

Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

July/August 2016

N F A P A

If Foster Care is Hard, You're Probably Doing it Right

Written by Maralee Bradley

I remember the moment. The four of us were all sitting on the kitchen counters eating cereal at ten p.m. (or it might have been ice-cream. . . we were young and stressed) debriefing about the events of the day. We were all recent college graduates in our early twenties who were responsible for the day-in and day-out love and nurture of 7 boys, mostly teens and preteens. Boys who had come from trauma. Boys who couldn't safely live with their parents. Boys who brought their unhealthy coping skills and beautiful smiles into this house designed to be their home until they could be safely reunified with their families. . . which for many of them over the years never happened.

We were exhausted by our work. My husband and I were the houseparents and along with caring for the boys were also responsible for supervising the interns assigned to help us- interns that were our same age with our same level of experience (namely, not much). We worked together to design systems to help these kids and created nurturing rituals and loved them with every ounce of our beings and it was draining. I remember the moment

when one of our interns said, "I don't think it's supposed to be this hard. It shouldn't be this hard." We saw other houseparents that made it look easier than what we were experiencing. Were we making this more difficult than it had to be? It's a question that has continued to haunt me over the years of caring for kids from trauma and as we continue to advocate for them, their families, and the foster families that partner with them.

I remember answering her in the moment, "I think it IS supposed to be this hard, if you're doing it right." And that's

continued to be the answer that gives me peace.

If you're doing foster care right, it may be the hardest thing you'll ever do. You will witness behaviors that are startling and break your heart as you realize they used to serve a purpose in the life of this child. You'll see physical wounds that are painful just to look at. You'll read court reports that frighten you. You'll spend your days and minutes and hours doing a thousand things to build trust, but the one time you respond in harshness, you're back to square one. You will be up all night with a child who has nightmares, then be chastised by her mother for not having her dressed in the clothes mom prefers for the visit that day. There are days it will feel like beating

your head against the wall and you'll wonder why you ever willingly signed up for this. And that's usually the day someone will make an offhanded comment about how foster parents are all in it for the money and you'll have to do your best not to cry because you KNOW they aren't paying you well enough to make it worth the pain.

If you're looking for some kind of "ministry" opportunity where you can put in a minimum of

effort and receive the maximum praise, this isn't the thing for you. If you're not willing to do something hard, don't bother. But if you jump into this world and in those dark moments find yourself asking, "Is it supposed to be this hard?" just know there are many other foster parents with you, standing beside you, saying "Yes! It is! Because you're doing it right!" We know the cost of doing foster care well and we validate the pain you're experiencing and promise it isn't in vain.



Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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Come join us for our annual Columbus support group potluck!

Tuesday August 2nd, 5:30 PM

Glur Park, 28th Street & 26 Avenue | Columbus, NE

RSVP to Tammy 402-659-4569 or

NFAPA Office 402-476-2273

If you live in the Columbus Area come join the fun.

Don't forget to bring a potluck dish to share!!



FACES Online Support Group

Do you want to chat with others who understand foster parenting? Do you need support from others who walk in your shoes? NFAPA hosts a weekly chat every Tuesday from 9pm to 10pm. We would love to hear from you and have you add to our conversations about whatever topic you need advice or opinions on. We have a wonderful group of foster and adoptive parents already but would love to have more. To join contact Terry Robinson at 402-460-7296 or Terry@nfapa.org. Hope to chat with you soon!

Take Me Out to the Ballgame

Come cheer on the Saltdogs during their 16th season. The Lincoln Saltdogs are a member of the Central Division of the American Association of Independent Professional Baseball. The Saltdogs play their home games at Haymarket Park. With help from corporate sponsors, they have donated tickets for the July 30th game! There are a limited number of tickets! If you are interested in tickets for the game, please email Felicia Nelsen at Felicia@nfapa.org.



(Continued from page 1)

Foster kids need you to be all in for them. They need you to be willing to take on the hard so they can have a chance at healing, at chance at normalcy. Struggling through the pain of foster care is NOT a sign that you're doing it wrong or that you shouldn't be doing it at all. It is a sign you are seeing this child's needs and you are fighting to be sure they are met. And the struggles of foster care aren't the whole story.

Because the challenges are so intense, the pain is so deep, the joy is intense, too. There are moments of stunning beauty—the child who finally comes to you when they're scared instead of hiding, the teenager who tells you how they'd protect you from any harm, the baby that learns to calm when you sing to them, the little girl who proudly brings you her school project, the little boy who shyly hands you a bouquet of dandelions. Reunifications with a mother who worked so hard. Adoptions by families who loved their children from the start.

In foster care you learn to not just seek joy in the happy endings, because they are the exceptions rather than the rule. You learn to find joy in the process. You seize these fleeting moments of peace because you know what a gift they are. You become a different person than you ever thought you could be as your heart stretches to love not just the helpless child in front of you, but the family that gave him life and is struggling to reclaim their own. Even the brokenness of "the system" and the frustrations of the foster care process become opportunities to find your voice as an advocate and fight for this child and the many other children stuck in legal limbo as wards of the state.

Could foster care be easier? Sure. If we weren't so invested. If we didn't love so hard, fight so strongly, feel so deeply. If we WERE just collecting a monthly reimbursement and walling ourselves off from these kids and their struggles. There is a way to do foster care more easily, but that involves these kids being denied a real chance at normalcy, stability and love. I know those kinds of foster homes exist and it breaks my heart. Easy isn't my goal.

Even in the very hardest of days, foster care is the right thing to do. It isn't right because the results go the way we want or we always feel appreciated and loved for our sacrifices or because this child and their family become functioning and healthy. Foster care is often hard because this work is messy and getting involved means you're going to get messy, too. But that's exactly how it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be this hard. And we're supposed to keep at it because these kids are worth it.

<http://herviewfromhome.com/if-foster-care-is-hard-youre-probably-doing-it-right/>



Mandatory Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training

As foster parents, you should have received a letter from Douglas Weinberg, Director, Division of Children and Family Services in August 2015 regarding the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act that President Obama signed on September 29, 2014. One key provision of the act is the utilization of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) by foster parents, Group Homes and Shelters.

The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard is defined as:

The standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain a child's health, safety, and best interest while at the same time encouraging the child's emotional and developmental growth, that a caregiver must use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under the responsibility of the state to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural and social activities.

