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### A Wintery Night

The sky is dark and the ground is white.  
The world is peaceful on this wintery night.

No one around, not a sound to be heard.  
Not a laugh, not a car, not even a bird.

For a moment, it's just the snow and me.  
I smile inside, I feel so free.

Lyndsey Kuster



**Deadline to apply to be a Peer  
Mentor is February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

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**See back cover for a listing of Local Associations throughout the province.**

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## Greetings from Board Chair

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Happy New Year!

I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Holiday Season and are looking forward as I am to a wonderful 2018!

In the Fall we traveled to Marystown for a training day and in-person Board meeting. Many thanks to Donna Ronan (Key Assets) and Renee Piercey and Natalie Ginn (Waypoints) for travelling from St. John's to share their expertise. The workshop topics were Trauma Informed Care and Coping with Grief and Loss. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend, I hope you got as much out of the sessions as I did - they were terrific. It was also great to meet some of our foster parents in the Marystown area. Our next

training day will be in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in March and we are really looking forward to getting back to the "Big Land".

The Board is gearing up for and looking forward to our Strategic Planning session next month as we look to create a plan that will guide our future activities.

As always, I thank you on behalf of the Board and all the children for whom you provide care. YOU are making a difference in the lives of so many and it is very much appreciated.

With kindest regards,  
Edie

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## Peer Mentoring Program Update

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As you know we had put out the call for applications for Peer Mentors earlier in the Fall and later extended the application deadline to November 15th. We got a number of applications for the program but no applicants from **Labrador, Northern Peninsula or the St. John's/CBS area**. We really don't want to move ahead with the screening and training until we have made every effort to ensure those who may be interested have the opportunity to apply.

We realize that Fall is a busy time for everyone; getting children settled back in school, preparing for Christmas etc. which can make it hard to think about adding something else to your busy schedule. For this reason, we have extended the application deadline to February 15, 2018. We are hoping that life might be a little less hectic now and some of you may reconsider and put in an application, particularly if you live in the areas mentioned above. We especially need foster parents in Labrador to apply because it would be difficult for a foster parent on the island part of the province to be an effective Mentor for our families in Labrador.

If you are not interested in applying or simply don't feel you have the time, it would be great if you could encourage another foster parent who you believe would be a good mentor to apply.

If you have any questions about the program or want an application mailed out, you can call Amy at 754-0213, 1-877-754-0218(toll free) or send her a message at [amykendall@nfd.net](mailto:amykendall@nfd.net). The job description, application and social worker reference are also available on our website at [www.nlffa.ca](http://www.nlffa.ca)

Thanks for taking the time to consider this.

## Executive Director's Report

Happy New Year! I hope that 2018 will be a great year for all of you. I am looking forward to what this year will bring, particularly as we get our Peer Mentoring Program up and running and develop our Strategic Plan.

In November, Amy and I travelled to the Labrador North Coast and had meetings scheduled in Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale and Makkovik. Unfortunately due to the unusual occurrence of the Airport in Goose Bay shutting down for three days, we got stuck in Natuashish and did not get into any of the other communities. This was very disappointing as we only make one trip to the coast each year because costs are so high. We did meet with foster parents in Natuashish and had a fairly good turnout for the meeting and we also met with CSSD staff. Staff were also very supportive in giving us access to their office to make calls, check emails, etc. Our Fall Training Day in Marystown was a great success with 25 foster parents and social workers in attendance. In February, Amy and I will be travelling to the West Coast for meetings in Corner Brook, Stephenville and Port Aux Basques. In March, the Board will be travelling to Goose Bay for our next Training Day.

In December, I met with Minister Lisa Dempster; Derek Bennett, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister; Deputy Minister Donna Ballard and Assistant Deputy Ministers, Rick Healey and Susan Walsh. This meeting provided an opportunity to talk about the work of the Association and to share some of the concerns identified by our foster parents, particularly as it relates to the support families receive. We also spent some time discussing the need for cultural awareness education when indigenous children are placed in non-indigenous homes, and the policy around investigations. We really appreciate the working relationship we have with the Department which gives us the ability to constructively talk about challenges while at the same time recognizing and acknowledging program strengths.

