

# Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

January/February 2015

N F A P A

## AUTISM/ASPERGERS

Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning it is a complex range of neurodevelopmental disorders which are characterized by difficulties with language and/or communication, difficulties with social skills, stereotype and patterns of obsessive behaviors. The generic term Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) covers autism, asperger syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder- not of specific origin, Rett Syndrome, and childhood disintegrative disorder. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates 1 in 88 children will have an ASD (2012). Boys are four times as likely as girls to have ASD.

Dr. Riffel has found dignity is the greatest gift we can give to children with autism. The dignity to recognize their struggles. The dignity to not speak about them in front of them, as if they do not understand. The dignity to give them age-appropriate tasks. The dignity to help them communicate in whatever mode they can. The dignity to give them friends who care about them despite their differences. The dignity to give them the same quality of life afforded to everyone. She believes it is the duty of every educator and every parent to fight for that dignity for their students and children.

Dr. Riffel's favorite movie clip to show in trainings is about Carly Fleischmann. Carly is a young lady in Canada who never spoke a single word.

However, when she was 11 years old, she ran to a computer and began typing.

If you only watch one movie clip this year, please watch this one.

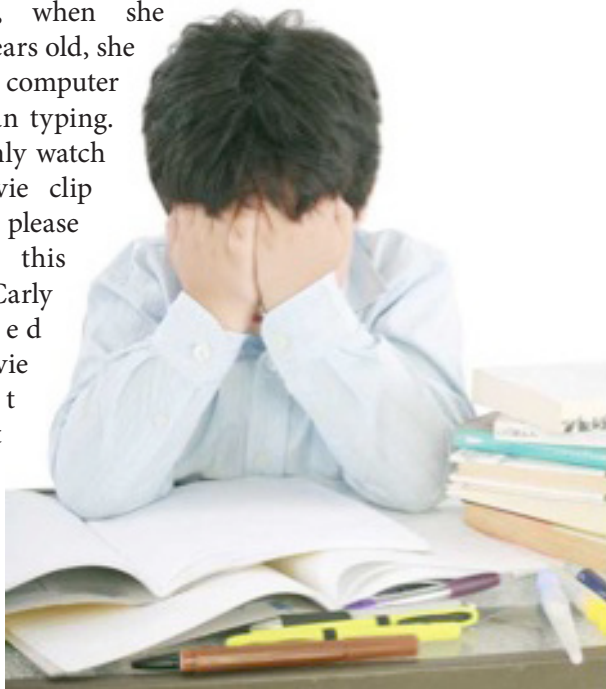
Carly directed

a movie about

what it feels

like to have

autism.



### Considering that all senses are heightened:

#### At school, think about all the overwhelming noises that are involved in a typical school day:

- *the buzzing of the overhead lights*
- *the sound of feet scuffling on the floor*
- *the sound of the fan in the overhead projector*
- *the sound of the air conditioner or heater blowing*
- *construction noise, traffic noise, bells, whistles, recess noises*
- *the sound of chairs scooting on the floor*

#### Think about all the sights that are involved in a typical school day:

- *hundreds of faces looking at you*
- *hanging art work in the room*
- *vast array of bulletin board displays*
- *all the colors in people's clothing*
- *clutter*
- *patterns in the floor*

#### Think about all the smells that are involved in a typical school day:

- *food smells from the cafeteria*
- *perfume*
- *body soaps*
- *shampoos*
- *residue of smoking on some people's clothing*
- *body odors after recess*

#### Think about all the textures that are involved in a typical school day:

- *elastic bands in underwear*
- *waistbands on pants or skirts*
- *tags in the back of shirts*
- *elastic on wrists of shirts*
- *sock seams*
- *shoes that aren't tied just right*

This list could go on. The point is to have the dignity to look at what might be upsetting the student by seeing the world from their viewpoint and making some modifications that will help them adjust to the world in which they live.

## Nebraska Foster &amp; Adoptive Parent Association

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a newsletter for Nebraska Families

**N F A P A**

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When reprinting an article, please receive permission from the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, 2431 Fairfield St. Street, Suite C, Lincoln, NE 68521

402-476-2273, toll-free 877-257-0176, e-mail: Pam@nfapa.org

To contact a board member or mentor, visit our website at [www.nfapa.org](http://www.nfapa.org)

## NFAPA Staff

**Pamela Allen**, Executive Director: 308-631-5847 or Pam@nfapa.org

**Felicia Nelsen**, Office Administrator: 877-257-0176 or Felicia@nfapa.org

**Alicia Carlson**, Support Staff: 877-257-0176

**Tammy Welker**, Northeastern/ Eastern Area RFC: 402-989-2197 or Tammy@nfapa.org

**Robbi Blume**, Northwestern Area RFC: 402-853-1091 or nothernnfapar@yahoo.com

**Terry Robinsons**, Central RFC: 402-460-7296 or trobinson1978@gmail.com

**Jolie Camden**, Western RFC: 308-672-3658

\*RFC = Resource Family Consultant

## NFAPA Board of Directors 2015

### President

Charles and Carla Colton  
32314 740 Road  
Imperial, NE 69033  
308-882-4078  
colton@chase3000.com

### Vice-President

Jay & Tammy Wells  
21 N. Kennedy, PO Box 162  
Alma, NE 68920  
308-928-3111  
jtwells@frontiernet.net

### Secretary

Kathy Wagoner-Wiese  
17630 W. 42nd Street  
Kenesaw, NE 68956  
402-752-3712  
okwiese@windstream.net

### Treasurer

Lynne Wiedel  
6279 Road S  
Belvidere, NE 68315  
402-469-9778  
lynne1978\_wiedel@hotmail.com

### Central Representative

Vacant

### Eastern Representative

Anna Brummer  
17820 Jacobs Circle  
Omaha, NE 68135  
308-627-6859  
brummeram@gmail.com

### Northern Representative

Josh and Erin Rathe  
2821 Furnas Street  
Ashland, NE 68003  
Cell #402-984-6461  
Erin.rathe@agps.org

### Southeast Representative

Vacant

### Western Representative:

**Southwest**  
Lana & Mark Tiede  
41596 Rd 766  
Gothenburg, NE 69138  
402-802-6363  
lanatiede@yahoo.com

### Western Representative:

Panhandle  
Vacant

### At Large Board Members

Barbara Dewey  
2900 South 70th Street, Ste 160  
Lincoln, NE 68506  
(402) 525-9825  
bdewey@neb.rr.com

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

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# ATTENTION FOSTER PARENTS!