This law was intended to empower foster parents to decide what activities foster youth may participate in. As a result youth will be able to experience a deeper sense of normalcy. Use of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard will be individualized based upon activity and if it is age or developmentally appropriate for the youth.

As part of this federal law, all foster parents are now required to complete the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training by December 31, 2016. Please contact your agency or NFAPA about upcoming RPPS trainings available in your area. This is an exciting time as we make changes to help ensure youth placed into the custody of DHHS experience as normal a childhood as possible.

For more information please visit: http://dhhs.ne.gov/children_family_services/Documents/PSP%2028-2015.pdf

RPPS at Lincoln NFAPA Office:

Tuesday Aug. 9th, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
Tuesday Sept. 20th, 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Monday Oct. 17th, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

RPPS at Peace Lutheran Church, Columbus:

Tuesday Sept. 13th, 6:00 PM (Before regular Support Group)



2016 Foster Parent Proclamation

On Wednesday May 4th, 2016, twenty people joined NFAPA and the Governor at the Capital for a Proclamation to celebrate National Foster Parent Month. It was great to see such support. Afterwards we all enjoyed a nice BBQ Lunch and conversation at the NFAPA Office. Hope to see you next year!



Attention Foster Parents!

Earn Your Foster Parent Credits While Getting the Chance to win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 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 10 questions and send us your answers! There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to Felicia@nfapa.org, send the questionnaire from the newsletter to the NFAPA office at 2431 Fairfield Street, Suite C, Lincoln, NE, print off this questionnaire from our website, www.nfapa.org (under newsletters) and fill out/send in by email or mail or you can go to survey monkey and do the questionnaire on line at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JulyAugust2016>. We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. **True or False.** Struggling through the pain of foster care is NOT a sign that you're doing it wrong or that you shouldn't be doing it at all. It is a sign you are seeing this child's needs and you are fighting to be sure they are met.
2. **Fill in the blanks.** You'll spend your days and minutes and hours doing a thousand things to build trust, but the one time you respond in harshness, _____.
3. **Fill in the blanks.** It's supposed to be this hard. And we're supposed to keep at it because these kids are _____.
4. **True or False.** Posttraumatic stress disorder occurs as a result of chronic trauma, including the experience or witnessing of death, violence, or child abuse.
5. List 5 symptoms of PTSD in Kids. _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
6. **True or False.** For all the benefits that online technology and social networking provide for a foster child, the dangers and horrors that are prevalent online for foster children are almost overwhelming.
7. **True or False.** As more foster children turn to online technology and social networking for entertainment, communication, and escape, the number of foster children that are being placed in harm's way via the internet is decreasing.
8. **True or False.** Biological parents are faced with quite difficult circumstances. They absolutely do not need our concern and compassion.
9. **Fill in the blank.** Switch your thinking from *finding the right child for your family* to _____, despite the history and issues the child is facing.

Name: _____ Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone #: _____

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 our website at www.nfapa.org. 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 (Southwest Area & FACES-Online Support Group): 402-460-7296

NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176

NFAPA has Support Groups at the following dates/times/locations. Please check our website for updated information and a list of new support groups being offered throughout the year.

WESTERN AREA

Alliance Support Group: Box Butte Community Hospital, in Alliance Room

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

Summer Dates:

July 14 and August 11, 2016

Scottsbluff Support Group: Regional West Medical Center, in South Plaza Room 1204

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

Summer Dates:

July 12 and August 9 2016

Kimball Support Group: Kimball Baptist Fellowship Church (507 S. Oak Street)

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

Summer Dates:

July 11 and August 8, 2016

North Platte Support Group: Mid Plains Center (1101 Halligan Drive)

6:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Terry Robinson.

Meets every other month on a Thursday evening August 4, October 6 (this meeting will be at a different location), December 1, 2016

Gothenburg Support Group: American Lutheran Church, 1512 Ave G (August & November) &

United Methodist Church, 1401 Lake Ave (September & October)

6:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Terry Robinson.

Meets the third Thursday of every month (no meeting in June, July or December).

August 18, September 15, October 20 and November 17, 2016

Lexington Support Group: Parkview Baptist Church (803 West 18th St)

6:00-8:00 p.m. Contact Terry Robinson.

Meets quarterly.

July 26 and October 25, 2016

NORTHERN AREA

Columbus Support Group: Peace Lutheran Church (2720 28th St.)

7:00-8:30 p.m. Childcare available. Contact Tammy Welker.

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

Meets the second Tuesday of the month (except December).

Group decided no meeting in July. Moved August date to August 2 for the picnic.

September 13, October 11 & November 8, 2016

ONLINE SUPPORT GROUP

FACES-Online Support Group: Every Tuesday 9:00-10:00 p.m. Central Time

Contact Terry Robinson to become a member of this closed group.

Meets weekly to discuss issues foster parents are facing. Support only.

TRANSRACIAL SUPPORT GROUP

Parenting Across Color Lines: Newman United Methodist Church (2242 R Street), Lincoln

6:30 p.m. Contact: Barbara Dewey, LICSW at 402-477-8278, ext. 1 to RSVP.

For more info: colorlineslincoln@gmail.com. Or <https://www.facecook.com/colorlineslincoln>

This group supports and strengthens racial identity in transracial families.

Watch our website for further dates or contact us by email or phone with any questions. Support only.

PACL will hold their 2nd annual picnic on August 6th at Antelope Park. Please contact Barbara Dewey in you and your family can attend!



Foster Children and Online Technology: A Feeling of Control- A World of Danger

Curtis was not in control. In fact, he had no control with just about everything in his life. After all, Curtis was in foster care.

Thirteen year old Curtis was placed into foster care after suffering neglect from a mother who was addicted to and sold illegal drugs. The teenager had been separated from his other two siblings, a younger brother and sister, as there were no foster homes in the area able to take in three children at that time. The foster teen's father had been in and out of the family's life, just as he had been in and out of jail. When Curtis arrived in his new foster home, he was confused, he was lonely, and he was scared. Curtis had been taken from everything he knew. He had been taken from his mother, his father, his brother, and his sister. He had been taken from his bedroom, his toys, his baseball card collection, his pet dog, his house, his home. The teen had been taken from his grandparents, his aunts, his uncles, his cousins, his neighbors, his friends, his teachers, and his classmates. Indeed, Curtis had been taken from everything that was familiar to him, everything he knew, and everything he loved.

