally have a permanent home — but now it's possible that they're ready to maintain a relationship with their biological parents or

other family members. If so, you may be concerned about the best ways for doing so as a new parent in a foster adoption. If you're on the fence about maintaining a relationship with your child's biological relatives, here is what you should know about open adoption after adopting from foster care.

What to Know About Open and Semi-Open Adoptions

While closed adoptions used to be the norm, most modern adoptions have some degree of openness. Although this is more common in a domestic infant adoption, it is still possible if you're adopting a child from foster care. Open and semi-open adoptions help children form a better sense of self and identity. If they're able maintain a relationship with their birth parents or siblings and other relatives, they can ask any questions about their history that they might not have known otherwise.

Although you may be wary at first, and open adoption from foster care isn't right in every situation, the most important thing to remember when it comes to an open adoption is that educating yourself goes a long way. Ask plenty of questions about what it's like to have an open adoption from other foster parents, as well as your options for creating a healthy ongoing relationship. Because no two open adoptions are every the same, you can make a plan that fits your unique situation.

Tips for Maintaining a Relationship

Your relationship with your child's biological family is important, and you might be worried about the best way to handle your future interactions. To give you a good starting point, here are some tips for opening up a relationship with your child's biological parents, siblings or other relatives.

- **Establish clear boundaries:** Every relationship is built on trust, so it's important to outline the expectations of both parties. Communication and honesty will be so, so important throughout your entire relationship. You should discuss if the open adoption will include visits and how often, if you plan to exchange emails, and more. You can always start small and then add more contact later once everyone feels comfortable.
- **Understand that you may need to maintain existing relationships:** If you're adopting an older child, and they have a healthy relationship with their biological parents, siblings, or other relatives, you'll need to keep them involved. While it won't always be easy, it will be a positive experience for your child.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help:** Your social worker or an adoption professional is always available when you need someone to talk to. You can also reach out to other foster parents who may be contemplating an open adoption, or have already gone through the journey, for their personal opinions.

- **Don't gossip about the birth parents:** No matter what your true feelings are about your child's biological parents, sharing your negative feelings is not only disrespectful, but it will hurt your child more than anyone else. Instead, put yourself in their shoes, and realize that no one is perfect. While this may be difficult depending on the circumstances, the way you talk about your child's biological parents will impact your child for the rest of their lives.
- **Be flexible:** One reason that open and semi-open adoptions remain a popular choice is that you can always change how much contact you're open to. Of course, this goes both ways. As your relationship with the biological parents evolves, you can ask for either more or less contact.
- **Be honest:** If there's something bothering you, don't be afraid to speak up. While it can be great to have plenty of contact and communication, it's not for everyone. Remember to always follow your gut if something doesn't feel right.

When it Might Be Time to Take a Step Back

In some cases, maintaining a relationship with the biological parents after foster adoption just isn't possible. Whether that's due to abuse and neglect, or the biological parents aren't able to follow established boundaries, not every relationship can be maintained — especially when it becomes toxic.

Your job as a parent is to use your best judgment in order to provide a healthy environment for your child to thrive in. If you feel as if you may need to take a step back before pursuing an open adoption, that's okay. If you do need advice on establishing contact, you can always reach out to a social worker who understands your situation.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://consideringadoption.com/maintaining-contact-with-biological-family-after-foster-adoption/>

WHEN PARTNERS DISAGREE: TOOLS FOR PARENTING ON THE SAME PAGE

Parenting disagreements are not uncommon, especially with so many different parenting ideologies out there. Here are 6 strategies for getting on the same page as your co-parent.

Seven o'clock rolls around. In our household, that means bedtime ritual begins.

Jammies. Brush teeth. Our favorite book. And then.... drift off to sweet dreams and counting sheep?

Ha! Not for us.

Picking out jammies becomes a game of cat and mouse. My husband chases our son. I'm chasing my husband.

Brushing teeth becomes an Olympic event and, from the snail's pace at which we complete this task, we're not taking home the Gold anytime soon.

And then, at last, a book. We sit, we snuggle, and we read. And then we read again.

And then the "one mores" begin. "Just one more time. Just one more book. Just one more minute!"

Before I know it, one more minute has turned into an hour. Emotions are high, tears are brimming, and yes, there is yelling.

My husband thinks we need to be more firm. "Let's put him in time-out or take away something he likes, like reading time," he suggests.

