

# Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

September/October 2021

N F A P A

## How Will Understanding My Child's Trauma Help Me As A Parent?

By Mike Berry

We have said this repeatedly over the past 5 years. When you gain an understanding of how trauma has changed your child, your entire parenting journey will change. Here's why.

I will never forget the moment my mind was fully opened to the reality of what our children have experienced and why they do and say the things they do at times. It was Christmastime, six years ago. On a cold December night, something triggered our child, who has a trauma history. We were popping popcorn, pulling out blankets, and settling down in our family room for a family movie night. For reasons that remain a mystery, he wasn't having any of it.

The movie was the wrong movie, the popcorn was too salty, his sister looked at him, he thought movie night was stupid, and he wished it wasn't Christmas break so he could go back to school. On and on and on until finally he lunged at his younger brother and tried to punch him. In our home, when someone displays behaviors that become unsafe or threatening, we step in, and lead them to another room to cool down. One of us will spend time alone with them one on one.

I was frustrated and couldn't see the full reality of our son's behavior that night. As he lay facedown in our upstairs bathroom, screaming obscenities, I fumed. I opened my mouth to say, "If you don't knock this crap off, I'm gonna..." but was suddenly stopped in my tracks. In that moment my eyes were fully opened, and the veil was torn away. I realized he's wasn't a bad kid being bad. He was a scared child voicing his unmet needs through behavior.

That night changed the way we approached our children and how we saw their world. Suddenly we saw what was really going on with them. We realized they were voicing something we couldn't understand. Understanding how chronic trauma plays out in a human being's life gave us a brand-new perspective. And boy oh boy, did the adoptive journey change for us.

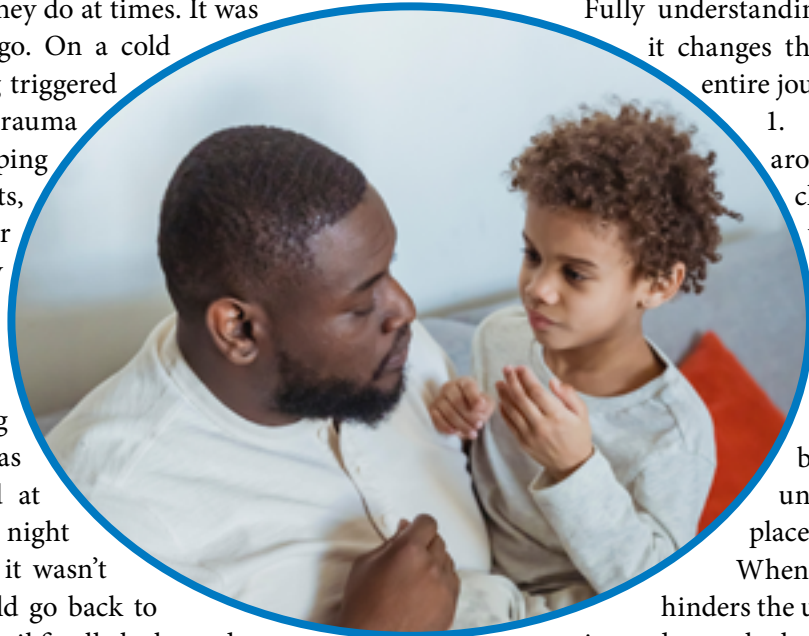
Fully understanding chronic trauma and how it changes the brain can transform your entire journey. Here's why:

1. You'll respond to the world around you in a new way. That child in your neighborhood who bullies the other kids. The little girl in your son's class who hangs upside down in her seat. Suddenly you start to understand that this may not be a bad kid behaving badly, but rather an unmet need being voiced from a place you know nothing about.

When I learned that chronic trauma hinders the use of logic and reasoning and instead propels the person into survival mode, I saw many everyday interactions in a new light. I can now see people with compassion and understanding.

2. Your heart will break. Annette Breaux, a bestselling author and sought-after speaker, wrote, "Nine times out of ten, the story behind the misbehavior won't make you angry, it will break your heart." So, so true! When you understand how trauma impacts your children, you become compassionate. That has changed the way we interact with our son.

3. You will parent differently. I used to respond angrily to our son's outbursts. I was annoyed when he would impulsively ask the same question over and over again. My own anxiety would heighten when he quickly jumped from one thing to the other.



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association  
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 a newsletter for Nebraska Families  
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Questions? Interested in becoming a member of the Board?

Call NFAPA at 877-257-0176 or 402-476-2273.

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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](mailto: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/SepOct2021> We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. Fill in the blanks. Parenting adoptive, foster or kinship kids who need so much of us is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Give four reasons why, fully understanding chronic trauma and how it changes the brain can transform your entire journey.
3. Fill in the blanks. A child who's gone through chronic trauma, even at a very young age, has learned to function from a place of \_\_\_\_\_, often absent from \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What percentage of teens, \_\_\_\_\_ claim they're completely stressed out about school.
5. List 7 ways you can help ease the stress your child may be feeling academically.
6. When kids don't have relationships, it can have a serious impact on their \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. True or False. As parents we often want to immediately jump into problem solving mode whenever our child is having an issue. But it's a better idea to slow down and just listen to what your kid has to say, first.
8. Fill in the Blank. Considering the fact that teens still need an average of \_\_\_\_\_ hours of sleep at night, it makes perfect sense that when it comes time to wake up for school they're totally exhausted and have to fight just to open their eyes.
9. List 8 ways to get your teen out of bed for school.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

I've learned to respond differently now. Once I understood what his past trauma did to his brain functionality, I began to respond calmly, understanding that my heightened emotion would also heighten his.

I also use to struggle to understand how, even after being in our home for a long time, some children still melted down over what I considered "normal" things, such as our daily schedule or household rules. A child who's gone through chronic trauma, even at a very young age, has learned to function from a place of survival, often absent from logic or reasoning. If they've gone through this neglect over a long period of time, it may be years before they learn to trust and connect in a healthy manner. This knowledge helped me adjust my expectations with my own children.

4. You will move into action. I believe understanding and knowledge can lead directly to advocacy. When my heart breaks, my feet move. Over the past four years, I've grown to fully appreciate how our knowledge of the way trauma impacts our kiddos can change the world.

If you have been in the dark like I once was, it's okay. Step into the light. Look at your precious child in a new light. Now take one step in front of the other from this moment forward.

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<https://honestlyadoption.com/how-will-understanding-my-childs-trauma-help-me-as-a-parent/?fbclid=IwAR2YVVSFCjWOaOFsDQEqWifckXaYUHe0Ko1jkjhaQcYyHlk5mVYhYx33-l>

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## HOW TO HELP KIDS WHO ARE LONELY

by Rachel Ehmke

*What parents can say to kids who are struggling socially and how they can help*

We all want our children to be socially successful. While they don't need to be the most popular kid in the class, we do hope that they will have friends.