The legislative review of the Children and Youth Care and Protection Act has been ongoing since July 2016. The Department has recently released a document outlining what they heard during their community consultations. Some of our foster parents participated in the consultations and it was great to see a number of the recommendations we made during the consultation process included in this document. You can access a copy of the document "What we Heard" by visiting the What's Happening section of our website at [www.nlffa.ca](http://www.nlffa.ca).

I am very pleased to let you know that the Waypoints Supporting Foster Parents Program continues to receive positive feedback from foster parents who find it very responsive to their needs. The staff are highly skilled and this program is seen as a very valuable resource. Waypoints is currently in the process of submitting a proposal for a further expansion of the program, to include the Bonavista Peninsula and as far west as Glovertown. To date, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development has been very supportive of this program and we are hopeful that the proposal will be approved. We are looking forward to further discussions after the proposal has been submitted.

In this newsletter edition, Amy has written a short article in response to conversations we often have with foster parents about maintaining contact with children when they leave (page 5). I think you will find some of her suggestions helpful. We continue to provide support to foster parents around a variety of needs. In 2017, we provided allegation support to 14 families. We really encourage foster parents to reach out for support when you need it, having someone to listen, validate your feelings and offer suggestions can go a long way to resolving any challenges you may be facing. We are here for you and the support we provide is confidential.

Diane

### Highlights/Ongoing Activities

- Strategic Planning
- Training Days
- Meeting with Minister
- Peer Mentoring Program
- Waypoints Pilot
- School Presentations
- Networking
- Allegation Support
- Personal Support
- Annual Symposium  
June 1-3, 2018

## Foster Families Week -- Contest Winners

### Labrador Straits Academy L'Anse au Loop, NL



Callie Chubbs, Grade 1 student receiving her award from Foster Parent, Marilyn Bride.



Maria Barney, Grade 2 student receiving her award from Foster Parent, Marilyn Bride.



Ashlee Griffin, Grade 4 student receiving her award from Foster Parent, Marilyn Bride.



Front: Ashlee, Maria, Callie, Back: Mrs Thomas, Grade 3/4 teacher, Marilyn and Bim Bridle, Foster Parents, Ms O'Brien, Grade 1/2 teacher.

## Waypoints Supporting Foster Parents Pilot

### Winter Training Schedule

These sessions are **free** for Foster Parents, however **registration is required** by the date(s) indicated. Please confirm your attendance for any session by emailing [monicawhite@waypointsnl.ca](mailto:monicawhite@waypointsnl.ca) or call 722-9377. Refreshments will be provided. Unless otherwise indicated, all training Presenters are Waypoints staff.

**January 27, 2018** - (10:30 am – 12:30 pm) – St. John's \*Register by January 19, 2018

**Bullying – What We Know and What We can Do:** Bullying is a painful reality for many children. Adult intervention is the key to bullying prevention. Parents and caregivers need to be aware of the behaviours and emotional signs that children are being victimized or are using power aggressively. The effects of bullying are immediate and long-lasting, putting our children at risk for a number of physical, social, and mental health problems. Learn ways to effectively intervene and help put an end to bullying.

**February 20, 2018** - (6:30 pm – 8:30 pm) – St. John's \*Register by February 12, 2018

**The Importance of Play:** Play is crucial for a child's development, it is also beneficial for people of all ages. Play can add joy to life, relieve stress, supercharge learning, and connect you to others and the world around you. Play can also make work more productive and pleasurable. This session will offer some examples of play activities and their benefit for all ages.

**February 22, 2018** - (10:30 am – 12:30 pm) – Clarendville \*Register by: February 14, 2018 \*Please note that the exact location of the training will be provided upon registration

**Trauma Informed Care:** Children in care often experience numerous adverse life events which can have lasting effect on their behavior and their way of being in the world. This training will provide an introduction to the impact of traumatic events on the developing brain and discuss trauma informed intervention strategies that are intended to enhance a child's ability to self-regulate.