## EARN YOUR FOSTER PARENT CREDITS WHILE GETTING THE CHANCE TO WIN A GREAT PRIZE!

Answer these 9 questions from this newsletter 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.

Just answer the following 9 questions and send us your answers! There are a variety of ways to do this. You can **1)** email the information to Felicia@nfapa.org, **2)** send the questionnaire from the newsletter to the NFAPA office at 2431 Fairfield Street, Suite C, Lincoln, NE, **3)** print off this questionnaire from our website, [www.nfapa.org](http://www.nfapa.org) (under newsletters) and fill out/send in by email or mail or you can go to **4)** survey monkey and do the questionnaire on line at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X3DV9FJ>.

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. T or F: Your foster child should have a minimum of one annual physical per year.
2. What is the name of the new NFAPA online support group?
3. As a foster parent list three strategies to enhance your listening skills.
4. Define Foster Care.
5. List 3 steps to strengthen your relationship with your children.
6. Permanency is the desired goal for all children. What two things will make "Letting Go" smoother?
7. List 5 tips to advocate for yourself or others.
8. List 5 competencies for successful family foster parenting.
9. T or F: Family foster care is a public trust that requires foster parents, with essential supports from their agencies, to be dedicated to service for the welfare of the children in their care.

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

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

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

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

Issue: Families First Newsletter: January/February 2015

# NFAPA OPENING!

## BOARD POSITION OPENINGS:

The following positions are vacant on the Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (NFAPA) Board of Directors.

- *Western Service Area Representative*
- *Southeast Service Area Representative*
- *Central Service Area Representative*

If you are a current or former foster and or adoptive parent and have a passion for serving with an organization that has a like-passion for serving foster/adoptive/kinship parents, please contact Pamela Allen, Executive Director, at 402-476-2273 for more information.

## STAFF OPENINGS:

- *A Resource Family Consultant Position (part-time) is available in the Western Service Area servicing the following counties: Grant, Hooker, Thomas, Arthur, McPherson, Logan, Keith, Perkins, Lincoln, Dawson, Chase, Hayes, Frontier, Gosper, Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willow and Furnas. If you are interested, please go to our website under the NEWS tab for the job description. Send your resume to Pam@nfapa.org. Applications will be taken until position is filled.*
- *An Office Assistant opening (part-time) is available in the Lincoln area. Applicants need to be familiar with Word and Excel. Send your resume to Pam@nfapa.org. Applications will be taken until position is filled.*

## Sibling Relationships in the Foster Care System

“Sibling Relationships in the Foster Care System” is a research team that seeks to improve sibling relationships for youth in the foster care system. If you are a former foster youth, case manager, or foster parent, we need you your help! Researchers at the University of Iowa are conducting a research study to learn more about sibling relationships for youth in foster care. Please visit their Facebook page for more information on this study: <https://www.facebook.com/siblingsinfostercare/info>.

**“Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one. ”**

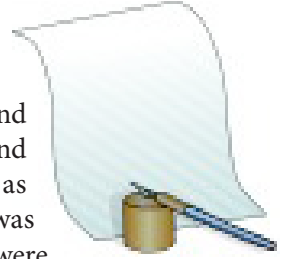
– Jane Howard

# CHANGE:

## A Letter from the Executive Director

Pamela Allen

Those of us who are part of the foster care system, know that life, and people in our lives change and bring new learning, challenges and growth experiences. Coming to you as the Executive Director of NFAPA, I was excited about what new experiences were offered, the challenges of stepping into an already awesome family centered, child oriented organization, and growing not only personally, but with NFAPA.



My husband Randy and I are proud parents of nine children (three of which are adopted) and many foster children who have come and gone in our lives over the past eighteen years. We feel that all of the children that have entered our lives are successful in their individual ways. We also believe that our success with our foster and adopted children is because of the awesome support we have received through our foster care community, through support groups and on-going training.

As changes are taking place in our government and Health and Human Services, change is also taking place at NFAPA as my husband has taken a job in another state. The girls and I will be joining him in May. As much as I am looking forward to our new adventure and new chapter in our lives, I am sad to be leaving NFAPA. I have grown so much personally and professionally with NFAPA and met many wonderful people....and put many, many miles on several different cars traveling across the state!

I believe that all things happen for a reason! I would also like to remind each of you that what you are doing.... helping families and their children come back together.... is AWESOME! I also know that it can hurt....so, please remember to reach out to your foster care community. Talk to someone who has “been there”. Be strong....attend support groups....attend on-going training with other foster parents, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT!

*God bless each and every one of you and what you do. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.*

Pamela Allen, Executive Director

**“Strangers are just family you have yet to come to know. ”**

– Mitch Albom



# WAITING CHILDREN...



## Name: Vanessa

Vanessa is a spirited young lady with a beautiful smile. She is shy and soft spoken at first, but once she warms up to you she shows her outgoing side. She has a great sense of humor and enjoys laughing, which brings out her smile.

Vanessa's favorite colors are purple hues, you will find a splash of it in every outfit she

may wear. She is creative with colors, especially with putting clothing and accessories together and making her own creations to feel good about herself. Looking good in color is her way of expression. Watch out fashion world! Vanessa's adding an accessory or two that brings out the pop and pizzazz in her personality.

Vanessa is like an average girl you know, with one difference; she has suffered trauma and loss through no fault of her own. She has the same needs, dreams, and has unique potential as any other young girl. She deserves the same opportunities to build a bright and promising future with a family who believes in her.

Vanessa deserves a family that will love her and spend quality time with her, so she can gain a sense of belonging and connection. She needs a family who is accepting and realizes she deserves to be shown what committed love looks like. She will need this through the good days and not so good days, along with a strong commitment to never give up on her. Vanessa needs a family who can provide structure and consistency to her daily life. She needs a family that will encourage her to meet her full potential to the best of her ability. A family to foster the sparks within Vanessa, so that she may grow into and become a remarkable young lady and contributing member in society.

Vanessa has three siblings she will need to remain in contact. Her siblings are not available for placement.