Friendships are one of the biggest sources of fun in a kid's life, which is reason enough to value them. But they are also critical to development. They lay the groundwork for lifelong skills like listening to others, solving problems and self-expression. They are also an important source of confidence. As kids get older their friendships start playing an even bigger role in their emotional and personal lives.

When kids don't have these relationships, it can have a serious impact on their mood, confidence and functioning. Going to school every day can be a trial. Using social media can be depressing. Kids who are lonely often feel rejected, invisible or like something is wrong with them. And parents

watching from the sidelines wonder what they can do to help.

### Why kids might be struggling socially

It hurts when you see that your child isn't making friends, and you can't figure out why — or how to help. Here are some potential reasons why a child may be striking out on connecting with other kids:

They don't understand how to socialize. The rules of social interaction might seem obvious to you, but they do need to be learned. And while most kids pick up social cues and patterns so easily it seems automatic, some don't, and need more support — and practice. This is particularly true for kids with ADHD, autism and non-verbal learning disorder. When one child isn't understanding their peers' expectations about how to decide what to play, how to share, when to talk and how to show that they're listening, they're going to find it harder to make friends.

They're anxious. It is common for kids — and adults — to feel anxiety when they come into a new social situation or join a group. This shows up in young kids who can't join in activities on the playground, or at birthday parties that are supposed to be fun but are actually overwhelming. Social anxiety gets more common as kids get older. Some kids with severe social anxiety may be paralyzed with worry that others are judging them. They might weigh every word in a text message and worry so much about how they look or what they say that they stop hanging out with friends. They may be so self-conscious they even stop eating in the school cafeteria.

They're depressed. A major symptom of depression is a tendency to withdraw from others. While they might have fun with friends once they're hanging out, a kid with depression will first need to be compelled to leave their room. Kids who are depressed are also more likely to interpret things negatively and assume other people don't want to see them.

They don't "fit in." For some children, the problem is more environmental. "Something we talk about with some kids is the idea of being a rose in a tulip garden," says Lauren Allerhand, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. "So maybe it's not a lack of skills, but you're just in an environment where people don't have the same ideas or interests as you, and you're just having a real challenge finding your group of people."

They're immature. Kids may struggle to fit in when they are younger than their classmates or just slower to mature. They might not have developed the same social skills as their peers yet, or they might just have different interests. As kids get older they tend to catch up, but in the meantime they may be feeling confused and lonely.

**How to tell if your child is lonely**

When kids spend a lot of time alone, you might suspect they are lonely. But unless they complain that they don't have friends or are obviously unhappy, parents can be left to wonder how much it's upsetting them.

Kids might not volunteer to discuss it with you. This is particularly the case with teenagers, but kids of all ages might feel some reluctance about admitting how they feel. It can help if you start the conversation by talking about times in your life when you have felt lonely, says Dr. Allerhand. "Sharing a little bit can open the door for kids to express some of what they're feeling. But I wouldn't push too hard. If they don't want to tell you, give it a try again in the next day or two."

Other kids, especially very young children and kids on the spectrum, might not know how to explain what they're feeling. "For individuals with autism, sometimes communicating their own experiences can be quite challenging. They often can have a hard time linking what they're feeling and what their experience is with a specific word that others may use for that experience," says Bethany Vibert, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. When asked point blank if they are lonely an autistic child might say no, but if you probed a little deeper you might find that they do actually wish they had friends.

For kids who are younger or struggle with emotion identification, first teaching what loneliness is can help. Sharing your own experience of feeling lonely is also a good strategy here. Dr. Vibert recommends that you might say something simple like, "When I haven't been around people for a while, sometimes I want to spend time with somebody. That means I'm feeling lonely." Dr. Vibert also suggests asking kids what they'd want to do if they could be doing anything. What they have to say could give you clues about what they might be missing out on.

### **What to say (and what not to say)**

As parents we often want to immediately jump into problem solving mode whenever our child is having an issue. But it's a better idea to slow down and just listen to what your kid has to say, first. Giving kids the space to open up and feel heard lets them know that it's okay to talk about emotions — and that you're a good person to turn to whenever they need help. For kids who might be feeling rejected or invisible, showing that you care will also be particularly meaningful to them. Waiting to hear more will help you be more supportive later, too. "If we don't give them space to just talk, we might be coming up with a solution that's not really a good fit for the actual problem," points out Dr. Vibert.

Here are some strategies for a good conversation:

**Ask open-ended questions.** For example, if your child says they miss spending time with someone they used to see a lot, you can ask questions about that. "What did you really like

doing with her? What do you miss the most about seeing her?"

**Make observations.** Sometimes comments are a good alternative to questions. So, if you notice that your child isn't spending time with people as much as they used to, you might point that out. Then leave space for them to talk.

**Validate their experiences.** Showing genuine interest goes a long way. Do your best to listen without judgment (or visible panic) to whatever they have to say. Try also to avoid overreacting with too much sympathy or emotion, since that might make them feel even worse. You can show that you're listening by reflecting back what they're saying ("It sounds like you're having a hard time"), or saying supportive things like "That sounds tough. Would you tell me more about that?"



### **How to help kids who are struggling socially**

**Make a plan.** When something is confusing or intimidating it is often helpful to break it into smaller steps. So if your child is struggling to ask someone if they want to hang out, for example, you can work with them to come up with a plan for how to do it. Dr. Vibert recommends having a plan A and a plan B just in case. "If the child is already feeling lonely and then they're putting themselves in a vulnerable position to reach out to somebody, I think it's helpful for a parent to have them work through what to do if it doesn't work out." Having a plan B can help kids feel more confident going in, too.

**Practice social skills.** For kids who are struggling with their social skills, try to give them plenty of opportunity to practice at their own pace in a supportive environment. Coach your child on the things they find challenging — maybe settling conflict, taking turns or noticing when someone is losing interest in an activity — and try role playing to give them experience. Relatives and family friends can also help so they get practice with multiple people.

**Give encouragement.** Kids who are feeling anxious or depressed are less inclined to put themselves out there. "When kids say they want to stay home, it's a challenge

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

Best Western Plus  
3201 S Jeffers St  
North Platte, NE

Saturday September 18, 2021  
9:00am-4:00pm  
(lunch on your own)

Register online: [HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/INSERVICE2021](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/INSERVICE2021)

## 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.

She graduated from Creighton University in 2000 as an Occupational Therapist and has worked with children and families in a variety of settings, including Schools, Early Intervention, Out-Patient Pediatrics and Hospitals. Became foster parents in 2012. In 2016, they adopted her children from foster care and she became a TBRI® Practitioner in 2018 after learning traditional parenting strategies were not effective for her children.