**March 20, 2018** – (6:30 pm – 8:30 pm) – Metro \*Register by: March 12, 2018

**Anxiety in Children and Teens:** Fears and worries are part of life, and certainly a part of development, but when do parents, foster parents and caregivers begin to worry that it's something more, and what do we do about it? This session will look at what anxiety is, how it might present itself in children and youth and what we can do to help them understand and cope with anxiety. Presenter: Derek Singleton M.S.W., R.S.W. Mental Health Clinician

**March 22, 2018** – (10:30 am – 12:30 pm) – Harbour Grace \*Register by: March 14, 2018  
\*Please note that the exact location of the training will be provided upon registration

**Building Your Trauma Informed Toolbox:** Being in the life space of children and youth in care provides a unique opportunity to help them enhance their coping and begin to heal from their traumatic experiences. This session is designed to help equip foster parents with everyday intervention strategies to use when helping children and youth self-regulate. We will also introduce some language to use when talking to children and youth about how they cope with big emotions in their bodies and mind.

**Please note:** Child Care can be provided for foster parents to attend training. Depending on the travel distance, mileage costs may also be covered. Foster parents are strongly encouraged to participate in training opportunities; ongoing skill development is captured in your annual review.

### **Maintaining Contact After Children Leave ....**

We often get questions from foster parents about how they can maintain contact after children return home. Here are some things to consider that might be helpful. When you become a foster parent, it's typically a time of excitement and hope; excitement over what is to come, and hope for the future. As part of the PRIDE competencies, you learn that working with the child's birth family is necessary and important. While it probably makes sense to you during the training, once you become attached to the child in your care, this may be a little more complicated and even challenging at times.

It is important to remember that the best place for a child is within their own family if there are no safety risks. While it may be difficult, we need to imagine the feeling of loss of control for the birth family as they are told that they are not able to keep their child(ren) safe and that you are now going to care for them. Sometimes there are differences in lifestyle choices and upbringing that can make communication and working together difficult. If children have been placed at risk or harmed in some way by the parent(s), this can also create another layer of complication and emotion. All of these factors can impact our relationship with, and our ability to communicate with the child's family.

The best way to maintain a relationship with a child or children after they return home is to nurture the relationship with the birth family. They need to feel respected and that you "have their back". Clearly, this doesn't mean that you will look the other way when something must be reported to the Department. Rather, it's that you provide a non-judgemental ear when they need it, and you support their relationship with their child(ren). Once children return home, some foster families offer to provide respite or babysitting. This helps to maintain contact while supporting the birth family. Others reach out on holidays and special occasions.

It is important to validate the difficult circumstances of the parents situation, and show genuine concern for their well-being. Including the birth parents in any parenting decisions that you can also goes a long way to building the relationship. Foster parents who do this demonstrate a very good understanding of their role as well as respect for the family. This is part of what it means to be working together as a team with the social worker and the family. You are the cheer leader, supporter, and advocate. We are asking you to do the near impossible here - to love, support and care for the child "as if" they were your own and then let them go and deal with your grief and loss when they leave. If we think of the fostering experience as fostering and supporting the family unit, rather than just the child, this may help us a little with this.

At times, you may not understand decisions made by the Department. Sometimes, you may think that you can provide a better life for the child. We need to be aware of these thoughts (being human and all), and recognize that while it may be a different life than the one that we would provide for the child, and while we may not always agree with the birth parents decisions or parenting style; they are the parents. We often hear foster parents refer to the children in their care as "my kids". While it is heartwarming that the children have become a welcome addition to the family and are considered like "one of your own", it's important not to lose sight of the big picture. They are someone else's children; you are providing the very best of care for them until a time that they are able to be cared for by their own family again or other permanent plans are made.

While many foster parents would like continued contact with the children after they return home, this is not always possible. For some birth families, they may have had their own experiences in care which can impact the contact and relationship that they have with you and your family. For others, once they have their children returned to them, they may see this as a fresh start and want to move on. This is not necessarily a bad thing. It is also not a reflection on you or the relationship with you and your family. Depending on the relationship that has been established, there may be circumstances where families reach out in the future. By offering the support during the time in care, as well as when the child is returning home, the door will be left open for them to reach out later.

If this is an area where you are experiencing some challenges, we encourage you to call the office for a chat.