Against his wishes, Curtis had been thrust into a strange home, with strange people and strange rules. The teenager had no control over the situation, had no say in where he was going to live, and had no power in whenever he might one day return home to his mother and to his family. Yet, Curtis did have control over one thing, his online life. The foster teen was able to create an online identity, one that he could control and one that he could escape into. During the day, Curtis was reminded that he was a foster child every possible moment. Whether it was at his new school, with his new teachers and fellow students, to living with foster parents and his foster



brother, Curtis was unable to escape his unwanted status of being in a foster home and a child of foster care. In the evenings, though, Curtis would escape and find refuge behind his computer from his fears and anxieties of being a foster child. Through social networking, playing online games, and texting his friends, Curtis felt like he was in charge of his own actions. This was the only thing the foster teen had control of, and he was not about to let it go.

For all the benefits that online technology and social networking provide for a foster child, the dangers and horrors that are prevalent online for foster children are almost overwhelming. Indeed, foster children are especially susceptible to many of these dangers, for a variety of reasons. As more foster children turn to online technology and social networking for entertainment, communication, and escape, the number of foster children that are being placed in harm's way via the internet is increasing. Unfortunately, this is one area that many foster parents, and child welfare workers for that matter, do not recognize or are unfamiliar with. Thus, it is vital that those who work with foster children be aware of these dangers if they hope to be better equipped to protect children in need from today's online world.

For much more, get a copy of *Keeping Foster Children Safe Online: Positive Strategies to Prevent Cyberbullying, Inappropriate Content, and Other Digital Dangers*, by Dr. John DeGarmo

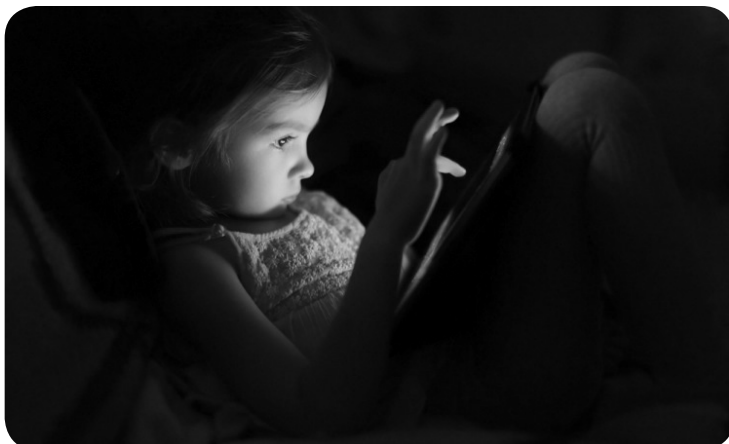
April 14, 2016 Health & Fitness Children, Dr. John DeGarmo, foster care, Online, parenting, safety Dr. John DeGarmo

Caregiver Information Form

Under Neb. Rev. Stat. 43-1314.02, the courts are required to provide a Caregiver Information Form to a foster parent, pre-adoptive parent, guardian, or relative providing care for a child. The form allows the caregiver to provide information about the child to the judge.

The Caregiver Information Form is made available in many courtrooms and an annual letter is sent to caregivers by the Through the Eyes of the Child Initiative informing them of the form.

If you are a foster parent or relative caregiver, you are encouraged to download this form and mail it to the child's judge. Judge's mailing addresses can be found on the Supreme Court website (<https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/5388/caregiver-information-form>). You can also download this form at www.NFAPA.org under the link Training and Resources, Remember as a caregiver to these kids, this is your voice in court.



Parenting Forgetful Behavior

By Deborah Godfrey

"Dad, where's my backpack?"

"Mom! I forgot my lunch! You have to bring it now!"

"Where'd you put my sweatshirt?"

Do any of these statements sound vaguely familiar? At Positive Parenting, we have a saying:

"A child who always forgets has a parent who always remembers!"

Many of the complaints I hear from parents have to do with children's irresponsible and forgetful behavior. It usually begins early, around 4 or 5 years old, and peaks when a child hits junior high. What happened between us happily picking up our screaming toddler's bottle that rolled under the couch and giving it to her and the preteen screaming at us that she can't find her favorite jeans and us snapping at her that if she didn't keep her room such a mess, then maybe she could find the clothes she wants?

First, parents often don't realize how much young children can do. Many toddlers are very capable of understanding our words and body language, even when they cannot communicate that verbally. So in the example above, when a child is distressed, we often "rescue" the child. This is a natural, normal response! The "saving" of a small child from their distresses is the way in which bonding occurs between parents and children. When a child cries because he is hungry, we "save" him by feeding him. When a child cries because she is wet, we "save" her when we change her diaper. This mechanism occurs instinctively under normal circumstances, and bonding between parent and child is established. The problem occurs when we "save" a child from an activity that she is capable of completing herself. So when her bottle rolls under the couch, you do not need to "save" her from starving right now. Now is the time to help her problem solve. You could play a game, "Where do you think your bottle went?" And start looking under things and behind things and help her to find the bottle. This way, she begins to learn self-sufficiency with your loving guidance.

Think of something that you are doing for your child that she could be doing for herself. Give this to your child as a new responsibility. In this way, you build her self-esteem and are teaching self-reliance.

The next complication occurs around the time that children start school. They forget their lunch, homework, sweaters, backpacks, library books...and on and on! They forget, and we nag, yell, complain, threaten and punish. Nothing seems to work! Here are 3 rules to teach children responsibility:

Stop remembering for them

Don't say "I told you so!"