Amy enjoys volunteering for Royal Family Kids Camp, walking, spending time with family, Husker Football, and reading. She is thankful for the journey that led her to discovering connected parenting for her family and devotes her life and education to helping other families and children heal from hard places.

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to figure out how much to push,” acknowledges Michelle Kaplan, LCSW, a social worker at the Child Mind Institute. “But generally, kids are able to reflect afterward that ‘Oh, that was a little less awkward than I thought,’ or ‘I had more fun than I thought I was going to.’” Validate how kids are feeling by acknowledging that going to see people might be difficult for them. Then remind them that they’re probably going to have a good time once they’re there and offer lots of support and praise for doing something challenging.

Give a reality check. Kids can sometimes struggle socially because they are prone to misunderstanding situations. This is especially easy to do with text messages, big group chats, and social media. Kids who are depressed are also more prone to interpreting things negatively even when it isn’t warranted. Dr. Allerhand has worked with teens on maintaining relationships and says that helping kids “check the facts” on a situation is important. “I think a lot of teenagers are self-focused, so they think if a relationship has fallen off, it’s because of something they’ve done. But maybe there are other interpretations.” Dr. Allerhand recommends talking it through: “Okay, so you haven’t spoken with Jimmy in a while. Do you have any evidence that he’s mad at you? Could there be any other reasons why you haven’t talked?”

For kids who tend to interpret things negatively a lot, helping them notice that tendency, and reminding them when they’re doing it, can help them break the pattern.

Look elsewhere for friendships. When kids just aren’t fitting in, they might be looking in the wrong places. “Maybe they’ve done a lot of sports groups before, but they’re not actually into sports,” points out Kaplan. Try to find a group or activity that is more interesting to them. Getting involved in something they genuinely find exciting will also likely improve their confidence and sense of self-worth.

Many kids also find success turning to the internet to explore niche interests or just connect with a larger pool of kids. “One positive thing to come out of the pandemic is there are more and more virtual groups for kids to come online and meet with other kids that have similar interests to them,” says Kaplan.

But if your child does turn to the internet, make sure they stay safe. “Children with autism and developmental disabilities may have more difficulty determining if a situation is dangerous,” notes Dr. Vibert. “It’s very important that parents be not only involved, but proactive in providing education to their child about safety and danger online.”

### **How to evaluate screen time**

If you’re worried that all your child seems to want to do is stare at a screen, keep in mind that screens have become a major way that kids interact with each other. While they don’t make up for in-person socializing, your child may be socializing more than you realize. Thanks to social media

kids are often in closer communication with their peers than parents realize. Video games can also be a lot more social than they may initially seem.

“I often suggest that parents sit by kids while they’re playing games and try to gauge how much they’re connecting with peers,” Kaplan explains. “Don’t ask a ton of questions, but maybe you can ask things like: Is there anyone else you’re playing with? Who are those kids? What are you guys working on? Do you see those kids each time you play? Are there new kids that come on? These kinds of questions can help you assess how much socializing is happening.”

Some kids tend to be more comfortable socializing online and find a lot of fulfillment that way. But while the internet can be a lifesaver for kids who are struggling to fit in otherwise, socializing offline is still important. So if your child is struggling with in-person socialization, talking to a clinician who specializes in children’s mental health about how to get your child more comfortable with other people is important.

*Reprinted with permission from:*

<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-kids-who-are-lonely//>

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## **THE ADDED TRAUMA OF RAISING A TRAUMATIZED CHILD: WHEN EVERYONE TURNS AGAINST YOU**

*by Carrie O’Toole*

We’d just been out to dinner with family to celebrate a birthday.

Getting there alone had been daunting with our child’s incessant questions, observations, and nonsense chatter—a part of his reactive attachment disorder. The ride to the restaurant consisted of arguing and trying to calm everyone’s anxiety.

During dinner, my uncle scolded me for not controlling my child the way he saw fit. “He just needs a good swat on the read end,” he said.

My uncle didn’t understand reactive attachment disorder. No one did. Driving home felt all the more hopeless than when we had left the house that night.

It’s a situation our family experienced and one I’ve heard hundreds of times from my clients. Others can’t comprehend what parents of children with reactive attachment disorder experience. Friends and family who once respected them turn their backs after they bring a child with a history of

trauma into their homes.

Maybe this situation is familiar to you too. Here's how it typically works:

People once saw you as a loving, skilled, and intelligent human being. You were humble and sought wisdom and counsel. When you struggled and asked for help, you examined your part in the problem, listened to the advice of others, and made changes. You did the hard work of growth. People respected you.

### **Then trauma entered the picture.**

The child did not cause their trauma or its aftermath. They didn't wish it on themselves. It's absolutely not their fault.

But trauma changes people. It rewires brains. It causes children who would typically connect and attach and allow their parents to care for them to fight as if their lives depend on it.

Mom is not safe in the wounded little eyes of a traumatized child. Love is scary. Trust is almost impossible. If they let you in, they believe they will die. So they fight you on everything. But usually not in front of other people.

In front of Grandma and Grandpa (and teachers, pastors, coaches, your best friends), your child with reactive attachment disorder is often a master of charm. Everyone loves them.

Others don't see the terror inside of your child. Only you see it, presented through lying, manipulation, cruelty, injury to self or others, destruction, rages, and refusal to do the most basic things. They aren't living in fight or flight mode when others are around. You see it because they feel most threatened by your love.

So you do what you've always done. You ask for help. But this time, everyone thinks you are the problem. They don't understand this crazy world of trauma. It doesn't show itself to them. So you begin to wonder if they are right. Perhaps you really are the problem. Maybe you are crazy. Maybe you're imagining all of this weird stuff you live with daily.

I know how you feel. I've felt it myself. But there is hope. I've found it in my own life and in the lives of my clients.

### **Here's what to know as a parent of a child with reactive attachment disorder when you feel alone:**

**1. Remember you are a normal (somewhat) human being living in a crazy situation.** People are not going to see what they can't see. Trauma does this to people. Remember who you are. Understand that this is the nature of the beast. Don't lose yourself in the process. Your heart hasn't changed.

**2. Until your mom, sister, uncle, or whoever they are lives or studies reactive attachment disorder, they will not understand.** I'm so sorry. That's just how it is. It stinks. Before I lived it, I never would have believed it either. It's so

much easier to just judge the parents when their kids are either misbehaving in public or when their kids are behaving like saints in public while the parents are stressed, anxious, angry, and exhausted.

**3. Realize that you are grieving.** It's so hard when those you love and have always believed in you suddenly don't like what they're seeing. And they blame you. You need to grieve their inability to understand. Grieve that they aren't willing or able to go there with you. Grieve that you need to seek help outside of what you thought would be a great support system even when you're already so taxed. Grieve that your family isn't as open-minded as you thought they were. Grieve that they are judging you and you've lost the closeness you used to have (or did you?). Grieve that this is one more area that trauma has impacted.