Amy

## Canadian Foster Families Association (CFFA) Calendar Art Contest

Our province has been asked to submit one piece of art to represent our province in the 2019 Canadian Foster Families Association Calendar- a calendar that will be displayed in homes all across Canada! This contest is to select the art from Newfoundland & Labrador that will be included in the calendar. All children and youth are encouraged to enter! Here are the guidelines:

- The theme of the artwork is FAMILY. (Please feel free to include anything that reflects our unique, special province as well)
- This contest is open to all children and youth up to age 18.
- Artwork must be on letter size paper measuring 8.5 by 11 inches. Entries must be in colour.
- A caption or words may be included in your entry.
- Please print your name, address, and phone number on the back of your art

**The deadline to submit entries is April 1, 2018.** Artwork can be mailed to:

Nicole Shuglo  
CFFA Director  
c/o Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association  
Suite 105, 21 Pippy Place  
St. John's, NL

**The winning artist will have their picture included in the Calendar and will receive 2 calendars.**



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## Regional Reports

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### Central Region

#### Exploits Central Foster Families Association

Happy New Year Everyone! We would like to welcome Marcia Drover as the new director on the Provincial Board representing our region. I know you will love your time on the Board and learn so much.

Our Local will be planning a Valentines get together and will get in contact with all our families when all details are finalized. Please make a special effort to attend and take the opportunity to meet with other foster families in our area. It is also really nice for the children to get together with others who are in care and share a similar experience. This can help them feel less isolated.

I would like to wish you all the best in 2018! We all look forward to a highly successful, healthy and productive year.

Coralee Roberts, Chair

### Eastern Region

#### Burin Peninsula Foster Families Association

Well, it's the short cold days of winter and the holidays are over and everyone is settling back into their routines. Here on the Burin Peninsula, thankfully, the weather has been kind and it was easy for everyone to be out and about during the holidays.

In November, we had a very successful training day organized by our Provincial Association who were in the area for a Board meeting as well. We had a great turnout with 26 people in attendance. It is always great to have a little social time along with some great information sessions. In December, we had our annual Breakfast with Santa which was a joyous time to get everyone in the holiday spirit.

Here's wishing that the New Year treats everyone well and that happiness is as plentiful as the snowflakes.

Melanie Smith, Chair

#### Bay Roberts/Harbour Grace Foster Families Association

Happy New Year from our Association. We wish everyone a safe and healthy 2018. We have had a quiet fall and winter within our association and are hoping to get more foster parents involved in our group and in helping to plan and participate in events for our children in care. If anyone has any suggestions for future events or would like to become involved please contact one of our executive members - Kim, Debbie Sellars or Anne Marie Tilley. I can be contacted via email at [kimnewman@hotmail.ca](mailto:kimnewman@hotmail.ca) or at my home number 589-2460.

It is crucial that we have more foster parents involved in our group if we hope to continue into the future and to be able to offer activities for our children. It is also a great way to get to know the other foster parents within our area and to spend some time with these awesome families!

Kim Newman, Chair

## **Bonavista Foster Families Association**

On January 23, 2018, we had our first Local meeting in Bonavista. We have recently branched off from the Clarendville area and decided that due to a high number of foster families in our region, distance and other factors that it would be beneficial for our area to try and form our own local committee.

I am pleased to announce that our first meeting was held at the CSSD building in Bonavista and there were seven foster parents in attendance and two social workers. Social Worker Laurie Anne Connors ran the meeting and discussed forming our local, the purpose of a local, moving forward, etc. The meeting was very informative, we talked about the upcoming Waypoints training event in Clarendville in February and everyone is encouraged to attend. We also discussed the types of training we would like to see in our area moving forward and Social Workers agreed to try and help coordinate this training. Everyone agreed it would be beneficial to the foster parents to have trainers come to Bonavista to put off events. The training that was discussed included an information session on drugs which could potentially be done by the RCMP, car seat training, FASD workshop, suicide intervention, CPR/First Aid, etc.

At our next meeting we will plan an event for the foster families in the area. We also discussed issues/concerns around funding, kids in care and policies and procedures with the social workers who were present. Everyone at the meeting discussed the upcoming Provincial Symposium and how beneficial it is for any foster parent to attend. We also talked about how we can build resources and make friends through fostering.