For more information:

Email: [BrendaMae.Stinson@nebraska.gov](mailto:BrendaMae.Stinson@nebraska.gov)

Phone: (402) 471-1537



## Name: Tierney

Tierney is looking for a family who will be able to keep up with him. Tierney is always on the go and enjoys riding his bike, helping out in the garden, playing with his toys, snuggling on the sofa and giving hugs. Tierney is best when he is the center of "your" universe and enjoys all of the attention. Tierney is asking for a strong male

role model in his life and a family that is very structured and patient

For more information:

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

Phone: 402-504-3607



# Foster Care Newsletter December 2014 Column

By Dr. John DeGarmo

The removal from the child's birth home comes without any notification and placed into foster care is often a time of great emotion and trauma for a child. These emergency removals oftentimes occur late in the evening, and with little to no warning for the children. As caseworkers remove a child from a home suddenly, most are unprepared. Foster children leave their home with a quick goodbye, leaving behind most of their belongings, with a few clothing and perhaps a prized possession hurriedly stuffed into a plastic bag. Before they know it, they are standing in front of you, strangers, people they have never met before. Against their will, they are in a strange home, their new home. With most children in foster care, it is a time of fear, a time of uncertainty, a time where even the bravest of children become scared. Indeed, foster children often have no control of this transition, no control where they are placed, and no control of when they will go back to their birth family. It is this lack of control that many times sends children in foster care spiraling into depression, various behavioral issues, and into a world of anxiety.

Issues from anxiety can manifest themselves in a number of ways. Perhaps the one that foster children face the most is separation anxiety, an excessive concern that children struggle with concerning the separation from their home, family, and to those they are attached to the most. Indeed, the more a child is moved, from home to home, from foster placement to another foster placement, or multiple displacements, the bigger the concern becomes. Those children who undergo many multiple displacements often times create walls to separate themselves in an attempt to not let others into their lives. In attempting to do so, many foster children end up lying to their foster families, as they try to keep their new family at a distance, and at the same time, give the child a sense of personal control.

Many times, children placed into foster care suffer from mental health issues. A placement disruption may be so severe to the child that it feels as if their entire world is falling apart. For them, it is. Everything they know to be true in their world is now turned upside down. Their mother and father are no longer there to comfort them when they are troubled, or afraid. The family they lived with, grew up with, laughed with, and cried with is no longer there to take care of them. The bed they woke up in each morning is now different. Far too many foster children, the school they went to, the teachers they learned from, and the friends they had formed relationship with, have also been taken from them. Instead, these children now live with a strange family, wake each morning in a different house, sit in an unfamiliar classroom, and are no longer surrounded by those who love and know them best. Children in foster care often struggle to best deal with and survive these traumatic events, as they struggle to adjust to a new home and new family. To be sure, the losses in their life, along with the lack of a permanent home, often times prevent these children from forming a secure and healthy attachment with a primary caregiver.

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*Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 13 years, now, and he and his wife have had over 45 children come through their home. He is a speaker and trainer on many topics about the foster care system, and travels around the nation delivering passionate, dynamic, energetic, and informative presentations. Dr. DeGarmo is the author of several foster care books, including the brand new book *Love and Mayhem: One Big Family's Uplifting Story of Fostering and Adoption*. Dr. DeGarmo is the host of the weekly radio program *Foster Talk with Dr. John*, He can be contacted at [drjohndegarmo@gmail.com](mailto:drjohndegarmo@gmail.com), through his Facebook page, *Dr. John DeGarmo*, or at his website, <http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>.*

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# Foster Parenting Manual Tips for January, 2015

By Dr. John DeGarmo

Today's youth do much of their communication through social networking. Millions of children and adults across the globe social network through a variety of means and venues every day. In truth, this is how many of today's children communicate. Gone are the days of postal letters and landline phones. Instead, they have been replaced with online communication.

Many social network sites share personal information with third parties. Identity theft can be rather common through social networking, as well, as predators create false profiles in an attempt to lure their victims. Online predators also track many foster children through cybercasing and through pictures posted online. Online web calling sites, such as ChatRoulette, open a doorway to online pedophiles and others wishing to place your foster child in danger, and also expose your foster child to a world of inappropriate material, as do sites such as YouTube. Digital footprints left behind each time your foster child accesses a site is yet another way that your foster child can be tracked and located. To be sure, anything can be found online, both positive and negative, both helpful and harmful. For those foster children who are simply curious, it is easy to stumble upon one of the countless inappropriate and harmful sites that are online. Some sites allow foster children the knowledge and information to build bombs and guns, while other sites allow the child to even purchase weapons. Other sites permit children in foster care to purchase both legal and illegal drugs, and many of these sites do not have restrictions in place. For those foster children who have eating disorders, "pro-ana," and "pro-mia" sites encourage these disorders, as well as those sites that provide "thinspiration".

## More Tips

- *Watch for any suspicious contacts and communication from the online social media sites, and be wary of those who wish to "friend" your child.*
- *Watch for pictures or videos of your foster child that might appear online. If you find them, delete the pictures from the site. "Un-tag your foster child from all pictures online that you can find.*
- *Check the browser's history to see where your foster child has accessed, ensuring that sites like ChatRoulette and other sites have not been visited.*

Contact Dr. John DeGarmo, Ed.D. at  
<http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com>.

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# Foster Parent Responsibilities

## Role:

As a foster parent you have many responsibilities to a number of individuals: the child placed in your home, the agency, the child's biological family, the team and your own family.

Your goal as a foster parent is to provide skilled care, discipline and nurturing for any child placed in your home, while serious problems are addressed through treatment interventions. You must operate as a parent, a behavior management specialist, a mentor, a guide, a protector, a team member, an advocate, a teacher, a mentor of families, and as a caregiver. This is a big role. We have broken your tasks down to the following:

## Tasks and Responsibilities

### CHILD'S PHYSICAL NEEDS:

- *Meet the child's basic need for food, clothing and shelter.*
- *Provide adequate personal space for the child with a separate bed and place to store their belongings.*
- *Feed the child nourishing meals on a regular basis.*
- *Regularly check the child's clothing needs and keep the child well clothed year round.*
- *Provide for the child's personal care, health and hygiene needs.*
- *See that the child is clean and well-groomed. Teach personal hygiene methods when necessary.*
- *Transport the child to all medical, dental and health appointments. Assure the child's medical and dental health needs are regularly checked and met.*
- *Provide adequate supervision on a 24-hour basis. (If you are not present to supervise it is your responsibility to make sure the child is being supervised by an approved adult.)*
- *Assure that the child follows a healthy, structured daily routine.*
- *Provide opportunities for the child to get regular and sufficient exercise.*
- *Administer all prescribed medications as directed. If problems or symptoms develop, contact medical assistance and/or staff immediately. Do NOT make a decision to discontinue medication without a doctor's approval.*

### CHILD'S EMOTIONAL AND NURTURING NEEDS:

- *Provide fair and equal treatment for all children in your home.*
- *Transport the child to all counseling appointments, assessments, testing and medical management appointments.*
- *Include the child in all family activities.*
- *Provide fair and equal treatment for all children in your home.*