Hang in there parents. This is a tough season you're in. I've lived it. It's heartbreaking.

Also know that, sometimes, there's a time when letting go makes more sense than hanging on. That can mean a multitude of things and depends entirely on your unique situation. I'll be chatting about this at the first-ever Navigating RAD 2021 conference next month in my presentation, "Determining What You Have Left as a Family and Ideas to Move Forward". Through this presentation and the guidance of additional experts, conference attendees will leave with a customized family plan of action to move forward.

Wherever you are along the journey, acknowledge the reality of your current experience, allow yourself to grieve it, and take care of yourself.

### *Reprinted with permission from:*

<https://www.radadvocates.org/post/the-trauma-of-raising-a-traumatized-child-when-everyone-turns-against-you>

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## **STRESSED OUT: HELPING YOUR TEEN COPE WITH SCHOOL PRESSURE**

The other day I was having a conversation with my daughter who is a sophomore in college.

As I sat quietly and listened, she went on and on telling me about everything she had to do in her classes – assignments that are coming due, projects she needs to work on, a test she has to study for, a help session she needs to attend – I could hear the anxiety in her voice. She was completely overwhelmed and stressed out.

Whether you have a child in middle school, high school or college, the academic pressure placed on kids today is enormous.

In fact, according to recent teen stress statistics, 68% of teens

## SEPTEMBER IS KINSHIP CARE MONTH!

We recognize and celebrate the heroes that are filling in the gaps due to changes within families.

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A PART-TIME JOB?

The NFAPA Board is looking to fill several volunteer board positions in the following areas: Eastern (Omaha), Central and Western service areas. Please contact Felicia at the NFAPA office at 402-476-2273 and send a bio of why you would like to be on the board to: [Felicia@nfapa.org](mailto:Felicia@nfapa.org)

## NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

As Nebraska is opening up with changes due to COVID please contact the RFC in your area to see when support groups will be back up and running or continuing with an online support. Registration is required when meeting in person.

### CONTACT A RESOURCE FAMILY CONSULTANT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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

- Virtual Support Group at this time for September & October. Available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday at 6:30 pm (MT). Contact Jolie for Google Meet information

#### Tammy Welker: 402-989-2197

- Virtual Support Group at this time, available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm (CT). Contact Tammy for Zoom information. Note: no meeting in September.

#### Terry Robinson (Central): 402-460-7296

- One on one support or if you would like one started in your area, please contact

#### Robbi Blume: 402-853-1091

- FACES-Our online support group. Meets Tuesday night at 9:00 pm (CT)

#### NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176

- Parenting Across Color Lines in Lincoln. Meets the 4th Monday of the month at ConnectioN Point, 1333 N 33rd Street, Lincoln. Contact Felicia for information or the NFAPA Office.

claim they're completely stressed out about school. Other studies show that teens today are actually more stressed out than adults. And, it's easy to see why...

Every year the academic bar is raised a notch higher with kids being encouraged to push themselves a little harder, put more emphasis on the rigor of their classes and aim for a higher GPA. Add the additional pressure of teens having to juggle extracurricular activities, volunteering, social pressure and family commitments and you have a potential recipe for disaster.

As parents, we need to help our kids find healthy ways to cope with the constant pressure they face day in and day out. Here are a few ways you can help ease the stress your child may be feeling academically:

### Establish a No-Stress Zone

Teens need a place where they can go to escape from the daily pressure of school, family, friends, and activities. Whether they shut the world out in their bedroom listening to music or get lost catching up on their favorite movies on Netflix, they need time and space to relax, decompress and recuperate from the barrage of information, deadlines, and responsibilities they're faced with day in and day out. Give them the freedom to find their own healthy escape route and support them by giving them the much-needed space they need.

### Help Manage Their Stress by Managing Yours

The best way to help our kids manage their stress is by keeping ours in check. You may not realize it, but your child is watching and learning from you and they sense your stress. The coping mechanisms you use to manage stress are inadvertently being passed along to your child. If you have unhealthy coping methods to manage stress, oftentimes your kids will too.

### Be a Sounding Board if They Need One

Studies have shown that having the ability to vent can feel almost akin to problem-solving, providing it doesn't become a habit. Giving your child the opportunity and freedom to vent will actually help them alleviate their stress and tension and help them feel just a bit "lighter." In doing so, you're giving them a chance to verbalize their thoughts and release the pressure in the boiling pot, so to speak. Plus, in most cases, it's far better to release negative emotions than bottle them up inside, and by allowing your child to talk about their stress, it opens the door to discussions to help them establish healthy, strategic coping mechanisms.

### Take a Breather from Extracurricular Activities

For some kids, the academic pressure they're facing really wouldn't be too consuming and stressful if they didn't have to juggle everything else they have going on in their life. If you see your child becoming completely overwhelmed academically, tired far too often, or depressed, take a hard look at their outside activities that may be piling on the stress. If they're volunteering, involved in clubs, and on the soccer team with practice four nights a week, maybe it's time they back off of a couple of the peripheral activities to ease their stress. Downtime does not equate to being lazy... kids need downtime to interrupt the constant flow of non-negotiable demands in their life.

### Sleep... More Sleep

Did you know 90% of teens are sleep deprived and a





## Spaulding: Making the Commitment to Adoption

▶ 12 hour  
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The Spaulding program is offered to prospective adoptive families.

**When:** September 25, 2021 from 9:00 am-5:00 pm.  
(you will have a break for lunch-on your own) &  
Sunday, September 26, 2021 from 1:00 pm-5:00 pm

**Where:** McCook Community College  
1205 E 3rd St, McCook, NE  
(McMillen Hall - room 213)

**Register:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/SpauldingRegistration2021>

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

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

You will be notified if Spaulding is cancelled due to low registration. Please note time/dates of the training (Central Time).

Questions, please call 402-476-2273 or Toll-Free 877-257-0176

whopping 20% of teens are getting by on less than five hours of sleep a night? Studies have shown that not only is the average teen desperately sleep-deprived, the impact of that sleep deprivation for teens is especially profound. In fact, a study of 28,000 high school students found that each hour of sleep lost is associated with a 38% increased risk of feeling sad or hopeless and teens who sleep an average of six hours per night or less are three times more likely to suffer from depression. As hard as it is to monitor and control your child's sleep habits in their teen years, encourage your child to establish a regular pattern of sleep to help them cope with the daily pressures of academics and life.