Those in attendance agreed that we will continue to meet and encourage others to attend every 6-8 weeks. The next meeting is planned for February 26, 2018 at which point we will elect a chair, vice chair and treasurer.

The meeting ran smoothly, the discussion was positive and it appeared that people are excited to form our own Local Association. We were very pleased with the turnout for the first meeting. I am excited to see what the future holds for our Local!

Melvina Elliott, Director

## **Western Region**

### **Deer Lake-Pasadena Foster Families Association**

Happy New Year to everyone.

I was excited to see the snow melting in mid-January but so sad to see the devastation it has created in our communities. I hope everyone is safe and the New Year has brought you all happiness and good health.

Our Local was scheduled to have a meeting in November and we had a guest speaker coming to speak about Autism. Unfortunately the weather stopped that meeting from taking place. We are trying to reschedule and will be in touch with our foster parents once the time is confirmed. We encourage everyone to come out to the meetings because they are very informative.

We will also be having an election for a new Chair and Treasurer at our next meeting. This is an opportunity to take a leadership role with our local and become a member of the Executive. If you are not interested but know someone else who would do a good job with this, you should encourage them to put their name forward

Hope to see everyone at our next meeting.

Vickie McCarthy, Chair

### **Corner Brook-Bay of Islands Foster Families Association**

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and New Year!

We have had a few things on the go for the foster families in this area. In October we had, Victoria Jones, Executive Director, Violence Prevention West in to talk to our foster parents about domestic violence and how it affects families. It was a very informative evening. Every foster parent there was very pleased with her presentation and felt it was very beneficial to them.

In December, we had our Christmas party. It was very well attended by the families in our area. Special thanks to; the Living Water Band for providing the entertainment, Academy Canada for allowing us to use their cafeteria, and to the parents who provided the food. The children had a wonderful time. They made ornaments and Santa came to visit. It was a lovely day!!

We have some presentations planned for January and February. I hope that we can see some new faces attend these training sessions as it will be reflected in your annual review. If you have topics of interest that you would like a presentation on, feel free to contact me. Diane and Amy will be in Corner Brook for a meeting at 7pm on Monday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. Hope to see many of you there.

Stephanie Lowe, Chair

### **Stephenville Foster Families Association**

Happy New Year everyone from the Stephenville Foster Families Association. Our local has become much more active throughout the Fall and I want to thank all our foster parents who have come out to meetings and social events.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, we had a swimming/pizza party to celebrate Foster Families Week. We had 50+ people show up for our swim including foster parents, children and CSSD staff. A great time was had by all. On October 25<sup>th</sup>, we held a local meeting with a guest presenter, Diane Alexander, who did car seat safety training. This was an awesome session because there was lots of questions and Diane provided everyone with the information they need to ensure safety for children of all ages. We had 11 foster parents in attendance as well as Kim Delaney, our social worker liaison. Following the presentation, Kim answered lots of CSSD related questions from foster parent and those she couldn't answer, she took back to get the answers. This was a great meeting.

On November 26<sup>th</sup>, we had our 2nd annual Christmas party with 16 foster families attending. We had pizza and cake, lots of treats donated by our foster parents and Santa came with presents for everyone. I want to thank Jelissa White who took pictures of the kids with Santa. Jelissa is the daughter of one of our foster parents. Thank You so much Jelissa! At our meeting on November 29<sup>th</sup>, we had 8 foster parents come out which was a great turnout. Carla Pearce did a presentation on self care and everyone enjoyed the session. Kim Delaney again conducted the rest of the meeting and there was some good discussion.

I want to thank our foster parents for coming out to our local meetings. If a foster parent has any questions about our meetings I can be contacted at 709-643-5206 or by email at [debbieoneil@hotmail.com](mailto:debbieoneil@hotmail.com)

Debbie O'Neil, Director

## Labrador Region

### Hopedale Foster Families Association

Greetings and a Happy New Year from the north coast of Labrador! Hoping that everyone had a warm and enjoyable Christmas season.

To start off the New Year, the people of Hopedale were blessed with a generous donation of winter hats and mittens from the Women's Group of St John the Baptist Church in Chapel Arm and St Andrews Church in Little Harbour. As wind chills have been dipping below -40C this warm act of kindness is very much appreciated! (And thanks to Air Borealis for their support in shipping this gift to our community free of charge)!