- *Express affection often. Demonstrate affection in appropriate, healthy ways.*
- *Say positive things about the child to others, or in their hearing.*
- *Understand and care about the child's feelings.*
- *Avoid hurtful, sarcastic comments. Do not criticize the child in front of others.*
- *Listen non-judgmentally to child's feelings.*
- *Take pride in how the child looks and presents themselves to others.*
- *Seek to establish supportive relationship with child's biological family.*
- *Never speak negatively about child's family or history. Listen and empathize, but do not judge.*
- *Model effective ways of expressing powerful feelings.*
- *Help children advance through the grieving and adjustment process that accompanies removal from their home and placement.*
- *Provide recreational and enrichment activities that will promote the health development of a positive self-esteem.*
- *Respect confidentiality of the child.*

### CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL NEEDS:

- *Enroll the child in school.*
- *Provide for daily attendance at school.*
- *Provide a quiet physical space for the child to complete school assignments.*
- *Monitor the child's educational progress.*
- *Transport the child to any educational evaluations.*
- *Communicate with teachers, guidance counselors and administrators to ensure your child is participating and cooperating with the school.*
- *Attend any after school meetings required.*
- *Provide access to after school activities, sports, etc.*
- *Provide for necessary equipment and funding to participate in custodian/team approved activities.*

### CHILD'S RECREATIONAL NEEDS:

- *Encourages the child's involvement in social and recreational activities.*
- *Provides transportation, equipment and funding to engage in custodian/team approved activities.*
- *Encourage the child to develop hobbies, skills, talents, and personal interests.*
- *Applaud their achievements.*

### TEACHING/DISCIPLINE TASKS:

- *Provide consistent and realistic discipline and guidance that is age appropriate and does not involve corporal punishment.*
- *Teach the child effective social interaction skills.*
- *Teach the child how to respond in difficult situations.*
- *Teach problem-solving skills.*
- *Observe, count and record behaviors as requested by clinicians.*



- *Use effective praise techniques to encourage positive behavior.*
- *Teach negotiation skills to the child. Demonstrate these skills at all times of conflict between you and the child.*
- *Teach the child effective time management and how to be responsible for their own lives.*
- *Teach effective anger management skills. Reinforce those taught by the agency. Demonstrate these skills at all times of conflict.*
- *Document behaviors effectively.*

### **WORKING WITH THE AGENCY/TEAM:**

- *Attend all agency/team meetings and participate fully.*
- *Provide adequate information regarding the child's progress, behaviors at home and school to the agency/team.*
- *Notify the agency or on-call worker immediately in all emergencies.*
- *Transport child to activities, meetings, appointments, etc.*
- *Submit all requested documentation in a timely manner.*
- *Discuss important status changes in your family with the agency (such as job change, separations, divorce, illness, financial stability, etc.).*
- *Participate in planing for the child--permanency, treatment, options, etc.*
- *Implement suggested behavior management plans from professional therapists, social workers, etc.*
- *Cooperate and support other agency/team members' roles and responsibilities.*
- *Communicate effectively with all agency/team members so child does not split authorities in his/her life.*
- *Adhere to agency/team policies and procedures.*
- *Effectively use emergency procedures and on-call procedures.*
- *Recognize when you need help or support and request this support from the agency or team.*
- *Notify the agency/team of any vacation or holiday plans. Allow adequate time for custodial approval and preparation.*
- *Meet all training requirements. Identify to the agency/team where you feel you need additional training and support.*
- *Attend support group meetings.*

### **WORKING WITH THE BIOLOGICAL FAMILY:**

- *Provide a supportive, non-judgmental attitude of respect at all times.*
- *Work with the biological family as an extension of their family rather than an alternative to the family.*
- *Model effective discipline techniques.*
- *Model professional team behavior.*
- *Model effective negotiating, conflict management and anger management skills.*
- *Be willing to listen to their story, needs.*

- *Cooperate fully with phone calls and visitations as prescribed by the team.*
- *Respect confidentiality of the family.*
- *Provide information, pictures, school data, report cards, medical records, etc. to the family.*

*Used with permission from Foster Care & Adoptive Community Distance Learning Program*

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## **New Facebook Page - FACES of Nebraska: An Online Support Group**

### **FACES: Family Advocacy, Collaboration, Empowerment, Support**

Whether you are a foster parent, an adoptive parent, have guardianship, or are kinship/family care giver, this group is designed to give support, information, resources and encouragement. Foster Parents are vital to keeping children safe and helping them heal from the trauma of abuse, neglect, abandonment or removal from their family home. This support group can help by:

- *Working together to improve the lives of children not living with their birth parents.*
- *Through mutual support foster families are strengthened and placement stability is improved for the children in care.*
- *Foster Parenting is a journey. Foster Parents must strive to keep up on educational opportunities to be better equipped to protect the health and safety of the children placed in our care. Staying informed and up to date on issues affecting the child welfare system are also important.*

Starting in 2015 we will have weekly chats Tuesdays at 9:00 PM (Central Time). Each week we will have a topic of discussion. During this time anything and everything related to the topic will be discussed. Just like in-person support groups, this will be a closed forum and issues discussed should remain confidential. If there is a topic you would like to suggest please let Terry Robinson know.

Please ask to join FACES of Nebraska by contacting Terry Robinson on Facebook.

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# SOME THOUGHTS!

Pamela Allen

As I am reading through the Code of Ethics for Foster Parents that were written in May of 2007, it occurs to me that they are still relevant. Children are still coming into care, children still love their families and sometimes, families need a little help to be able to safely take care of their children. The other thing that occurs to me is that I hear too often that Foster Parents feel as though they are just “housing” children. How sad is that?! I truly believe that Foster Parents have good hearts and good intentions and sometimes through frustration, become apathetic. If that is you or someone you know...PLEASE:

- *Reach out to another Foster Parent*
- *Use planned respite*
- *Attend support groups*
- *Attend workshops*
- *Become informed!*

The saying “It takes a village” is so true.