Don't tell them what will happen, let the consequences do the talking for you

So the first thing parents need to do is stop reminding! When parents remind children, they rely on the reminders and become incapable of remembering for themselves. We parents cannot understand why they don't remember since we tell them over and over! But it's the telling them over and over that creates the irresponsibility! The second thing we need to do is STOP saying "I told you so!" or "See what happens when you forget?" In this case the child is focused on how mean we are or how stupid they are, and not on learning to be responsible. And finally, stop telling them how the world works, let the world and the natural consequences in it teach your child. When you tell them, then they will focus on you as the teacher and not learn from the way the world works. What I love most about this parental response is that I can make myself be the safe haven when that big bad world is teaching my children. For example, when Michael, my son, would forget his lunch, I would have a sandwich and food ready when he got home. "Wow, you must be starving! Here, have a sandwich!" If he tried to blame me, saying "Why didn't you bring me my lunch?" I would just say, "You must have been really hungry from forgetting your lunch, you need another snack?" And he would see it was his responsibility and not mine, and I was actually soothing him.

Finally, over time you can help your children be more responsible by teaching them how to think. When you tell them what to do, they don't learn. When you ask questions, in a loving way, they learn to use their brains.

When you find yourself telling your child to do something, phrase it in a question instead.

For example, instead of saying, "It's time for school", say "What time do you need to leave in order to be on time?"

Instead of saying, "Remember to turn in your library book" say "How are you going to remind yourself to turn your library book in on time?"

Instead of saying, "Do your homework" say "How much time to you need to do homework this evening?"

More than anything else, this style of communicating will create kids that learn to remember, be responsible and accountable for their actions. You have so much to do with how your children learn to think, how they react and how they communicate. By asking questions, you become a master teacher of the very communication you want your children to learn to be successful in school and their lives.

Deborah has been teaching parenting classes for over 20 years. Her kids are 28, 23 & 22 and wonderfully self-sufficient!

<http://positiveparenting.com>

<http://positiveparenting.com/parenting-forgetful-behavior/>

Waiting for a Forever HOME!

The following are children available on the Nebraska Heart Gallery.

Name: Timothy

11 years old

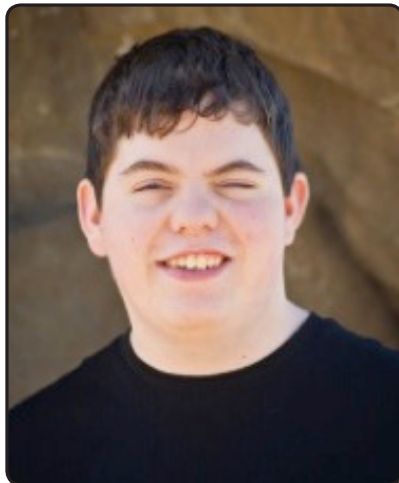
Timothy, or "Tim" as he prefers, is a very sweet and caring child. He loves to tell stories and is incredibly animated! When he grows up, Tim would like to be a firefighter or a policeman; either would be good for him because he is very social and loves to talk! He enjoys video games, bowling, reading and is also a big fan of superheroes. Tim has demonstrated good skills when presented with consistency and structure. Tim has expressed that he would prefer a two parent household that is loving and can be patient with him while he continues to work on developing his social skills and interactions with peers and adults alike. He very much looks forward to meeting his forever family!



Name: Joseph

16 years old

Thoughtful, caring, and imaginative, Joseph's smile can light up a room. He enjoys spending time with his brother and sisters and going out for pizza or ice cream. Joseph takes pride in his individuality and says his greatest wish is to be the ruler of a country. (Did we mention his vivid imagination?) He loves playing video games like Zelda, Candy Crush, and his favorite-Family Guy: The Quest for Stuff.



Joseph will thrive in a family where he can share his humor, wonderful ideas, and spend nurturing one-on-one time. He longs to be part of a family that is excited about sharing his experiences as he is.

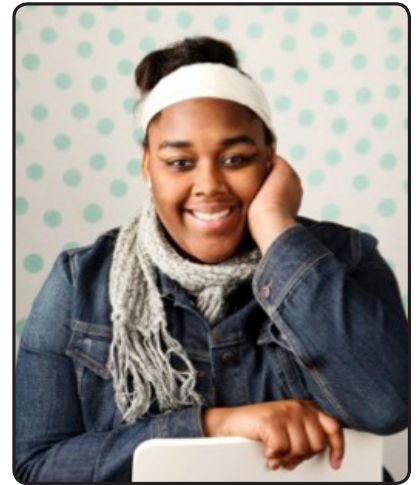
Connections

Joseph has a close relationship with his siblings and needs a family that will support him in maintaining these connections.

Name: Jeronicka

18 years old

Funny, smart and dynamic, Jeronicka has a witty sense of humor and loves to make people laugh. She doesn't hesitate to try new things and is always up for an adventure. Whether it be miniature golf, bowling, batting cages, or horseback riding, Jeronicka wants to try it all. A typical teen, she loves to shop and spend



time with her friends, listen to music, go to the movies, or hang out and talk at a coffee shop (with a blended Hazelnut Mocha). She longs for a family that is positive, interested in spending time with her, and committed to talking and listening to what she has to say. She would like a family that knows how to push her to be her best, but that is also good at showing her that she is appreciated and loved no matter what. Jeronicka wants a long-term family, one that she can visit and call home for the rest of her life.

Connections

Jeronicka needs to maintain relationships with her siblings.

For more information on these children or others on the Heart Gallery please contact Sarah at:

Email: scaldararo@childsaving.org

Phone: 402-504-3673



How to help veterans & kids climb the canyons of trauma

When most people hear the term posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), they envision soldiers who return from war. Indeed, our brave soldiers bring their battles home with them. People often do not recognize that many different groups of people suffer from PTSD, however. Anyone can experience PTSD as a result of chronic trauma, whether it's your cousin, co-worker, or child. Memorial weekend presents the opportunity to engage in conversation about post-traumatic stress disorder with friends, family, and neighbors at holiday gatherings. It's an important topic not only on behalf of our honorable war veterans but also for our precious children.



How PTSD happens

Posttraumatic stress disorder occurs as a result of chronic trauma, including the experience or witnessing of death, violence, or child abuse. When these events occur, the stress hormone cortisol gets released in the brain. This biochemical reaction to such chronic and extreme stress changes the formation of the brain.

Consider this analogy—think of the human brain like the earth and water like trauma. Over time, the release of water over the earth begins to erode the soil into pathways. As pathways form, the water rushes down those pathways again and again until they become canyons. Like the earth, the brain looks physically different than it once did. Therefore, the brain reacts differently as a result. When the brain experiences a trauma trigger, fear becomes an overwhelming irrational emotion. The brain automatically goes into survival mode and the person fights, flees, or freezes in his own way. Such triggers only make the erosion and canyons deeper.