### Get Outdoors and Exercise

This one is a no-brainer, but it's still worth mentioning. We all know the importance of exercising to stay healthy and strong, but it's especially important when we're stressed or feeling anxious. If your child isn't into a sport and getting them to exercise is like trying to move the Rock of Gibraltar, make it fun. Take the family on a hiking trip for the day, go on a bike ride, go canoeing, paddleboarding or skiing. Do what you have to, but get your child outside where they can take a deep breath of fresh air and begin to put their stress into perspective. Nothing helps us assimilate stress better than a little exertion and sunshine.

### Toss In a Distraction

What works for some kids may not work for others. For my daughters, an afternoon at the mall where I helped them pick out a new top or a cute new pair of shoes always seemed to brighten their day and relieve their stress. For my son, I had to use an entirely different strategy – a new video game, a new accessory for his telescope or a trip to the Apple Store to check out the latest iPhone. The art of distraction when teens are under stress works wonders. Even if it's something small like buying them an inexpensive gift, taking them out for ice cream after studying for four hours or taking them to a movie to help them escape, it helps break up the monotony of pressure in life, reinforces the idea that you're there for them and reminds them that they aren't alone.

These strategies to help your teen manage stress are simply a few suggestions. There are dozens of additional ways you can help including encouraging your child to set up a meeting with their counselor or teacher to discuss their workload and establish a workable plan to manage it, talking with and seeking support from friends who are feeling the same pressure, and helping them create a calendar of responsibilities and deadlines so they can visualize their to-do list and check things off their list as they complete tasks.

As parents, we have a tremendous amount of control over how our kids manage stress. Every child deals with stress differently – the key is to find what works for your child, teach them to keep their daily to-do list in perspective and work together to find healthy solutions and outlets to cope.

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<https://raisingteens.today.com/stressed-out-helping-your-teen-cope-with-school-pressure/?fbclid=IwAR3V7RPvkkfwG3GcHFJ-imskrllaHV1bXzz9S3COZSdcQePRYjwv68eER8>

# 8 NO-WAR WAYS TO GET YOUR TEEN OUT OF BED FOR SCHOOL

Let's face it, moving the Rock of Gibraltar seems like an easier task than getting your teen out of bed in the morning for school.

Most teens (not all) moan and groan, roll over, hit the snooze button (17 times) and end up eventually dragging themselves out of bed, frantically dashing out the door in a sweatshirt they grabbed off the floor and barely making it to their first class before the bell rings.

I mean, come on... we're parents. We're supposed to be helping our kids prepare for life without us. We're supposed to be encouraging independence, maturity and the ability to manage their schedule on their own without our constant intervention, i.e. nagging, yelling, reminding, pleading, threatening...

But, before you totally lose it and consider hiring a foreman to come in with a crane to forcefully lift your child out of bed for school, there's something you need to know.

In most cases, it's not them. It's their body.

Remember when they were toddlers and they woke up at the crack of dawn raring to go? Well, that all changes when kids hit the teen years and their internal body clock starts to shift.

According to UCLA Health Sleep Center, teen's circadian cycle changes – the natural rhythm of the body that tells them when to wake up and fall asleep. Before puberty, hitting the sack at 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. might have been the norm. As soon as they hit puberty, they become night owls (seemingly overnight) unable to fall asleep until 10:00 p.m., 11:00 p.m. or sometimes even midnight.

And, considering the fact that teens still need an average of nine hours of sleep at night, it makes perfect sense that when it comes time to wake up for school they're totally exhausted and have to fight just to open their eyes.

To avoid the daily battle of sleepiness and help your teen get moving on those early mornings, here are a few "no-war" ways to get your teen out of bed for school.

## 1. Encourage Them to Hydrate First Thing in the AM

Sounds too easy, I know, but it works. It's a science-backed fact – when your body doesn't have enough water it can experience a ton of negative side effects including everything from mood and concentration issues to an increase in headaches and a sluggish metabolism. Beyond this, physical performance, including alertness and energy, takes a big hit as well, especially in the morning when you've gone six to eight hours without rehydrating.

To kick-start your teen's day, have them skip the caffeinated soda or coffee and pass them a 16-ounce glass of H2O instead. Not only will the water fuel their body and brain, but it will also give them a boost of energy and make them far more alert to start their day.

## 2. Get Their Internal Clock on Track

We've heard it a million times. To get your kids on a more normal sleep schedule, turn off the electronics. But, it's not necessarily the electronics themselves that keep our kids awake (although it is easy to lose track of time when you're surfing the net). What's really causing the problem according

to a Harvard Health Sleep Study, is external light.

Light is one of the most important external factors that can impact sleep. And, it does so both directly, by making it difficult to fall asleep, and indirectly, by influencing the timing of our internal clock and affecting our preferred time to sleep. To help your teen fall asleep earlier and make it easier to wake in the morning, have them shut down the electronics early (no later than 9 p.m.) and pull back those curtains in the morning to let the morning sunshine in the room.

### 3. Get Creative with Their Alarm Clock

When trying to lure a sleepy teenager out of bed, sometimes the best defense is a great offense. In other words, you have to pull out all the stops. Start by getting an alarm clock they'll respond to.

Whether it's waking up to rap or pop music, the relaxing sound of waves, a full-blown sonic boom or a simulation of the morning sunrise, chances are there's an alarm clock that's sure to get your kid on their feet and out the door for school. Also, consider making it a challenge to hit the snooze button by putting the alarm clock across the room so they have to get up to turn it off.

**Here are few clocks heavy sleepers swear by!**

**Wake-Up Light Alarm:** The ultimate natural sunlight alarm clock that helps you wake up naturally. **Nature Alarm Clock with 6 Sounds:** Get your teen moving with the relaxing sound of waves or birds chirping. **Screaming Meanie Alarm Clock:** Let his alarm clock be the meanie! This clock has 3 loudness levels so you can crank it up when they don't wake up. **Clocky:** the only alarm clock that runs, hides, rolls away and even jumps on a nightstand. It's annoying and crazy, but it actually works! **Sonic Bomb Extra-Loud Alarm Clock with Flashing Alert Lights and Powerful Bed Shaker:** Honestly, there's no way your kid can sleep through this alarm clock!

### 4. Use a Sleep Cycle App

Sure, they're tired. But, another reason your teen dreads slipping out of their cozy bed is the idea of having to spend the next seven hours in a classroom learning (boooooorrrinnnggg). Make it as easy as possible for them by encouraging them to download a sleep cycle app that senses and regulates their sleep cycle so they wake up at precisely the right time.

Science has proven that waking up at the right point in your sleep cycle (the alternation of REM and non-REM sleep) will make you feel more rested than waking up in the middle of a cycle. Apps like Sleep Cycle, Sleep Better and Calm are all free apps that can help your teen get a great night's sleep and wake up at just the right time.