"What about respecting our son's needs/emotions?" I counter.

And just like that, my husband and I are locked in a power struggle too.

With such different ideas about how best to manage our son's champion sleep fighting tendencies, is there any hope for us to parent from the same page?

Parenting Philosophies

According to Dr. John Gottman, when two people have children, a cross-cultural experience occurs. Each parent brings forth a different set of beliefs based upon how they were raised.

William Doherty, in *The Intentional Family: Simple Rituals to Strengthen Family Ties*, mentions that when a new family system is set into motion, partners have the opportunity to re-evaluate beliefs and values to create a chosen culture within their tribe. The more intentional that culture is, the more the tribe thrives.

"We all come into relationships with our belief systems from our upbringings," says Burnaby, BC, clinical counselor Allison Bates. "But it doesn't always mean it's the best way to raise your family."

Given this divide, is it realistic for me to hope that my husband and I will one day be able to meet in the middle, parenting together with a shared set of clear, firm boundaries while still validating our child's emotions?

When Parenting Styles Clash

I think my partner is too harsh, where my partner thinks I'm too soft.

My partner prefers a strict routine, where I prefer spontaneity.

My partner is not comfortable with big emotions, whereas I raise the roof on making space for feelings.

Given this divide, is finding common ground hopeless?

I've read enough to know that the way we co-parent can greatly impact our family dynamics.

Children are concrete learners who thrive on consistency,

boundaries, and rituals. Inconsistencies in parenting practices can send mixed signals, leading to confusion and more acting out.

In more extreme cases, "uncoordinated child-rearing," as I'm seeing our recent reality called in the literature, can also create anxiety and/or depression in the child.

Color me motivated. I was going to figure this out.

The Science Behind Consistent Co-Parenting

In my digging for a solution, I found this little nugget of wisdom, and shared it with my husband:

According to Parent Coach Nicole Schwarz, "When parents are on the opposite ends of the parenting spectrum, kids may show more big feelings with one parent and not the other – often the parent they feel safer with."

Apparently, when children do not feel safe or when they feel that their environment is unpredictable, they resort to brainstem behaviors of fight, flight or freeze, resulting in more power struggles and misbehaviors.

This grabbed our attention.

And then, just in case there was any doubt about our motivations to figure this co-parenting thing out, we read this:

"Although parenting disagreements are bound to arise, prolonged dissonance among partners can echo throughout the rest of the relationship, leading to arguments beyond parenting differences alone. In some cases, relationships collapse."

There was no question, we were committed to finding a solution.

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.

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>

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

Finding Middle Ground In Co-Parenting

We started by putting these six tips into motion:

1. Create emotional and physical safety

Research shows that our brains have a greater sensitivity to negative input; a built-in protection mechanism intended to keep us safe from harm.

Creating a shift of energy that promotes a safe environment allows both partners to feel heard and validated, providing an opening for compromise.

With clear minds and hearts, the sharing of ideas can occur. Ask open-ended questions and then pause to hear what your partner has to say.

According to the Gottman Institute, completing and talking about the following statements as a couple can help evoke safety and connection, a great first step to co-parenting:

I feel that you are a good parent because ____.

I feel that my role as a parent is to ____.

It's most important to me for our child to be ____.

My goal in raising our child is ____.

2. Listen

Although it can be challenging, it helps to commit to actively listening -- to really hear one another, even when you disagree with what the other person is saying.

This tip helped me shift my goal from convincing my husband to see things my way, to actually listening to what he had to share without feeling that my differing views were under attack. Instead, I validated his emotions, just as I was hoping we could do as a couple for our child.

It helped for me to remember that his reality is very real to him, just as my perspective is real and valid to me. And although I may not have agreed with what he was saying, in listening to him, I was learning. Every opportunity is a growing opportunity. In embracing this mindset, we are brought closer to one another instead of further apart.

I realized that the ultimate goal was not for me to win the argument but to find our middle ground. This shift in our thinking proved vital. We made it our mission to co-parent in a way that respects our shared values and beliefs.

3. Create a shared vision

So we sat down and we defined our long-term goals for our family. We discussed the desired rules and boundaries and why we felt that they were important. Talking through these sharing prompts helped us recognize how our different parenting styles aligned with our sometimes differing goals:

My parents were ____ and I feel that was ____.

To me, discipline means ____.