What PTSD looks like

People can't physically see the wounds of those suffering from PTSD. Therefore, many go without help. It's important to identify the symptoms so you can assist others in getting the professional help they need.

Symptoms of PTSD in children (a.k.a developmental trauma/RAD):

- Lack ability to focus to complete tasks and filter nonessential information out
- Physically act out
- Act out in school
- Get poor grades in school
- Have trouble making friends
- Have trouble regulating emotion
- Get “stuck” on things that happened yesterday, last week, etc.
- Have an eating disorder
- Use drugs/alcohol
- Mistrust others
- Compliant, aggressive, or avoidant

Symptoms of PTSD in adults:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| • Guilt | • Insomnia |
| • Anger | • Lack of focus |
| • Poor memory | • Flashbacks |
| • Nightmares | • Hallucinations |
| • Hopelessness | • Addictions |

What you can do

War veterans and children with PTSD typically do not speak up when they need help. Soldiers learn not to ask for help and may avoid talking about their feelings. Children with developmental trauma are in survival mode, do not trust adults, and rely only upon themselves. Both groups need others to recognize when they are struggling. Helpful people include a wife who encourages her veteran husband to seek professional help, a father who recognizes PTSD symptoms and seeks help for his child, or a school counselor who recognizes PTSD in a child and reaches out to her parents.

Neither love nor time will make PTSD go away on its own, unfortunately. The erosion is too deep. Only effective treatment and efficient coping skills can begin to stop the water from further eroding the soil. The sooner people with PTSD get the help they need, the better their chances of recovery. The phrase, “Time heals all wounds,” most definitely doesn't apply to PTSD. If you care about a person who may have PTSD—whether you are a close friend or relative—speak up and assist her in finding professional help. That person probably can't do it for himself and the water will continue to erode. You can make a difference.

MAY 26, 2016 BY INSTITUTE FOR ATTACHMENT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

[How to help veterans & kids climb the canyons of trauma – Institute For Attachment and Child Development](#)

You Are Not Ready To Be a Foster Parent If...

In my job, I often speak to families who are curious about foster parenting. Some of them come to the decision to foster as a way to fulfill what they believe to be a calling in their lives. Others have adult children, are now empty-nesters, and continue to have the desire to parent. There are also many who start the journey of foster parenting after years of infertility, and in hopes that fostering might eventually lead to adoption. All of these reasons are significant. They all carry a deep motivation to help meet the needs of at-risk children in our communities. However, not everyone is right for foster parenting.

To be brutally honest, I cringe a bit when I hear people speak about their desire to be foster parents. I hear them say, "We really want a baby that is ready to be adopted, and does not have any major issues..." I just want to say, "*Bless your heart*". And, I mean it. I really do.

However, there is a great distance between the desire to foster/adopt and the knowledge of what all it will take out of you to do so. And, that's okay. The first step is to ask questions. The second step is to listen. I mean...**really listen** to what professionals, foster parents, and others in the field are saying.

Entering into the world of foster parenting is exciting, but definitely presents a huge learning curve. Because of this, let's take off our rose-colored glasses for a bit, and get real.

Presenting my list: "**You Are Not Ready To Be a Foster Parent If...**"

(Disclaimer: I had some help from other foster/adoptive parents with this one...just want you to know that these opinions are not just my own; although, I agree with all of them. Also, this list pertains to foster parenting in the United States. Other countries/areas of the world may have different laws/expectations of foster families.)

1. **You are not ready to be a foster parent if you do not see the value of the required training.** Most agencies/governments require training in order to be approved as a foster parent. If you believe that "*I've raised children and it is common sense*", I would challenge you to consider that the training is not only required, it is important. Of course, you understand basic child development because you have parented, but you need to understand that the children who are in foster care have experienced trauma, separation from family of origin, and lots of changes. Parenting a foster child IS different than parenting a child you have raised from birth. The training does not stop when your license is approved. You will be asked to participate in on-going training. Even after adoption, you may need to seek additional training, information, and resources. Trust

me on this. My husband and I have both attended various training in order to give us better insight into our kids, and our last adoption occurred in 2013. Adoption really is a lifelong learning process.

2. **If you desire to find a child for your family instead of offering your family to a child, then you are not ready to be a foster parent.** Children who have been brought into the system because of abuse and neglect may not match your expectations of an "ideal" child. Switch your thinking from *finding the right child for your family* to *giving your family to a child*, despite the history and issues the child is facing. It may not feel perfect (because parenting never is), but foster children should never have to live up to the standards of your home that is hopefully free of abuse and neglect.
3. **You are not ready to be a foster parent if you believe that love fixes everything.** Please don't get me wrong. Love does help, and I'm all about love, peace, and rainbows, but if love was enough to undo the trauma, then social workers would be spending less time finding new placements for foster children who have disrupted, and I dare say that abuse and neglect would not be an issue. Pouring love into a child goes a long way, but fostering takes so much more. Love is also not always about feeling good all of the time. Love takes it all...the sweat, the tears, the hard work, and the dirt. It takes tenacity, resourcefulness, humility, understanding, and humor. If it didn't, would it even be called love?
4. **If you have firmly picked a side in nature versus nurture debate, then you are not ready to be a foster parent.** Oh, this one. I've been asked about a gazillion times where I stand on this debate. In my twenties/early thirties and before parenting through adoption came around, I was headstrong about nurture. However, as a parent, I know that nature and nurture are equally important. I also know that children who have experienced trauma, have on-going developmental delays, or come from high-risk situations need extra nurturing, patience, and stability. I cannot tell you the number of foster and adoptive parents who, after having children in their homes, shake their heads with a fervent "YES" that genetics and nature are incredibly important and absolutely impact a child's development. For example, one of my kids does this certain little thing with his mouth, and I recognize it immediately as resembling the same thing his birth mother does. He has never lived a day of life with her, except in the womb.
5. **You are not ready to be a foster parent if you believe that children should not have a connection with their birth parents in some way.** Even if adoption has occurred, you must remember that your children have a history that does not include you. I know that does not feel good, but that is the reality. For my children, their

primary histories only include being in the wombs of their biological mothers. However, these histories are important, and so is the fact that they all have biological parents who love them, think about them and miss them. Regardless of how you feel about your child's biological parents, it is your responsibility to share with your children what you can about their biological families.