### 5. Give Them Something to Look Forward To

Maybe it's the smell of sizzling bacon in the kitchen, pancakes hot off the griddle, an array of aromatic essential oils in the shower, a quick morning workout with friends or a brand new outfit they're dying to wear, give them a reason to crank it up in the morning and get their day started. Figure out what your teen loves and what motivates them and use it to spark a get-up-and-go positive attitude so they can start their day with a little pep in their step.

### 6. Stop the Caffeine Early in the Day

Teens are notorious for chugging energy drinks just to get through the day, treating themselves to a sweet, caffeinated Starbucks just because and grabbing a Coke or Mountain Dew

every time they're thirsty. While those drinks might give them the much-needed energy boost they need during the day, they won't do much to help them fall asleep or get a restful night's sleep so they can wake up feeling refreshed.

To get a good night's sleep they need to cut the caffeine out early in the day, which means no coffee, caffeinated tea, energy drinks or even chocolate eight hours before bedtime.

### 7. Start the Day with a Convo with Your Bestie

When you're looking for ways to get your teen out of bed for school, you have to get creative! Enlisting the help of your teen's besties to be their morning wakeup call could be just the ticket they need to jumpstart their day. Have friends take turns calling each other at a designated time to wake each other up.

Having the responsibility of waking your friend up at a certain time will be a big motivator to get moving and the snoozing friend on the other end is more likely to respond to a friend than a frustrated (potentially nagging) parent who's tried everything to get their kid to wake up.

### 8. Don't Let Weekends Derail Their Sleep Schedule

It's all too tempting. As soon as Saturday hits, it's time to turn off the alarm clock, enjoy their slumber and catch up on all the zzzzz's they missed out on during the week. But, as hard as it is to follow through with a consistent schedule – even on weekends – it will do them a world of good when it's time to wake up for that early-morning Monday class.

In fact, an inconsistent sleep schedule not only throws off your internal clock, but it can also cause irritability, mood swings (who needs more of those?), drowsiness, concentration and memory issues and even a decline in cognitive skills. So, even if your teen works toward a more consistent sleep schedule a little at a time, they'll be doing themselves a huge favor in the long run.

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<https://raisingteens today.com/ways-to-get-your-teen-out-of-bed-for-school/>

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## MOOD DISORDERS AND TEENAGE GIRLS

*by Ron J. Steingard, MD*

Why they are more vulnerable than boys, and what signs and symptoms you should look for

Anxiety and depression occur in both genders, but by the teenage years, girls are much more at risk than boys. Before puberty, the prevalence of mood disorders is about the same in boys and girls—3 to 5 percent. But by mid-adolescence girls are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with a mood disorder as boys, with the prevalence at adult levels, 14 to 20 percent.

Why such a big disparity in mood disorders? We know from looking at brain scans that there are differences in the way girls and boys process emotional stimuli. Girls mature, in terms of their emotional recognition, faster than boys—and that sensitivity could make them more vulnerable to depression and anxiety.

It's plausible that that these gender differences around the time of puberty can be traced to evolutionary advantages: Girls may be wired to tune in earlier to emotional stimuli because it was advantageous for nurturing babies; for young men, given their roles as hunters and tribe protectors, emotional responsiveness might have been an important attribute not to have.

The argument that the differences in emotional sensitivity are hard-wired is underscored by the fact that even as women's lives have clearly changed—with many more women living professional, competitive, Type-A lives—the rate of depression hasn't dropped. Even the participation of far more girls in sports and other intense physical activities hasn't reduced the rate of depression, though physical activity is important to emotional wellbeing, and one effective way to help jumpstart recovery in someone who's depressed.

### Symptoms of depression in teenagers

In adolescent depression, the thing people tend to notice first is withdrawal, or when the teenager stops doing things she usually likes to do. There might be other changes in her mood, including sadness or irritability. Or in her behavior, including, appetite, energy level, sleep patterns and academic performance. If several of these symptoms are present, be vigilant about the possibility of depression.

This is especially important because by the time family



members and other people around a teenager note her lack of interest in most things, or what we call anhedonia, she's usually been depressed for some time. Depression is an internalizing disorder, i.e. one that disturbs a patient's emotional life, rather than an externalizing one, which manifests in the form of disruptive or problematic behavior. As such, it takes a while not only for others to recognize it, but often for the patient herself to realize that her thinking, and emotional responses, are disturbed.

Note that there are actually two kinds of depression. In major depressive disorder—the most familiar form of depression—the cluster of symptoms that define depression occur in what may be severe episodes that tend to last from seven to nine months. But there is also another form of depression called

dysthymic disorder, in which the symptoms are milder, but they last longer, measured in years. So while the experience of dysthymia may be less debilitating for the child at any given moment, the risk is that there is more accrued damage, more time in which the child is kept out of the healthy development process.

### Symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety is a normal adaptive system that lets the body know when it's in danger. But anxiety becomes a problem when it's out of proportion to the situation, and interferes with a person's ability to function. An overly anxious teen might withdraw from activities because she's too scared or anxious, and her anxiety doesn't go away with reassurance.

A teenager who has been anxious since childhood may have a lifestyle built around her anxieties: the activities and environments she chooses and those she rules out, the friends she is comfortable with, the expectations and limitations she has trained her family, friends, and teachers to accept. That's why it's more challenging to treat anxiety the longer a child has lived with it, and developed unhealthy coping mechanisms to manage it.

### Why early intervention is critical

When a child is depressed or anxious, her suffering isn't the only reason it's important to get help.

In addition to the disorders themselves, there are add-on effects that may cause lifelong issues. With depression comes low energy and poor concentration, two factors that are likely to have a significant impact on social and academic functioning. Anxiety, and the withdrawal that may accompany it, is likewise a detriment to social and academic progress.

It's easy to see the effects of poor academic functioning: falling behind in school undermines a child's confidence and self-image, and can impact her future if it's prolonged. But social learning is just as critical as academic learning in childhood and adolescence. This is a time when a girl would normally be learning such things as how to be a daughter, a sister, a friend; with either depression or anxiety, she may miss or fall behind on these critical kinds of learning. These deficits not only put her behind her peers, but in themselves they can compound her depression or anxiety.

### Other disorders

It's important to understand that anxiety and depression often occur in the same teenager, and may need to be treated as two separate disorders. Anxiety is more likely to occur without depression than depression without anxiety. It may be that depression leads to anxiety—the negative state of mind of a depressed teenager lends itself to uncertainty. If you're not feeling good about yourself, or confident, or secure, or safe, anxiety may find fertile ground. It may also be because the regions of the brain affected by anxiety and depression are close together, and mutually affected.