What are our parenting strengths (individually/collectively)?

The approach to parenting that I most align with is ____ because ____.

4. Prioritize

Here, we took the larger, shared vision we had for our family and focused on addressing the reoccurring, high-stress

situations we were dealing with, like bedtime. Together, we became curious as to why certain behaviors were arising from our son.

Daniel Siegel, clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and executive director of the Mindsight Institute, invites co-parents to ask these questions:

Why did our child act this way (What was happening internally/emotionally)?

What lesson do we want to teach?

How can we best teach it?

Answering these questions actually helped us find our common ground.

5. Embrace differences

We began to realize that this was not a clear case of right and wrong and that, as a couple, we didn't have to have the same strengths to be effective co-parents. And slowly, our parenting power struggles at bedtime lessened, so too did our child's.

6. Be a united front

It is highly unlikely that you will agree with every disciplinary action your partner makes. As long as you are not concerned with abuse or neglect, be a united front in the presence of your children. Undermining your co-partner in front of your children diminishes both of your authority and sends the message that there is a way around parenting decisions. Discuss your feelings in private and re-visit as a united pair.

What if your co-parent is not interested in same page parenting?

Despite having the best of intentions, ultimately, we cannot force change on someone who does not want to change. When both partners continue to hold different ends of the tug of war rope, asking for help from an outside party can be useful. Parenting coaches, couple's counseling and/or online parenting courses can help co-parents reach compromise.

So, how did we fare? Well, somewhere along the way, my husband and I put down our weapons, leaned into a few shared goals, and slowly, we started to find some common ground.

As for our little champion sleep fighter? Well, he's still a champ, but as our rituals became more consistent, and my husband and I more united, our son has shifted too.

And though I'm fairly certain my husband and I will never parent from the exact same page, I feel hopeful, because "same" is not my goal anymore.

Together is.

Ashley Patek

Ashley Patek is an occupational therapist, certified lifestyle/parenting coach, and mama to four children; two boys and two daughters born to Heaven. She believes that parenting starts with us as parents and focuses on the whole-parent, whole-child, and whole-family dynamics.

Reprinted with permission from:

https://www.dailymail.com/health/relationships/when-partners-disagree-took-to-same-page?feature=story&utm_source=dm&utm_medium=story&utm_campaign=dm_story&utm_term=.40101724&_ga=2.14101724.14101724.14101724.14101724

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ADOPTING FROM FOSTER CARE

Our resource specialists field thousands of calls about foster care and adoption every month. This page provides answers to frequently asked questions about:

- Costs of adoption
- Who can adopt
- About the children
- Support and training for families

Process of fostering and adopting: rules and best practices

Many rules governing foster care and adoption vary by state. Find state-specific information about fostering and adopting on our website.

Costs of adoption

How much does it cost to adopt from foster care?

Most adoptions from US foster care are free. The minimal costs that can be associated with them are often reimbursable. Read more about the costs of adoption.

Is there financial assistance available to cover adoption fees?

Most children in foster care, and all children photolisted on AdoptUSKids, are eligible for the adoption tax credit.

This credit allows adoptive parents of children in foster care to claim adoption expenses from their federal taxes—such as necessary adoption fees, court costs, attorney fees, traveling expenses (including meals and lodging while away from home)—or receive a full credit (which varies by year) without itemizing when adopting a child who qualifies as having “special needs.”

Please note that the adoption tax credit is not a refundable credit. Taxpayers can only receive the credit if they have federal income tax liability. Find out more:

Information on the North American Council on Adoptable Children website

Information and required forms for claiming the credit on the website of the US Internal Revenue Service

Is there financial assistance to help meet children's needs after they are adopted?

After you adopt a child, there are medical assistance programs to help finance an adopted child's medical and mental health needs. There may also be current educational benefits, college tuition assistance, child care vouchers, subsidies, and other assistance. Read more about resources available after adoption.

Who can adopt

Do I need to be married to adopt?

No, you do not need to be married! Many single people are successful foster and adoptive parents. You can read other families' adoption stories on our blog.

Are there income or education requirements?

Do I need to own my own home?

You don't need to own your own home, be wealthy, have children already, have a college degree, or be a stay-at-home parent to adopt. However, you do need to demonstrate that you can support yourself without any additional income, such as adoption assistance.

Are there age restrictions on adopting from foster care?