6. **If you cannot find it in your heart to forgive the birth parents for what they may have done to the children, then you are not ready to be a foster parent.** Forgiveness is one of those things that we love to soak up, but man, we have a hard time dishing it out. When you think about the drug exposure, the lack of supervision or protection, the physical and sexual abuse, or the chronic neglect of children, the first thing that **does not** come to your mind is *"Let's just forgive them for what they have done."* I know what you are thinking because I have thought the same thing! More than once! However, if we take a step back and remember that the biological parents were also children who had dreams for their futures or who may have histories full of abuse, it is much easier to be empathetic to them. I'm not saying to forget what has happened, but I am saying that you have to get past it, reconcile with it, and choose to reach out in support to the birth parents.
7. **You are not ready to be a foster parent if you do not have a support system.** Fostering can take a lot out of you. With natural childbirth, you have leave time, people bringing dinner over, others offering to clean your house and lots of support. With fostering, you may not have any of these things. I have spoken to so many foster parents who, in their first few months of fostering, were completely worn out. They cannot go on date nights because they cannot just drop the kids off at a family member's or friend's house without prior approval. They may not be approved for leave from work. It can be quite overwhelming. You need to build a support system that includes approved childcare and someone to just let you unload your frustrations on. It is so important.
8. **If your only goal is adoption, and you are not willing to help parents get their kids back, then you are not ready to be a foster parent.** If this is the case, then there are a tremendous amount of children (necessarily, not babies) in need of adoption in the United States. There is a federal law that **mandates** states to work towards reunification with biological families when children are brought into custody. This is not just something that is taken into consideration or viewed as a recommendation. It is expected to be upheld by the courts, caseworkers, and foster parents, and this can be a very difficult pill to swallow. I've been there and

done that. I know how hard it can be, but it is not impossible. Like a lot of things in life, we cannot control how other people respond to circumstances, but we can control how we respond. I just know that if my children were in care, I would certainly want and need foster families who supported me and the goal to reunify with my children. I suspect you probably feel the same way.

9. **You are not ready to be a foster parent if you are not willing to accept ambivalence and lack of gratitude from the children in your care.** Children who end up in foster care are generally not happy about it. Why would they be? Even with the tough situations they are in, they love their parents and want to be home. Because of this, it is completely unrealistic to expect a child in your home to appreciate what you are doing for him or her. The same goes with their feelings *towards* you. Children and youth might be ambivalent about how they feel about you. If you are a "feely" kind of person, it can hurt...a lot...to think that the child you are caring for may never (or, at least not for a long time) show you affection and concern. My advice on this: Don't take it personally.
10. **If you lack patience with people and processes, then you are not ready to be a foster parent.** When asked what the average length of time a child is in care before potentially being available for adoption, I usually let people know that there is no average. Each case and situation are different. The US federal law dictates a length of time (typically between 15 to 22 months) that the birth parents can work towards reunifying with their children. It is also important to remember that there is a ton of paperwork involved. Most caseworkers and court officials are overloaded with cases. Attorneys are also extremely busy. All of these players and their workloads absolutely can affect how quickly or slowly things progress on the case. Also, the biological parents deserve the time to rectify the situation that brought their children into care. Again, if the tables were turned, I suspect we would all feel the same way.
11. **You are not ready to be a foster parent if you are not willing to remember that God loves the biological parents, whose children are in foster care, as much as He loves you.** Ouch, right? It is super easy as a human being to administer our own versions of grace, or what we think God should feel about people who abuse/neglect children, or live a different lifestyle (whatever it is) than us. Jesus entered into places where others did not want to go. He offered care, compassion, and hope to the people who society disregarded. He also gave instruction. When we learn about the details of why a child enters foster care, it is hard not to get angry. However, the passion of Christ was for us all... *everyone.* *Let us not forget that.*

I hope this list informs and inspires you about foster parenting. I certainly do not want it to dissuade anyone from foster parenting, or seeking information about it. However, one must remember that when you choose to become a foster parent, you are choosing to jump into a world of many imperfections. It is not a fair system. Not for anyone.

Biological parents are faced with quite difficult circumstances. They absolutely need our concern and compassion. Foster families will also deal with frustrating situations beyond their control.

For the children and youth who fall into the system, life is anything but fair. At the very least, they deserve foster families who are willing to commit to the goal of reunification or permanency through adoption (if this is what the court decides), who understand the need for children to have a connection to their biological families, and who realize that trauma can present many challenges both in the present and the future.

So, are you ready to be a foster parent? Oh, friend. I hope so.

BARREN TO BLESSED

a little bit of hope, joy, love, grace, life and all things in between

<https://barrentoblessed.com/2016/04/18/you-are-not-ready-to-be-a-foster-parent-if/>

Posted on April 18, 2016

Preparing Your Child for the New School Year

Here in the Northern hemisphere, the last weeks of summer are already upon us, and the new school year is right around the corner. Whether you can't wait till your kids are back in school or dread the more regimented days ahead, there's one thing you can count on: Back to School is always a big transition.

Kids who are starting school for the first time or moving to a new school have to cope with the biggest adjustment, but even moving up a grade means facing more academic demands, a new teacher, and a changing social circle. The good news is that a little bit of preparation and forethought--a very little bit, so you can enjoy these last weeks of summer!--can make those first weeks of school easier for your kids -- and yourself.

Here's how:

1. Make sure your child is familiar with the school.

If she was at the same school last year, great! You only need to talk about any differences this year.

"Now that you're in first grade, you get to play on the big kids playground, and go eat in the lunchroom with the other kids." "Now that you'll be in third grade, you'll have homework every day." "Now that you'll be in middle school, you'll be walking by yourself. We'll need to practice crossing Main Street."

But if this is her first year at this school, then you'll want to take some trips there. Even if there is a formal orientation day just before school begins, start now by

taking a trip to the school. If you can get access to the playground, that's a terrific way to help your child bond with her new school. If not, at least admire it through the fence and get her excited about the slide or climbing structure.