My wish for 2018 is that our local foster parents may gather together to support one another and learn from each other! In early February, our local will be welcoming Nunatsiavut Sexual Violence Prevention & Outreach Counselor Laura Moores to deliver a presentation on 'Kids and Consent: How to have a conversation about sex and bodily consent to kids of all ages.' We are also planning for upcoming information sessions on 'Autism' and 'Self-Care.'

Hopefully 2018 will bring with it many opportunities for fellowship and growing together as we care for ourselves and others. Wishing everyone the best in 2018! Kuviasugitsi jâri nutâmi!

Nicole Shuglo, Co-chair

### Lake Melville Foster Families Association

Hello from Lake Melville, I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year.

Not much happening in this neck of the woods. We haven't had any meetings for a while now but I'm hoping to get our meetings started up again in the very near future. This time of the year when everyone is getting packed away from Christmas and the temperatures being extremely cold no one wants to do anything. We have to keep tugging and working hard at making our meetings happen.

Until next time stay safe!!

Petrina Smith, Chair

### Labrador West Foster Families Association

The Labrador West Local Association ended off 2017 with a blast...of partying for our families.

In October, our local social workers hosted a dress up Halloween party for our families. It was greatly attended and everyone looked great all dressed in their costumes....even the parents! In December, our Local hosted a family Christmas party with treats, bouncy castles and a visit from Santa. The kids loved it and it was an excellent opportunity to parents to chat throughout. 2018 planning is underway with a meeting coming up in the first quarter. Happy New Year!

I have decided to step down from the Provincial Board, but I will be remaining involved with our Local. If there are any foster parents (Labrador West, Lake Melville areas) interested in the position on the Board, please contact Diane Molloy at the provincial office for details. 1-877-754-0218 or [dianemolloy@nfld.net](mailto:dianemolloy@nfld.net).

Eunice Earle, Chair

## Grenfell Region

### Grenfell Island

Happy New Year from Grenfell area, I hope you all had a great Christmas with family and friends. In October, we had a great Halloween potluck party. All the kids came in their best costumes looking so great and they all went home with treat bags prepared by CSSD staff. We had a great turnout of 67 in attendance; another wonderful evening together.

We had a great potluck Christmas party on December 4<sup>th</sup> with another awesome turnout of 67 in attendance, all the kids went home with treat bags. It was a great night for all.

We hope you all have a safe and happy winter.

Shirley Fowler, Director

## St. John's Region

### St. John's/CBS Foster Families Association

In my last report, I had put out a call for a few good men and women to strike a committee in an effort to establish a Local Association here in our region. Unfortunately no one took up the challenge.

In an effort to have a discussion about establishing a Local, Diane Molloy, Executive Director of the Provincial Association and I will be planning a meeting over the next couple of months with foster parents. Diane will share some of the work the Association has been doing and we will also engage in a discussion about the benefits of being involved in a Local. This will also be an opportunity to raise any concerns/issues you may have. Once the date has been confirmed for the meeting, you will receive notification by mail.

I really encourage you to come out to the meeting to connect with other foster parents and discuss ways we can support each other. I am really looking forward to seeing you!

Edie Newton, Chair

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**June 1-3, 2018**

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR!**

Our Annual Symposium will be held at the  
Ramada Hotel in St. John's.

Your registration package will arrive in the mail in March.  
We encourage foster parents and social workers to attend.

Without hesitation, we can promise you a wonderful weekend of training, team building and fun. This is something you really should do for yourself! Ask anyone you know who has attended.

**Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.**

**Maya Angelou**

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## Foster Parents Share Experiences

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Foster Parents Share Experiences is a regular feature in our newsletter. It would be great if Foster Parents would write a story of their experiences providing care for children and forward it to the office. We want to have a ready supply of stories for future newsletters. It is realized that not everyone is comfortable writing about themselves but everyone has a story to tell. If you would like to share your experiences but need help putting it on paper, you can call the office and we will give you a hand.