In most states, adults of all ages can adopt. There are typically no upper age limits.

Are family members given priority in adopting a child?

Often they are. When children cannot be reunited with their parents, their caseworkers first look to extended family members and other people who have played a role in their life.

Can I adopt from US foster care if I am in the military or live overseas?

Yes. Families living outside of the United States can adopt from US foster care.

Military families stationed overseas and within the US are eligible to adopt children from the US foster care system. Learn more about adoption resources for military families.

Can I adopt a child if I have a Green Card?

As long as you are residing in the United States you may be able to adopt as a Green Card holder. Search for contact information for your state on our website, and call them to confirm.

Is it possible to adopt a Native American child if I do not have Native American heritage?

While it is possible, adopting Native American children can be more involved than adopting a child who does not have tribal citizenship or affiliation. Find more information about adopting Native American children.

Can I adopt a child who I know through my church or neighborhood?

Yes. Children's caseworkers first look to extended family members and other people who have played a role in their life.

What are the important qualities for foster and adoptive parents to possess?

Qualities of successful foster and adoptive parents are similar to all parents. Helpful qualities include being willing to seek out and use support services, learn new parenting techniques, and advocate for your child. Flexibility and humor go a long way as well! Critical to being a successful foster and adoptive

parent is understanding the challenges these children have faced and not taking their behavior personally.

In this guest post on our blog, “What I Learned from My Mother About Adopting a Teen,” a young woman who was adopted shares tips for parents.

About the children

Why are children in foster care?

Children and youth enter foster care through no fault of their own, because they have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by the people who were supposed to care for them.

While the majority of children come into care due to neglect, all children in foster care have experienced loss and trauma. Read more about the effects of trauma and how to support children who have experienced trauma.

How many children are in foster care and awaiting adoption in the United States?

Approximately 400,000 children are in foster care at any given time. Approximately 117,000 of them are available to be adopted.

I have heard that many children in foster care have “special needs.” What does that mean?

The term “special needs” simply refers to children who qualify for adoption assistance due to specific factors or conditions such as:

- Being an older child
 - Having a particular racial or ethnic background
 - Being part of a sibling group needing to be placed together as one unit
 - Medical conditions
 - Physical, mental, or emotional disabilities
- A child with special needs should not be confused with a child who requires special education.

What is the average age and background of a child in foster care?

According to the most recent report published by the US Department of Health and Human Services:

- Their average age is approximately 8 years old.
- There are slightly more boys than girls.
- The majority are white (42 percent), followed by black/African American (24 percent), Hispanic, of any race (22 percent), and Native American (2 percent).

I see a lot of older children in photolistings like the one on AdoptUSKids. Why would I want to adopt an older child?

Imagine being a teenager grappling with the transition into adolescence and independence all alone. That is the situation facing thousands of young people who face aging out of foster care alone every year. These teens need support, guidance, and family now and for the rest of their lives.

Learn more about how adopting an older child can bring a lifetime of rewards.

Are brothers and sisters always adopted together?

In an ideal world, the answer would be yes. Research suggests that siblings placed together experience lower risk of failed placements, fewer moves, and many emotional benefits. Even when siblings have been separated in foster care, the goal is to find them a safe, permanent home where they can grow up together.

Read more about the benefits of adopting siblings.

Support and training for families

Where can I find information and training about being an adoptive parent?

Meeting many of the day-to-day emotional needs of a child you’ve adopted will be similar to meeting the needs of any child by providing unconditional love, reassurance, and support. However, there are additional things you’ll need to know to help a child you’ve adopted work through past traumas and loss.

Read more about the effects of trauma and how to support children who have experienced trauma.

Are there support groups for parents who adopt? How can I connect with other adoptive parents?

Parent support groups provide the opportunity to network, share, and learn from other adoptive parents who are experiencing or have experienced the same things as you. You can search for parent support groups and other post-adoption support services in your area on our website.

Also check out our Facebook page, where thousands of families are sharing their questions and experiences.

Is help with respite care available for adopted children?

There may be a program to provide respite care—the short-term care of a child in order to give the regular caregiver a break—in your area. Search for respite care where you live using the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center’s national respite locator service.

Is there financial support available for adoptive families?

Yes! See the “costs of adoption” section of this FAQ.

Process of fostering and adopting: rules and best practices

How can I find a local adoption agency?