Two serious problems that are directly associated with teenage depression and anxiety are suicidal thinking (or behavior), and substance abuse. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24, and we know that most kids who commit suicide have been suffering from a psychiatric illness. Especially at risk are teenagers who hide their depression and anxiety from parents and friends. That's why it's important to be alert to signs of these disorders—withdrawal, changes in school performance,



eating habits, sleeping patterns, things she enjoys doing—even when teenagers aren't forthcoming about how they feel. Similarly, the majority of teenagers who develop substance abuse problems also have a psychiatric disorder, including, most commonly, anxiety or depression, which is another important reason to get treatment in a timely way.

Two other problems associated with teenage girls—that is, occurring with greater frequency in girls than boys—are eating disorders and self injury, or cutting. While both of these can overlap with depression, the common assumption that they're caused by depression is not borne out by research. Girls who have eating disorders often show no signs of depression; indeed, they are often very high-functioning, competitive girls who have a distorted body image, but not the symptoms of depression. Similarly, self-injurious behavior is a kind of dysfunctional coping mechanism kids get into to alleviate emotional pain, or numbness they've developed as a result of that pain. It can occur with, and be complicated by, a mood disorder, but isn't thought to be a result of the latter. Antidepressants, the medication of choice for mood disorders, don't usually alleviate eating disorders or cutting, which receive different kinds of treatment.

### Treatments for anxiety and depression

Fortunately, early involvement of health care professionals can shorten the period of illness and increase the likelihood of her not missing important life lessons.

The most common treatment a mental health professional is apt to use is some form of cognitive behavioral therapy, and depending on how young the child is, it may involve teaching the parents as well. Cognitive behavioral therapy is based on the idea that a person suffering from a mood disorder is trapped in a negative pattern of thought. Depressed kids tend to evaluate themselves negatively, interpret the actions of others in a negative way, and assume the darkest possible outcome of events. Similarly, a child suffering from anxiety is overwhelmed by fears of negative outcomes long before events occur. In CBT, we teach sufferers to challenge those negative thoughts, to recognize the pattern and train themselves to think outside it. And in many cases we see real improvement in teenagers with depression and anxiety.

If the anxiety or depression is moderate to severe, treatment may involve medications such as antidepressants. For both anxiety and depression, a combination of psychotherapy and medication usually works better than either alone.

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<https://childmind.org/article/mood-disorders-and-teenage-girls/>

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## SELF-CARE FOR ADOPTIVE, FOSTER, AND KINSHIP PARENTS

We hear it, We say it. But do we do it? When you are a parent of a child who has experienced trauma, it might not be your habit to practice self-care. Yet. But we hope to challenge you a little bit today. We suggest that self-care for adoptive, foster, and kinship

parents is a priority that you cannot and should not neglect.

All parents need times to recharge, refuel and rest – and those times can be tricky to coordinate in a typical, busy home. However, when you are parenting a child with challenging behaviors rooted in trauma, abuse, or neglect, building in “me time” can feel selfish. Some might even say indulgent or maybe even logistically impossible.

### “I Think I’m Too Busy for Self-Care.”

Suppose your child has learning disabilities, medical needs, or emotional or mental health struggles. In that case, we know your calendar is already filled to the brim with tutoring, therapies, specialist appointments, IEP meetings, and caseworker visits. Maybe you are fostering or in an open adoption. Then you also have to consider birth family visits – sometimes complicated further by the network of your child's extended birth family.

In addition to the full calendar that most adoptive, foster, and kinship parents juggle, you are likely also monitoring your child's educational progress. It might be summer enrichment work right now, which can feel manageable. However, homework battles consume your weekday afternoons during the rest of the year. Daily, you also balance your child's emotional and mental health, whether it's fall-out from early trauma, lagging skills, or developmental delays.

Phew. You are, indeed, quite busy. However, with all that is on



your plate, you need to take care of yourself to take care of your family.

### The Barriers to Self-Care Are Mostly In Your Head

Adoptive, foster, and kinship parents frequently tell us that they “can't” schedule self-care into their family calendar. We would posit that many of the reasons you object to self-care are actually messages you tell yourself or messages that you've internalized as true, consciously or unconsciously.

These internalized messages don't just keep you busy, they keep you from taking care of yourself.

### I'm a Care Giver, Not a Care Receiver.

It's uncomfortable to be on the receiving end of nurture and care when you are accustomed to being the caregiver. When our identity is wrapped up in giving care, it's hard to see that we deserve nurture.

### I Asked for This Life.

We understand that you chose this path and that you might have received the message – or spoken the message to yourself – that you don't have room to complain about the weight of it



Nebraska Adoption Agencies Association Fall Zoom Conference  
September 24, 2021

**Seven Core Issues in Adoption & Permanency:  
For All People Touched by Adoption, Foster Care and Kinship Care**

*Presented by: Sharon Kaplan Roszia, M.S. & Allison Davis Maxon, M.S. KMFT*

Register Today: [NAAA Annual Conference Tickets](#)

**Learning Objectives**

- 1.) Participants will learn the Seven Core Issues in Adoption/Permanency as a way of understanding the lifelong, intergenerational losses, challenges and tasks for the child/youth/ adoptee, foster/kinship/adoptive parents and birth/first parents.
- 2.) Participants will learn tools and resources to address each of the Seven Core Issues for each constellation member through a strengths based, resiliency focused lens.
- 3.) Participants will be able to identify various types and symptoms of traumatic loss for children, as well as ways to intervene to help children identify, express and manage their pain/ grief/anger/distress.
- 4.) Participants will recognize the signs of grief and loss in children/youth, especially as it relates to their traumatic losses and developmental stage and develop tools to assist with grief and affect management.
- 5.) Participants will learn to use the conceptual framework of emotional intelligence as way to strengthen parents/caregivers ability to read and attune with the emotional cues of their child while strengthening the child/youths ability to identify and express complex emotions associated with trauma and the foster/adoption experience.

**AGENDA**

10am-12pm CST - Morning Session  
12:00-12:30pm – Lunch Break  
12:30pm-2:30pm – Afternoon Session 1  
12:30-2:45pm – Break  
2:45-4:45pm – Afternoon Session 2

**CEU'S**

This program offers 6.0 ceu's for Social Workers and Mental Health Professionals, and 6.0 education hours for Foster/ Adoptive Parents

**COST: \$20**

because you asked for this. Wherever you might have picked up this message, it hangs out in your brain when you feel tempted to reach out for help or support and shouts you down.

**I Don't Have it So Bad.**

It's easy to look around and compare your hectic, busy life to others' circumstances. When you have a naturally caregiving bent, it's easier to decide that you can make it through. Even when you are barely muddling through, it's okay because your life is not nearly as hard as Jane's.

**I Don't Even Know What I Need.**

We also get the lack of clarity you might feel about what it is that you actually need. When you are overwhelmed, sleep-deprived, and depleted mentally and emotionally, it's a challenge to think through what will help you the most. Scheduling a routine appointment for your own rest seems out of reach.