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### *...when a child leaves our home it always causes a lot of emotions in us ...*

We started fostering in 2010 when I was 49 years old, our children were grown and on their own. It took two years for us to become foster parents, we thought we would never get approved because it seemed to take so long. I was doing respite with children in foster care for four years and decided I might like to start fostering myself.

In February of 2010 we got the call to take our first child. We were so excited we could barely contain ourselves. On Friday, three social workers brought this beautiful young teenager to us. We were very nervous and anxious but not to worry this child knew all the ropes of fostering having being in care for years. In another couple of months, we got the second call to take another child; of course we said yes. This caused a bit of friction in the household but when you stick with it, it can be overcome. Then in September we got a call to take a baby, oh the joy, excitement and happiness of having a baby in the house again. We had this child for four years and then he got adopted. The devastation of the child leaving but the excitement of him getting a wonderful Mom and Dad brought us overwhelming feelings we can't begin to describe. It's been four years and we still find it hard to speak his name without crying but the adopted parents let us stay in the child's life for which we will be forever grateful.

In the years we have been fostering we have had lots of children come into our home. Some have stayed till they were out of care, others went back home to their parents, others have went back with grandparents and some to other places for various reasons. We stay in contact with most of them but when a child leaves our home it always causes a lot of emotions in us; but we are happy we played a part in their lives and hoped we have made a difference for them.

Then in 2014 we got a call to take a child who had autism, of course we said yes, with not a clue what autism was. We still have this child living with us and we are so glad we said yes when we got that call. This journey has been hectic, funny, entertaining, crazy and unpredictable with lots of sleepless nights. What a treasure this child is. This child is completely different from any child we have ever had. The love this child gives to us is so unconditional and our home will never be the same again. The child had been in multiple homes and they had never worked out and when we got the child we thought we might not be able to do it either but we have stuck with her and the rewards are endless for both me and the child. The difference in the child because we have stuck to routine and consistency is remarkable, so you should never easily give up on a child.

When everyone works together as a team it makes for a better outcome. We have had good social workers and most of the parents of the children have worked with me really well. My wish would be that all the children could go back home to their parents and have a wonderful good full life.

D.S.

Thank you D for sharing your story!

**The content of your character is your choice.  
Day by day, what you choose, what you think and what you do is who you become**

**Heraclitus**

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### Voices of Youth

Voices of Youth is a regular feature. This space will be available for the printing of poetry, drawings, short stories, or life experiences of young people. If submitting a drawing, please ensure you use a dark pencil. For reasons of confidentiality, the full names of those who submit will not be printed unless the individual is over 16 and has provided their consent.

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**Theresa, thanks for sharing your artwork. You are very talented!**

**Artwork by Theresa, age 12**



## Teen Corner

### Eczema

Rick was exhausted. Increased stress at school, home, and work had made him extremely tired. It also made his skin act up. Not again, he thought — not another eczema flare-up! Eczema is a common skin problem. If you have eczema or think you might have it, here's how to deal with it.

#### Some Skin Facts

Your skin — which protects your organs, muscles, and bones and regulates your body temperature — can run into plenty of trouble, like acne when pores become clogged. But zits aren't the only skin problem you may encounter. Have you ever tried a new type of soap and developed an itchy rash? That reaction may just be eczema in action.

**What Is Eczema?** Eczema (pronounced: EK-zeh-ma) is a group of skin conditions that cause skin to become red, irritated, itchy, and sometimes develop small, fluid-filled bumps that become moist and ooze.

There are many forms of eczema, but atopic (pronounced: ay-TOP-ik) eczema is one of the most common and severe. Doctors don't know exactly what causes atopic eczema, also called atopic dermatitis (pronounced: der-muh-TIE-tis), but they think it could be a difference in the way a person's immune system reacts to things. Skin allergies may be involved in some forms of eczema.

If you have eczema, you're probably not the only person you know who has it. Eczema isn't contagious like a cold, but most people with eczema have family members with the condition. Researchers think it's inherited or passed through the genes. In general, eczema is fairly common — about 1 in 10 people in the world will be affected by it at some point in their lives.