Find state-specific information, including a list of adoption agencies, on our website, call our foster care and adoption resource specialists at 888-200-4005, or request to be contacted by an adoption professional in your state.

How long does it usually take to become licensed to adopt?

That is a difficult question! Unfortunately there is not a specific timeframe. On average, the process can take from four

to twelve months from your first contact with your selected agency.

What are the benefits of fostering-to-adopt?

The majority of children in care are ultimately adopted by their foster parents. Most states give top priority to relatives and current foster parents when a child becomes legally freed for adoption, and a growing number of states are requiring that families be willing to foster if they want to adopt from foster care.

Fostering first has the advantage of reducing the number of moves the child who may be placed in your home and allowing the child to live with the family before an adoption is finalized. It also enables a potential adoptive family to make connections with birth parents or other relatives that can be maintained in the future.

According to recent data, 88 percent of children adopted from foster care are adopted by relatives or foster parents.

What is a home study?

A home study (also known as a family assessment) is a process that results in a document about you, your family, and your strengths, characteristics, and challenges.

A home study begins with an interview of you and your family at your home. It can include a home safety inspection, a background check, and pre-adoption training classes. After getting to know your family, your caseworker will make recommendations about the characteristics and number of children who would succeed in your home.

How frequently are children in foster care reunited with their parents?

Approximately half of children taken into state care are reunited with their birth parents.

As a foster parent, you may have to arrange and attend meetings with a child's birth family, attend court hearings, and participate in other activities that support reunification with the child's birth parents.

Are there requirements governing house size of foster parents? Do children I am fostering need to have their own room?

Requirements about house size vary by state. Each child needs a bed of their own. In most cases, children of the opposite sex may share a room if they are under an age specified by the state (usually around 6 years old). These are general guidelines. Rules vary by state. Talk with your caseworker about an individual child's needs.

Do I have to get approved to adopt in every state?

No, you only need to be approved in the state where you currently reside. If you are a military family and are currently stationed in a state that is different from your permanent address, please use the state where you currently reside.

Can I adopt a child from another state? What does that process look like?

Absolutely. While there are additional requirements that can slow the adoption process, families do successfully adopt children from other states every day.

Adoptions across state lines are governed by the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). These adoptions require additional paperwork and more communication between court and child welfare systems.

Prospective parents usually travel to meet the children in their current location for at least the first visit. Following the early introductions, the child welfare agency will work with your family to determine what pre-placement planning best meets the needs of the child.

Is there a limit to the number of children I can adopt?

Yes, and this number varies by state.

Do I need to maintain contact with a child's birth family?

Some degree of openness is almost always better for the child and may be mandated by the courts during the adoption process.

Most children in adoption, even younger ones, are able to understand that they have birth parents they no longer live with. Children are not going to forget their parents, whether or not they are in their life. Our advice is to follow whatever level of openness the adoption paperwork calls for and to be as open as possible in including birth family members in your child's life.

Does a child being adopted need to change their last name? Can they change their Social Security number?

A child can choose to take on the last name of their adoptive family, but it is not legally required. That should be a decision you and the child discuss and make together.

Adoptive families have shared varying degrees of success in changing their adoptive children's Social Security numbers. Go to the Social Security website to learn more about the process and find contact information for your local Social Security office.

Reprinted with permission from:

<https://adoptuskids.org/adoption-and-foster-care/overview/faq>

WHAT IS INSIDE

Celebrating the Holidays In Foster Care: A Guest Post.....	1
NFAPA Staff / Board of Directors.....	2
Attention Foster Parents!	2
Christmas As a Foster Parent is a Reminder of the Children I Cherished But No Longer See	4
Four Ways to Handle the Holidays After Placement	5
Four New Year's Resolutions for Adoptive Parents	5
Dear Struggling Parents, It's Not Just You. Parenting Teens is Hard.....	6
Signs of Teenage Depression and How To Help.....	9
Maintaining Contact with Biological Family After Foster Adoption	9
When Partners Disagree: Tools for Parenting On the Same Page.....	10
NFAPA Support Groups	11
Frequently Asked Questions About Adopting From Foster Care.....	13



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

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



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

Benefits

- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- Networking opportunities with other foster families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- 25% of membership dues goes toward an NFAPA Scholarship

Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:
**NFAPA, 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D
Lincoln, NE 68521.**

Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised
of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

Name(s): _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

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

I am with _____ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

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

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

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