Trust us – some of these barriers are in our minds, too. The mental, emotional, and physical labor of caring for an adopted, foster, or kinship child is weighty. These barriers feel insurmountable — unless you get some help and guidance to get you over or through them.

Practical Tips to Overcome Those Barriers and Start Self-Care

We are offering these practical tips to help you identify and re-write the messages you tell yourself about why you don't need self-care. Your challenge is to pick one or two of these tips to start new messaging and new habits. This list is inspired by the recent CreatingaFamily.org podcast, Taking Care of Yourself When Parenting Harder to Parent Kids.

**Give Yourself Permission.**

Start by telling yourself that you are worthy of care and that it is okay – even good! – to engage in self-care. If you must, say it out loud, a few times a day, until you believe it. We've included a couple of scripts to help you change the messaging in your head.

- I am worth taking care of.
- I will take better care of my family if I learn how to take care of myself.
- I cannot give to my family what I have not learned to give myself.
- Self-care will make me a better (mom, dad, grandparent, aunt, uncle).

**Say "No" More Often.**

It might be intimidating to say "no" to more events on your calendar or, "asks" from friends and family. However, it's a vital

step in setting healthy boundaries for yourself. Start small by giving yourself permission to say “no” to that upcoming bake sale contribution. Or by bowing out of a park meet-up with moms from your kids’ school. Replace the thing you said “no” to with an activity that fuels you – like a walk alone in the park, a coffee date with your best friend, or early bed for the kids and a movie date on the couch.

Establish a Routine.

If you don’t already have a predictable, manageable routine for your household, set one up. It’s a form of self-care itself, and it sets you up for scheduling other self-care as well. For the summer months, you might want the schedule in your home to be a bit looser but remember how your kids respond to unstructured time vs. routine and plan accordingly. When the kids go back to their weekday school routine, tighten up the schedule but continue to prioritize your “me time.”

If you do well with a running To-Do list for yourself, put your self-care activity or event in writing. Some parents might prefer to schedule their couple dates and alone time on a shared online calendar to keep each other accountable to stick to the plan.

Once you have a good routine running for your home, look for additional times to schedule self-care time. Consider what activities might need to be removed for the sake of prioritizing that time to recharge. Be flexible and gracious with yourself while you are working it out.

### Pick One Thing.

Within the routine you have established for your family, be sure there is one thing you can look forward to daily. One mom we know looks forward to climbing into bed with a book one hour earlier than her spouse. She lights a candle and plays soft jazz music while she reads her historical fiction. What can you plan on daily to keep you moving through the day?

### It’s GOOD to Start Small!

If you are not in the habit of regular self-care, build your muscle for it in small ways. Schedule a manicure or pedicure once every two weeks. Be sure to turn off your phone while you are in the massaging chair to maximize that hour or so.

Other small ways to start the habit of self-care can look like these ideas:

- Saturday morning coffee with your partner while the kids chill with cartoons.
- Go for a walk alone in the park. Bring along your favorite podcast or new music.
- Watch one movie a week starring your favorite actor until you’ve exhausted their whole body of work.
- Soak in a hot bubble bath while older kids clean the kitchen (and lower your standards on what constitutes “clean”).
- Take one hour every other day to learn a new hobby or pick up a hobby you’ve neglected.

### Ask for the Help You Need

Whether it’s laundry, a grocery run, or two hours every week of childcare, be specific about the help you need. Some parents find it helpful to brainstorm this together. Others can immediately list the tasks of life they are willing to outsource to create time for self-care. Remember, asking for help IS self-care. And it helps you carve out time for that which nourishes, rather than depletes, you.

Many adoptive, foster, and kinship parents have loving, supportive people in their network who frequently say, “If you need anything, please let me know.” Train yourself to respond to that offer with a concrete task that will help you.

For example, “Oh, I’d really appreciate it if you could run Johnny to soccer camp on Tuesday and Thursday night this week.” Or, “Really? Because I sure could use a meal on the table Wednesday night since I’ll be down at the children’s hospital all day with Suzy.”

### Teach Yourself to ACCEPT the Help

Those who offer you their help might not know what you need, but when you provide ideas for specific support, then take the help when it comes! It sounds silly to say it so bluntly. But if you are used to telling yourself that others have it much harder than you do or that you asked for this life, you have to re-write the messages with healthy, NEW messages in your mind.

Self-Care is an Investment in Your Whole Family.

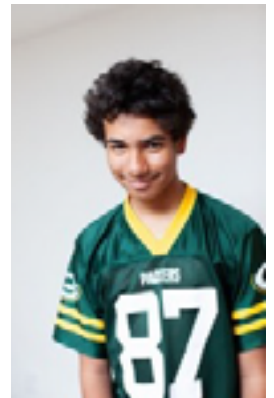
Parenting adoptive, foster or kinship kids who need so much of us is challenging, rewarding, and consuming. When we invest the time and intentionality in taking care of ourselves – body, mind, and spirit – we are modeling for them how to be healthy. We are giving them the best versions of ourselves that they — and we — deserve.

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<https://creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/adoption-blog/self-care-for-adoptive-foster-and-kinship-parents/>

## MEET ANDREW

Andrew loves to play basketball and wishes to get involved in high school sports at some point soon. Andrew has shared his dreams of going to college some day, with the desire to major in Engineering. He is funny and expressive. Andrew gets along with his peers but can become more expressive with his emotions, which can sometimes challenge him to re-build relationships with peers as well as with adults.



He likes to be treated fairly and thrives when his needs are met in his home. Andrew would do very well in a home with supportive adults who encourage him and support him in outside activities. He wants to be a part of a family that engage in activities together, as a family. He would do very well in a home that is patient and understanding of his needs. Andrew needs stability and affirmation from any family who opens their home to him. He has such potential and has amazing life goals he wishes to achieve with his forever family. He wants a family that believes in him, and will help him achieve his goals, short term as well as long term.

Connections: Andrew has a cousin in Lincoln that he remains in contact with periodically. Andrew really advocates for wanting to stay close to his friends in Lincoln. Andrew also has a sister that he'd like to maintain contact with.

To see more children available on the Nebraska Heart Gallery. Visit their website: [www.nebraskaheartgallery.org/home](http://www.nebraskaheartgallery.org/home)

For more information on Andrew or others on the Heart Gallery, please contact Samantha Thomas at:

Email: [sthomas@childsaving.org](mailto:sthomas@childsaving.org)

Phone: 402-553-6000

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## JOIN NFAPA ....your support will enable NFAPA to continue supporting foster parents state-wide!

### Benefits

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

### Thank you for your support!

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

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

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

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

I am with \_\_\_\_\_ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

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

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

- Gold Donation, \$1,000
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- Platinum Donation, \$500
- Bronze Donation, \$250
- Other, \$ \_\_\_\_\_