## Code of Ethics for Foster Parents

### Preamble

The mission of the National Foster Parent Association is to support foster parents in achieving safety, well-being, and permanency for the infants, children, and youth in their care commensurate with the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act passed in 1980, and the Adoptions and Safe Families Act passed in 1997. The Code of Ethics for Foster Parents begins by emphasizing that family foster care is an integral component of the child welfare system which:

- *Recognizes the rights of children and youth to safe, nurturing relationships, intended to last a lifetime;*
- *Assists parents to regain custody or make alternative plans, intended to be permanent, for their children and youth;*
- *Emphasizes the developmental needs of children and youth*
- *Provides each child or youth with a foster parent and social worker who have the skills to support the child or youth’s safety, developmental, and permanency needs, and provide foster parents and social workers with the supports necessary to develop and use these skills;*
- *Designs family foster care as a part of a comprehensive, coordinated, inter-disciplinary service delivery system;*
- *Provides legal representation to ensure timely and skillful responses to case plans involving court proceedings;*
- *Collects, analyzes, and disseminates accurate and relevant data about children, youth, and their families leading to informed policies, programs, and practices;*  
*and*

- *Supports family foster care – and all child welfare services – with effective and accountable leadership in city halls, governors’ offices, national organizations, the judiciary, the federal government, Congress, and the White House (National Commission on Family Foster Care, 1991, p. 5).*

## Historical Perspective and Definitions

The Code of Ethics for foster parents is based on the definition of family foster care established by the 1991 National Commission on Family Foster Care, sponsored by the Child Welfare League of America and the National Foster Parent Association. It reframed the historical term, “foster family care” to “family foster care,” to emphasize the importance of family. This is based on the premise established by the first White House Conference on Children in 1909 (Rycus & Hughes, 1998) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1997 that children need and have the right to a family life. Family foster care: An essential child welfare service option for children and parents who must live apart while maintaining legal and, usually, affectional ties. When children and parents must be separated because of the tragedy of physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, maltreatment, or special circumstances, family foster care provides a planned, goal-directed service in which the care of children and youth takes place in the home of an agency-approved family. The value of family foster care is that it can respond to the unique, individual needs of infants, children, youth, and their families through the strength of family living, and through family and community supports. The goal of family foster care is to provide opportunities for healing, growth, and development, leading to healthier infants, children, and youth, and families, with safe and nurturing relationships intended to be permanent (National Commission on Family Foster Care, 1991, p. 6).

Foster Parent: NFPA definition: Includes those providing kinship, guardianship, resource and family foster/adoptive care.

## Statement of Purpose

The Code of Ethics is a public statement by the National Foster Parent Association that sets clear expectations and principles to articulate basic values and to guide practice. Family foster care is a public trust that requires foster parents, with essential supports from their agencies, to be dedicated to service for the welfare of the children in their care. Each foster parent has an obligation to maintain and improve the practice of fostering, constantly to examine, use and increase the knowledge upon which fostering is based, and to perform the service of fostering with dignity, integrity, and competence.



## Principles

Successful family foster parenting includes competencies in the following domains:

**Principle 1:** Providing a safe and secure environment

**Principle 2:** Providing a loving, nurturing, stable family care environment.

**Principle 3:** Modeling healthy family living to help children, youth, and families learn and practice skills for safe and supportive relationships.

**Principle 4:** Providing positive guidance that promotes self-respect while respecting culture, ethnicity, and agency policy.

**Principle 5:** Promoting and supporting positive relationships among children, youth, and their families to the fullest possible extent.

**Principle 6:** Meeting physical and mental health care needs.

**Principle 7:** Promoting educational attainment and success

**Principle 8:** Promoting social and emotional development

**Principle 9:** Supporting permanency plans

**Principle 10:** Growing as a foster parent - skill development and role clarification; participation in training, professional or skill development, and foster parent support organizations and associations.

**Principle 11:** Arranging activities to meet the child's individual recreational, cultural, and spiritual needs.

**Principle 12:** Preparing children and youth for self-sufficient and responsible adult lives.

**Principle 13:** Meeting and maintaining all licensing or approval requirements.

**Principle 14:** Advocating for resources to meet the unique needs of the children and youth in their care (National Commission on Family Foster Care, 1991, p. 17).

**Principle 15:** Collaborating with other foster parents and the child welfare team, building trust and respecting confidentiality.

**Principle 16:** Promoting decisions that are in the best interest of the child/youth, promoting safety, well-being, and permanence.

**Principle 17:** Supporting relationships between children and youth and their families.

Principle 18: Working as a team member.

## Context

A Code of Ethics for Foster Parents must be viewed within the context of the service delivery system in which individual foster parents are affiliated. Foster parents recognize that while they have the solemn responsibility for the 24-hour care of the children placed with them, their abilities and resources are influenced by caseworkers, the role reciprocals. The National Foster Parent Association urges social work professionals to view the Code of Ethics for Foster Parents within the Code of Ethics for Social Workers, promulgated by the National Association of Social Workers: competence, dignity, integrity, importance of human relationships, service, and social justice (National Association of Social Workers, 1996, p. 1).

## References

- *National Commission on Family Foster Care (1991). A blueprint for fostering infants, children, and youths in the 1990's. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.*
- *National Association of Social Workers (1996). NASW Code of Ethics. Washington, DC.*

May 2007

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# 20 Quick Tips to Better Advocate

## for Yourself & Others

In my four years identifying as an activist, I have had the opportunity to learn from other experienced activists as well as engage in the discussion of theories-of-change in my academic social work experience. As an activist, you are never done learning. While I have been an activist for only a short while now, part of my learning process is to explain to others what I have learned. How can we effect positive change if we don't pass on our knowledge to others to benefit from?

The wonderful thing about so many of the tips I have written below is that they are applicable to advocacy at all levels. Meaning, they are skills that can be used whether advocating for yourself, for another individual, for a group or community, or for broad level policy changes. I have used these skills when calling utility companies to clear up discrepancies on my own household bills. I have used these skills to help clients reach resources within agencies that they need. I have also used these skills when being interviewed on the radio, writing opinion editorials, blogging, meeting with legislators and their staff, giving feedback on drafted legislation, and providing testimony for legislative hearings.

**Be respectful** It is important to be respectful to other groups, individuals, and causes in your advocacy. You do not have to put one group down to raise the needs of a specific group. If you send the message that other causes and issues aren't important (or as important), you alienate potential allies to your cause.

This also means not putting another cause down when it is receiving attention and yours is not. That being said, there are times when focus is put on something that definitely is not as important as a human rights issue is. For example, when legislators have ignored human rights bills because they were overcome with debating the State's official vegetable (yes, that actually happened). But deciding how to point out where priorities should lie should involve thoughtfulness, wisdom, compassion, and respect for other people.

**Be inclusive** Seek to understand how the issue you are passionate about impacts a diversity of people, not just you. Advocate for everyone that your cause impacts. Make sure the voices of others are heard.

**Take up space** Your cause and your needs are important. It's your legislator's job to listen to you. I say this frequently, especially to fellow female activists, take up space. You are entitled to raise your voice and be heard. You are entitled to complain when a service you use isn't working right. You are entitled to give feedback on issues that impact you.