If the building is open, by all means walk in together to check it out. If you're allowed to poke your head in the library, peer into a classroom or two, and use the bathroom (important in making her feel more secure there) you've hit the jackpot. You may not get much further than the office, where you can explain that your child will be starting school in the fall and wanted to see what the school was like, and introduce her to the front office staff. Either way, the more your child sees of the school, the less she'll fret with fear of the unknown, and the more comfortable she'll feel on the first day.

2. Take advantage of any orientation opportunities.

Many schools let new students, especially in the younger grades, come to school for an orientation session before school begins. If the school doesn't have such a program, ask if you and your child can come by to meet the new teacher for a few minutes a day or so before school starts. Teachers are busy preparing their rooms and materials at that time, but any experienced teacher is happy to take a few minutes to meet a new student and make him feel comfortable, since she knows that helps her students settle into the school year.

3. Facilitate your child's bonding with the teacher.

All kids need to feel connected to their teacher to feel comfortable in the classroom. Until they do, they are not ready to learn. Experienced teachers know this, and "collect" their students emotionally at the start of the school year. Obviously, if you can arrange for your child to meet the teacher in advance, by all means do so. But there are lots of ways to help your child feel like he knows even a teacher he's never met.

Once you find out your child's classroom assignment, begin talking about the teacher in fond and familiar terms.

"When you're in Ms. Williams class, I bet she'll be impressed with what a great cleaner-upper you are."

"I'm pretty sure that Ms. Williams reads stories to the kids, she might read your favorite book if we bring it to school."

If you can find a photo of Ms. Williams, by all means put it up on your refrigerator and speak to it fondly

"Ms. Williams, you are a great kindergarten teacher and I just know you and my David are going to love each other!"

If you know other kids who have been in Ms. Williams' class, ask them to tell your child what their favorite thing was about her.

Encourage your child to draw a picture to bring Ms. Williams on the first day, and to pick out a shiny red

apple for her. Note that it doesn't really matter what kind of teacher Ms. Williams is. Your child will feel a fondness for her to which she is likely to respond favorably. Regardless, the feeling of familiarity will help your child bond with her.

If you notice in the first week of school that your child doesn't seem to have connected with his teacher, don't hesitate to immediately contact her. Just explain that your child was excited before school started but doesn't seem to have settled in yet. You're hoping that the teacher can make a special effort to reach out to him so he connects with her and feels at home. Virtually all teachers understand this issue and will pay extra attention to your child during that first week if you make a nice request. My own daughter cried every day at the start of fourth grade until I had a conversation with the teacher; a week later she loved him and couldn't wait to go to school in the morning.

4. Facilitate bonding with the other kids.

Kids are always nervous about their new teacher, but if they know any of the other kids, they'll feel more at ease. If you're new in town, make a special effort to meet other kids in the neighborhood. Often schools are willing to introduce new families to each other, allowing kids to connect with other new students in the weeks before school starts. Even if your child is not new to the school, find out what other kids are in her class and arrange a playdate so she'll feel more connected if she hasn't seen these kids all summer. If you can arrange for your son or daughter to travel to school that first morning with a child he or she knows, even if they aren't in the same classroom, it will ease last minute jitters.

5. Practice saying goodbye.

For many children, the biggest challenge will be saying goodbye to you. Orchestrate small separations to practice saying goodbye, and develop a parting routine, such as a hug and a saying like

"I love you, you love me, have a great day and I'll see you at 3!"

You might give your child a token to hold on to that reminds her of you, such as a cut-out heart with a love note, your scarf, or a small stone you found on the beach together, that she can keep in her pocket while you're apart and give back upon your return. Most kids like to have a picture of the family in their backpacks. Be sure to use the suggestions above for helping her bond with her new teacher; she needs to transfer her attachment focus from you to the teacher if she is to successfully let you go.

6. Ask the school whether you will be able to walk your child into the classroom and hand him off to the teacher.

Find out how long you will be able to stay. If you suspect that your child might have a hard time saying goodbye, by all means speak with the teacher now and make a plan for how to handle the first day. Maybe every morning you will read your child one story and then take her over to the teacher when you say goodbye, so the teacher can comfort and distract her.

Once you have a plan, begin describing to your child what will happen at school. But don't emphasize the goodbye, keep right on going with how fun the day will be:

"Every morning you will pick a book for me to read to you. When we finish the story, we will find Ms. Williams together. We'll give each other a big hug and say our special goodbye. Then Ms. Williams will hold your hand and take you to the block corner where you and Michael can build a tall tower while I go to work. You will have snack, and play outside, and read stories, and have lunch. Every day when I pick you up I will be excited to hear what you built in the block corner that day."

7. Start conversations about the next grade at school or about beginning school.

One good way to do this is to select books relating to that grade. Your librarian can be helpful; some good choices include books by Alan & Janet Ahlberg, Stan & Jan Berenstain, Dianne Blomberg, Marc Brown, Lauren Child, Julie Danneberg, Bonnie Graves, James Howe, Beth Norling, Marisabina Russo, and Amy Schwartz.

Get your kids excited by talking about what they can expect, including snack, playground, reading, computers, singing and art. If you know other children who will be in his class or in the school, be sure to mention that he will see or play with them. Share your own stories about things you loved about school.

Encourage her questions by asking what she thinks school will be like. That will help her to express any fears she hasn't articulated, but that are making her nervous. Emphasize the things you think she'll enjoy but be sure not to minimize her fears; kids can be stricken by worries that adults might find silly, like finding the bathroom at school. Normalize any fears and reassure her that she will have fun, that the school can reach you if necessary, and that your love is always with her even when you aren't. Be sure to end every conversation with "and when school is over I will be there to pick you up and we'll have a special snack while you tell me all about your day" so that every time your child thinks about school, she remembers this reassurance.

8. If a younger sibling will be at home with you

If a younger sibling will be at home with you, be sure your child knows how boring it will be at home and how jealous you and the younger sibling are that you don't get to go to school like a big kid. Explain that every day

after school you will have special time with your big girl to hear all about her day and have a snack together.

9. Get your kids back on an early to bed schedule well before school starts.

Most kids begin staying up late in the summer months. But kids need 9 1/2 to 11 hours of sleep a night, depending on their age. (Teens need a minimum of 9.5; toddlers usually do best with 11). Getting them back on schedule so they're sound asleep by 9pm to be up at 7am for school takes a couple of weeks of gradually moving the bedtime earlier.