**Speak to common values** Politics has become divided between party lines. Speaking to common values can help create common ground. One example is why so many adoption activists reiterate words like "equality" and "truth" when it comes to discussing adoption policy. These are things many people value, regardless of political affiliation.

**Know the cost** More often than not when you advocate for a policy or a new program, the legislator or person in charge is going to ask, "how much does this cost?" Sometimes people will disregard an idea based on how much they believe it will cost alone. It is important to know how much something may cost, who will benefit, and where the funding might come from.

**Speak to strengths** When advocating for yourself or others, speak to their strengths. It's true that social justice advocates are often advocating for problems to be fixed. But it is vital to speak to the strengths of the human beings involved. Why? Because human beings are deserving of dignity. Second, people are psychologically more likely to support a cause where people are spoken of positively, as survivors, and as heroes.

**Tell a story** Having a story to tell in the midst of facts and figures makes everything you have to say memorable. A short, poignant story directly addressing the issue you are advocating for goes a long way.

**Have an elevator speech** Recently, I went with a group of fellow social workers and students to advocate for some social work legislation. I ended up becoming the spokesperson for one large group of us in a brief meeting time with one legislative aide. I literally had two minutes to say what we wanted, how much it would cost, why it was needed, its benefit to our group and society, and how change could be made. Sometimes two minutes is all you will get; make the most of it; be prepared.

**Respect the time** When you meet with a legislator, administrator, or any other type of decision-maker, their time is often spread very thin. Come prepared and respect the time frame that you have. It increases your chances of more frequent and positive interactions with these individuals in the future. Write a script or agenda for you and the other activists to help you keep time. You'll be sure to be invited back in the future.

**Take care of yourself** Self-care is so important in any type of advocacy. Burn-out can impact how you approach your cause. When you become so entrenched in an issue that you begin stereotyping or feel like you will never make a difference, it's time to explore self-care options. Ways I self-care are to check-in with my mentors, take a break, write my thoughts down on paper, and even take time to work on other advocacy issues that aren't so close to home.

**Be wise with emotions** The details of your facts and story will conjure emotions within the listeners. This tends to be more effective than outright telling someone how they should feel.

**Don't set yourself at odds** Let people understand how they can connect to an issue. Some legislators (etc.) may surprise you by agreeing right away and wanting to get involved.

**Know your audience** Stay current on your issue and other issues yours may intersect with. Educate others about your issue. Brush up on what's important to them; is there any common ground between issues you both are passionate about that will help them see your issue your way?

**Use your story wisely** A single story won't speak for every person that faces a given issue. Use research and statistics to pull back the lens and broaden your focus to help more people most effectively.

**Have a bottom line** You should have a say in how you want the issue you face to be resolved. Brainstorm some ideas. What does a solution look like to you and why should the issue be resolved your way?

**Stay on task** If you get distracted from your goal, so will whomever is listening to you. When talking to someone about the issues, stay focused on your cause and topic at hand. Writing out a goal or mission with objectives and action steps to complete those goals can help you stay focused on what best promotes your cause.

**Respect yourself** Be open to other points of view. But acknowledge that when you know an issue, you know it. If you've done significant work on a topic and trust the research you've done, say so.

**Get comfortable** Be comfortable with your platform. Research a variety of ways to advocate and practice those skills. Writing petitions, submitting testimony, in-person meetings, phone calls, demonstrating, blogging--the list is endless.

**Don't lose hope** You never know how the seeds you have planted with your message will grow. Don't get discouraged. Even when the change wanted isn't made or your bill doesn't pass, the time you spent educating still made a difference.

**Pay it forward** Give back. Become an advocate for other causes. Expand your understanding of social justice by seeking to understand the needs of as many people as possible.

<http://www.declassifiedadoptee.com/2013/04/20-quick-tips-to-better-advocate-for.html>

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## LEARNING TO LISTEN

Dina, a single mother of a 4-year old boy named Luke, worked a full day and rushed to pick up her son from his home child care provider. After spending 15 minutes discussing his day, paying for the next week and making plans for the following week of care, Dina secured her son in his car seat and headed home. Once in the house, she looked through her mail, walked through the house picking up laundry, and started a load of dishes—the whole while, Luke followed her talking about his day.

“Yes honey, you went to the park,” “uh huh...you had a great day.” Dina commented as he followed her throughout the house. This went on for several minutes until finally, Luke said, “Mommy, listen to me.”

Dina stopped and turned to him, “I am listening to you. You are telling me about your day.”

“No,” Luke replied, “I mean listen to me with your eyes.”

Listening to your child requires you to learn his or her language. Learning your child's language means you need to pay attention to vocalizations, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, body language, play and meaning of words, for example:

- *Exaggerations such as “everybody”*
- *Generalizations—“doggie,” when it is a kitty.*
- *Implications “I thirsty.” When he wants you to give him milk.*
- *Using one word such as “mine” instead of “I want that.”*

Young children communicate in different ways depending on their age. Babies cry, rub their eyes, move their arms and legs, coo and babble. Toddlers use one to three word phrases, move a lot, use gestures and can be impatient. Preschoolers like to repeat themselves over and over, they are curious and ask a lot of questions.

Listening to your child promotes a strong relationship, increases his or her feelings of self-importance, teaches him or her to listen to others, and helps him or her manage emotions. In addition, you are likely to learn and understand what your child knows, wants, wonders, worries about and enjoys. You will gain insight into how your child problem-solves, plans and sees the world.

### To enhance your listening skills, try these strategies:

- *Face your child.*
- *Sit at eye level*
- *Use eye contact*
- *Have your child sit in your lap*
- *Hold hands*
- *Be patient*
- *Provide enough time for your child to communicate his or her thoughts*
- *Pay attention*
- *Make time every day*
- *Encourage elaboration of ideas*
- *Ask open-ended questions*
- *Turn off competing noise such as the TV*
- *Listen to him or her “read” or tell stories*
- *Focus on what is being said*
- *Limit interruptions*
- *Repeat or summarize what your child says*
- *Respond with a gentle voice in an even tone*
- *Respect your child's feelings*
- *Consider his or her perspective*
- *Think like your child*
- *Be prepared to listen to the same story over and over*
- *Listen for the message “behind” the words for example, asking for a drink of water four times before bed may not mean he or she is thirsty. It may really mean, I love you and don't want you to leave me.*
- *Mostly, model all of the listening skills you hope your child will demonstrate as he or she grows older.*

As you learn to listen he or she will too?

*About the Author: Noelle Hause, Ed.D., LPC, IMH-E (IV) is the young child wellness coordinator for Project Launch and Infant Mental Health Mentor-Clinical at North Range Behavioral Health in Greeley, Colorado.*

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# Attachment Issues and Reactive Attachment Disorder

## Part 1

### Symptoms, Treatment, and Hope for Children with Insecure Attachment



Attachment is the deep connection established between a child and caregiver that profoundly affects your child's development and ability to express emotions and develop relationships. If you are the parent of a child with an attachment disorder, you may be exhausted from trying to connect with your child. A child with insecure attachment or an attachment disorder lacks the skills for building meaningful relationships. However, with these tools, and a healthy dose of effort, patience, and love, it is possible repair attachment challenges.

### Understanding attachment problems and disorders

Children with attachment disorders or other attachment problems have difficulty connecting to others and managing their own emotions. This results in a lack of trust and self-worth, a fear of getting close to anyone, anger, and a need to be in control. A child with an attachment disorder feels unsafe and alone.

So why do some children develop attachment disorders while others don't? The answer has to do with the attachment process, which relies on the interaction of both parent and child.

Attachment disorders are the result of negative experiences in this early relationship. If young children feel repeatedly abandoned, isolated, powerless, or uncared for—for whatever reason—they will learn that they can't depend on others and the world is a dangerous and frightening place.

### What causes reactive attachment disorder and other attachment problems?

Reactive attachment disorder and other attachment problems occur when children have been unable to consistently connect

with a parent or primary caregiver. This can happen for many reasons:

- *A baby cries and no one responds or offers comfort.*
- *A baby is hungry or wet, and they aren't attended to for hours.*
- *No one looks at, talks to, or smiles at the baby, so the baby feels alone.*
- *A young child gets attention only by acting out or displaying other extreme behaviors.*
- *A young child or baby is mistreated or abused.*
- *Sometimes the child's needs are met and sometimes they aren't. The child never knows what to expect.*
- *The infant or young child is hospitalized or separated from his or her parents.*
- *A baby or young child is moved from one caregiver to another (can be the result of adoption, foster care, or the loss of a parent).*
- *The parent is emotionally unavailable because of depression, an illness, or a substance abuse problem.*

As the examples show, sometimes the circumstances that cause the attachment problems are unavoidable, but the child is too young to understand what has happened and why. To a young child, it just feels like no one cares and they lose trust in others and the world becomes an unsafe place.

### Early warning signs and symptoms of insecure attachment

Attachment problems fall on a spectrum, from mild problems that are easily addressed to the most serious form, known as reactive attachment disorder (RAD).

Although it is never too late to treat and repair attachment difficulties such as reactive attachment disorder, the earlier you spot the symptoms of insecure attachment and take steps to repair them, the better. With early detection, you can avoid a more serious problem. Caught in infancy, attachment problems are often easy to correct with the right help and support.

### Signs and symptoms of insecure attachment in infants:

- *Avoids eye contact*
- *Doesn't smile*
- *Doesn't reach out to be picked up*
- *Rejects your efforts to calm, soothe, and connect*
- *Doesn't seem to notice or care when you leave them alone*
- *Cries inconsolably*
- *Doesn't coo or make sounds*
- *Doesn't follow you with his or her eyes*
- *Isn't interested in playing interactive games or playing with toys*
- *Spend a lot of time rocking or comforting themselves*

It's important to note that the early symptoms of insecure attachment are similar to the early symptoms of other issues such as ADHD and autism. If you spot any of these warning

signs, make an appointment with your pediatrician for a professional diagnosis of the problem.

## Comforting a Crying Baby

It's common to feel frustration, anxiety, and even anger when faced with a crying baby—especially if your baby wails for hours on end. In these situations, you need to be calm and centered so you'll be better able to figure out what's going on with your child and how best to soothe his or her cries.

*End Part 1. We will continue the article in the next newsletter.*

## APPRECIATION:

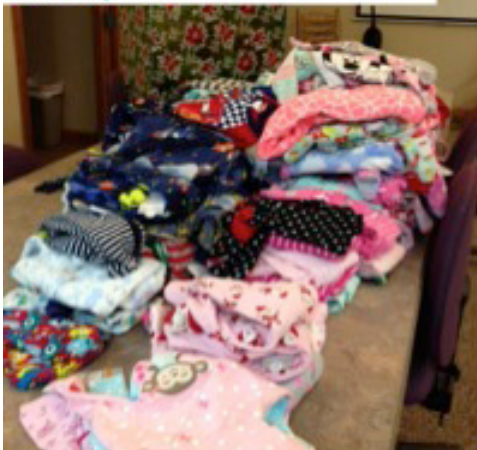
NFAPA had two large donations of pajamas to be given in our Kits for Kids bags for children that are in foster care across Nebraska. Thank you so much for thinking of the children! We have already given many to children needing a new pair of pjs! These and all donations are very much appreciated.

If you or an organization is interested in similar donations to be given to foster children as they come into care, please contact the NFAPA office at 877-257-0176.



**UNL Children's Center:** Had a contest to see which class could collect the most donations.

**Knowledge Beginnings®**  
Child Development Centers



**Knowledge Beginnings:** Collected donations through the Pajama Drive and Scholastic Reading Club.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!

### LINCOLN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Lincoln Community Foundation has many scholarships available. One is the Mildred Fry Scholarship (3 awards). This scholarship was established in 2011 to help students who had been or currently are in the foster care system. Applications must be submitted by March 31. The Application Form is available online at [www.lcf.org](http://www.lcf.org). The Lincoln Community Foundation manages over 50 scholarships! Go to their website for more information and take advantage of this opportunity. We have linked on our website ([www.nfapa.org](http://www.nfapa.org)) under the news tab many scholarships still available.

## Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association Scholarship

**Application Deadline: April 1, 2015**

### Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association \$250 Scholarship Program

NFAPA offers 1 scholarship for an adoptive, foster, guardianship, or kinship child, who wishes to further their education beyond high school or GED. This can be either at a college or university, vocational and job training, or on line learning. The scholarship form is available on our website ([www.nfapa.org](http://www.nfapa.org)). Requirements and submission instructions will be listed. Other scholarships will also be available on our website.

## Has Your Child Been to the Doctor Lately?

Please remember your foster child should have a minimum of one annual physical, see a dentist every 6 months and attend other medical and mental health appointments as required. Foster Parents are required to keep documentation of all medical, dental and mental health appointments and give that documentation to your child's worker!