Imposing an early bedtime cold turkey the night before school starts results in a child who simply isn't ready for an earlier bedtime, having slept in that morning and with the night-before-school jitters. In that situation, you can expect everyone's anxiety to escalate. So keep an eye on the calendar and start moving bedtime a bit earlier every night by having kids read in bed for an hour before lights out, which is also good for their reading skills.

10. Wake up your child's brain.

You aren't the teacher, and you don't need to start school before the school year starts by pulling out the flashcards or assigning math problems. On the other hand, research shows that kids forget a lot during the summer. (Don't worry, they learn a lot from playing, too.) If your child has been reading through the summer months, congratulations! If not, this is the time to start. Visit the library and let him pick some books he'll enjoy. Introduce the idea that for the rest of the summer everyone in the family (you can include yourself if you like, or you can read to them) will read for an hour every day.

And if your child has assignments to complete, don't wait for him to remember the day before school starts that he was supposed to write a book report. Finish summer work at least a week before school starts so he can relax for the rest of vacation.

11. Let your child choose his own school supplies...

...whether from around your house or from the store, and ready them in his backpack or bag.

12. The day before school starts, talk about exactly what will happen the next day...

...to give your child a comfortable mental movie:

"We'll get up early tomorrow for your first day in Ms. Williams' class. We will drive there together and I will take you into her classroom and introduce you to her. She will make sure you know all the other kids, because they will be your new friends. I will read a book to you and then we will hug and say our special goodbye. Then Ms. Williams will take you to the block corner so you can build a tower. Ms. Williams will show you where the bathroom is, and you can ask her anytime you need to go. There will be games and books and blocks, and she will read to the class. You will get to have fun on the playground with the other kids, and you will get to sit at

a desk like the big kids. And at the end of the day, Ms. Williams will bring you to me on the school steps, and I will be there to pick you up and hear all about your first day at school."

Be alert for signs that your child is worried, and reflect that most kids are a little nervous before the first day of school, but that he will feel right at home in his new classroom soon.

13. Get yourself to bed early the night before school...

...so you can get up early enough to deal calmly with any last minute crises. Be sure kids – including teens! – lay out clothes the night before, that lunches are made, and that everyone gets enough sleep and a healthy breakfast. Plan to arrive at school early so you have time for meaningful goodbyes. And don't forget that "first day of school" photo before you leave home!

14. If your child gets teary when you say goodbye

If your child gets teary when you say goodbye, reassure her that she will be fine and that you can't wait to see her at the end of the day. Use the goodbye routine you've practiced, and then hand her off to her teacher. Don't leave her adrift without a new attachment person, but once you've put her in good hands, don't worry. Experienced teachers know about first day jitters and are used to bonding with their charges. Her tears won't last long. If your child continues to have a hard time separating, be sure to speak with the teacher. Maybe she can give her a special job every morning, or facilitate a friendship with another child who has similar interests.

15. Make sure you're a few minutes early to pick your child up that first week of school.

Not seeing you immediately will exacerbate any anxieties he has and may panic him altogether. If your child cries when you pick him up, don't worry. You're seeing the stress of his having to keep it together all day and be a big boy. Your return signals that it's safe to be his babyself again, take it as a compliment.

This is true for kids of all ages, who may have uncharacteristic meltdowns during the first week of school, or just before school starts. Chalk it up to stress, don't be hard on them, and be sure you're there to talk so they don't have to resort to tantrums. Before you know it everyone will be comfortable in their new routine and not even looking back as they race into school.



North Platte Conference

6 hours of in-service training facilitated by
Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Sandhills Convention Center, Snake/Calamus Room
 2102 S. Jeffers St.
 North Platte, NE

Saturday, July 16, 2016 9:00am-4:30pm

Registration is Required

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

Trauma 101 & Recovery, 9am – 11am, Stephanie Morse, LIMHP, LADC, NCC:

Trauma-informed care is an approach to engaging people with the histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives. Foster & Adoptive parents need education about how trauma affects children in care, what trauma-informed care is, how to create safe environments for persons served, and ways to avoid re-traumatizing practices.

How to Help Your Struggling Child Succeed in School, 11:15am - 12:15pm,

Anna Brummer, CSW:

Parents will learn about both regular and special education options including the Student Assistance Team (SAT) process, how/when a child might qualify for special education and related services in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or qualify for special services in a 504 Plan.

LGBTQ 101, 1:30pm – 3pm, Scott Schneider:

Basic information regarding common LGBTQ vocabulary, common struggles faced by the LGBTQ community, basic understanding of the trans experience and "How to be a Trans Ally".

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS), 3:15pm – 4:45pm,

Felicia Nelsen & Terry Robinson:

RPPS is a provision of the Strengthening Families Act that passed Congress 2014. We will talk about how foster parents can exercise their best judgement as it relates to youths' activities and provide normalcy for youth in foster care. **This is required training for ALL foster parents by December 31, 2016.**

- Lodging, mileage and meals will be reimbursed for Western Foster Parents only who travel more than 60 miles.
- Childcare will not be reimbursed. No children at the workshop.
- Lunch is on your own.

North Platte Conference July 16, 2016

Name(s): _____

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

Mail your registration to:

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive
 Parent Association
 2431 Fairfield St, Suite C
 Lincoln, NE 68521

Email your registration to:

Felicia@nfapa.org

Call with questions:

Toll-free 877-257-0176



WHAT IS INSIDE

If Foster Care is Hard, You're Probably Doing it Right	1
NFAPA Staff / Board of Directors	2
Come join us for our annual Columbus support group potluck!	2
FACES Online Support Group	2
Take Me Out to the BallGame.....	2
Mandatory Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Training	3
Attention Foster Parents!	4
2016 Foster Parent Proclamation	4
NFAPA Support Groups	5
Foster Children and Online Technology:	6
Caregiver Information Form	6
Parenting Forgetful Behavior	7
Waiting for a Forever HOME!	8
How to help veterans & kids climb the canyons of trauma	9
You Are Not Ready To Be a Foster Parent If	10
Preparing Your Child for the New School Year	12
North Platte Conference	15
JOIN NFAPA...your support will enable NFAPA	16



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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, \$ _____