**Thank you for taking care of Nebraska's children!**

# Nurturing, Bonding and Letting Go

Martha Hooper

Foster care is the term used for a system in which a minor has been placed into a ward, group home, or private home of a state certified caregiver referred to as a “foster parent”. The placement of the child is usually arranged through the government or a social service agency. The institution, group home or foster parent is compensated for expenses.

The state via the family court and child protection agency stand in loco parentis to the minor, making all legal decisions while the foster parent is responsible for the day-to-day care of said minor.

The vast majority of children who would otherwise need foster care are in kinship care, that is, in the care of grandparents or other relatives. Most kinship care is done informally without the involvement of a court or public organization. However, in the U.S. formal kinship care is increasingly common. In 2012, a quarter of all children in formal foster care were placed with relatives.

## Nurture

- *To provide the care and attention necessary for a young child, animal or plant to grow and develop*
- *To help someone or something to develop*
- *To provide the necessary conditions for something to grow and develop*

## Tips for being a Nurturing Parent

A healthy, nurturing relationship with your child is built through countless interactions over the course of time. It requires a lot of energy and work, but the rewards are well worth it. When it comes to parenting, there are few absolutes (one of course, being that every child needs to be loved) and there is no one “right way”. Different parenting techniques work for different children under different circumstances. These tips provide suggestions as you discover what works best in your family. Do not expect to be perfect, parenting is a difficult job.

## Help Your Children Feel Loved and Secure

We can all take steps to strengthen our relationships with our children, including:

- *Make sure your children know you love them, even when they do something wrong.*
- *Encourage your children. Praise their achievements and talents. Recognize the skills they are developing.*
- *Spend time with your children. Do things together that you both enjoy. Listen to your children.*
- *Learn how to use nonphysical options for discipline. Many alternatives exist.*

- *Depending on your child's age and level of development, these may include simply redirecting your child's attention, offering choices, or using "time out" or "time-in".*

## Community Resources Add Value

Children need direct and continuing access to people with whom they can develop healthy, supportive relationships. To assist this, parents may:

- *Take children to libraries, museums, movies, and sporting events.*
- *Enroll children in youth enrichment programs, such as sports or music.*
- *Use community services for family needs, such as parent education classes or respite care.*
- *Communicate regularly with childcare or school staff.*
- *Participate in religious or youth groups*

## Helping a Child Grow

Emotionally

Physically

## Socially

- *Simply stated, bonding is the process of forming an attachment. Just as bonding is the term used when gluing one object to another, bonding is using our emotional glue to become connected to another. Bonding, therefore, involves a set of behaviors that will help lead to an emotional connection.*

Human bonding is the process of development of close, interpersonal relationship. It most commonly takes place between family members or friends, but can also develop among groups such as sporting teams and whenever people spend time together. Bonding is a mutual interactive process, and is different from simple liking.

- *Bonding typically refers to the process of attachment that develops between romantic partners, close friends, or parents with children. This bond is characterized by emotions such as affection and trust.*

Are there indicators that a child has bonded?

Can you make a child bond?

Is bonding always reciprocal?

What about divided loyalties for children bonding to “other parents”?

## Benefits of Bonding

- *The most important property of humankind is the capacity to form and maintain relationships. These relationships are absolutely necessary for us to survive, learn, work, love and procreate. Human relationships take many forms but the most intense, most pleasurable and most painful are those relationships with family, friends and love ones. Within this inner circle of intimate relationships, we are bonded to each other with “emotional glue”- bonded with love.*



## Letting Go

- *Permanency is the desired goal for all children. Therefore, reunification with the family should be the first consideration.*

## Objective

Recognize that letting go is both a completion and a beginning.

- *Returning to an uncertain future w/birth family*
- *Being removed from our home to another foster placement or relative placement (guilt-perhaps a failed/disrupted placement)*
- *Being adopted (mixed emotions)*

## Things that make Letting Go Smoother

- *Remembering your role as temporary parents*
- *Plan for the departure/celebrate moving-on*

## Realizing

- *The benefits of bonding even though it hurts to let go*
- *Letting go may begin a healthy process/attachment*
- *Contact with the child may still be possible*
- *The move may actually be providing the child with an even larger support system*

## Revisit

- *Nurturing is critical to a child's development*
- *Relationship between nurturing and bonding*
- *Recognize that letting go is both a completion and a beginning*

## Support Group Happenings:

We have had some great speakers over the last couple of months in Columbus. PTI Nebraska came to talk with us about ADHD and gave us some great ideas to help with parenting a child with ADHD. In January Adopt Us Kids came and explained their roles in helping foster children find forever homes. Coming up on February 10th we welcomed PTI Nebraska once again to have a discussion on Bullying. If you live in or around Columbus spend one night a month with us (The Second Tuesday of every month) for some in-service training hours and networking support with fellow foster parents. We meet at Peace Lutheran Church from 7:00-8:30 PM. We have babysitting and chocolate chip cookies! Hope to see you there!

## NFAPA Support Groups

Have you ever thought about attending a support group? NFAPA offers support groups to foster, adoptive and kinship families! This is your chance to gain understanding and parenting tips through trainings, discussions, and networking with fellow foster families. This is a great way to meet other foster/adoptive families in the area! In-service training is offered at most support groups for those needing credit hours for relicensing. Up to date information with each support group location will be on our calendar page on the website. Support Groups will be cancelled for inclement weather. Contact your Resource Family Consultants for more information.

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

Tammy Welker: 402-989-2197

Terry Robinson: 402-460-7296 (FACES-Online Support Group)

## NFAPA has Support Groups at the following dates/times/locations

### Alliance Support Group

Box Butte Community Hospital

6:00-7:30 p.m. Please RSVP to Jolie

January 15, February 19, March 25, April 16,

May 28 and June 18, 2015

### Scottsbluff Support Group:

St. Francis Community Center (1605 2nd Ave)

6:00-7:30 p.m. Please RSVP to Jolie

January 19, February 16, March 30, April 13,

May 25 and June 15, 2015

### Columbus Support Group:

Peace Lutheran Church (2720 28th St.)

7:00-8:30 p.m. Childcare available

(Thank you Building Blocks and Behavioral Health Specialists for providing childcare!)

Meets the second Tuesday of the month.

January 13, February 10, March 10, April 14 and

May 11, 2015

### FACES-Online Support Group:

Every Tuesday 9:00-10:00 p.m. Central Time



**EVERY CHILD IS  
A STORY YET  
TO BE TOLD!**





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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 (resource) families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster (resource) 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
- Alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system

### *Thank you for your support!*

Please mail membership form to:  
NFAPA, 2431 Fairfield Street, Suite C,  
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
- I wish to join the effort through a donation.

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

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