People with eczema also may have asthma and certain allergies, such as hay fever. For some, food allergies (such as allergies to cow's milk, soy, eggs, fish, or wheat) may bring on or worsen eczema. Allergies to animal dander, dust, and other things in the environment can also trigger the condition in some people.

**Signs and Symptoms.** It can be difficult to avoid all the triggers, or irritants, that may cause or worsen eczema flare-ups. In many people, the itchy patches of eczema usually appear where the elbow bends; on the backs of the knees, ankles, and wrists; and on the face, neck, and upper chest — although any part of the body can be affected.



In an eczema flare-up, skin may feel hot and itchy at first. Then, if the person scratches, the skin may become red, inflamed, or blistered. Some people who have eczema scratch their skin so much it becomes almost leathery in texture. Others find that their skin becomes extremely dry and scaly. Even though many people have eczema, the symptoms can vary quite a bit from person to person.

Now!! Itching stop

**What Do Doctors Do?** If you think you have eczema, your best bet is to visit your doctor, who may refer you to a dermatologist (a doctor who specializes in treating skin). Diagnosing atopic eczema can be difficult because it may be confused with other skin conditions. For example, eczema can easily be confused with a skin condition called contact dermatitis, which happens when the skin comes in contact with an irritating substance, like the perfume in a certain detergent.

In addition to a physical examination, a doctor will take your medical history by asking about any concerns and symptoms you have, your past health, your family's health, any medications you're taking, any allergies you may have, and other issues.

Your doctor can also help identify things in your environment that may be contributing to your skin irritation. For example, if you started using a new shower gel or body lotion before the symptoms appeared, mention this to your doctor because a substance in the cream or lotion might be irritating your skin. Emotional stress can also lead to eczema flare-ups, so your doctor might also ask you about any stress you're feeling at home, school, or work.

If you're diagnosed with eczema, your doctor might:

- prescribe medications to soothe the redness and irritation, such as creams or ointments that contain corticosteroids, or antihistamine pills.
- recommend other medications to take internally if the eczema is really bad or you get it a lot.

For some people with severe eczema, ultraviolet light therapy can help clear up the condition. Newer medicines that change the way the skin's immune system reacts also may help. If eczema doesn't respond to normal treatment, your doctor might do allergy testing to see if something else is triggering the condition, especially if you have asthma or seasonal allergies.

If you're tested for food allergies, you may be given certain foods (such as eggs, milk, soy, or nuts) and observed to see if the food causes an eczema flare-up. Food allergy testing also can be done by pricking the skin with an extract of the food substance and observing the reaction. But sometimes allergy testing can be misleading because someone may have an allergic reaction to a food that is not responsible for the eczema flare-up. If you're tested for allergy to dyes or fragrances, a patch of the substance will be placed against your skin and you'll be monitored to see if skin irritation develops.

**Can I Prevent Eczema?** Eczema can't be cured, but you can do plenty of things to prevent a flare-up. For facial eczema, wash gently with a nondrying facial cleanser or soap substitute, and use facial moisturizers, makeup, and sunscreens that say noncomedogenic/oil-free .

In addition, these tips may help:

- **Avoid substances that stress your skin.** Besides your known triggers, some things you may want to avoid include household cleaners, drying soaps, detergents, and scented lotions.
- **Try to avoid hot water.** Too much exposure to hot water or overuse of soaps or cleansers can dry out your skin, so take short warm — not hot — showers and baths and wear gloves if your hands will be in water for long periods of time. Be sure to gently and thoroughly pat your skin dry, as rubbing with a coarse towel will irritate the eczema. Also, it isn't the water that causes your skin to react; it's the water evaporating that's not captured in the skin.
- **Say yes to cotton.** Clothes made of scratchy fabric like wool can irritate your skin. Soft cotton clothes are a better bet.
- **Moisturize!** A fragrance-free moisturizer such as petroleum jelly will prevent your skin from becoming irritated and cracked.
- **Don't scratch that itch.** Even though it's difficult to resist, scratching your itch can worsen eczema and make it more difficult for the skin to heal because you can break the skin and bacteria can get in, causing an infection.
- **Keep your cool.** Sudden changes in temperature, sweating, and becoming overheated may cause your eczema to kick in.
- **Take your meds.** Follow your doctor's or dermatologist's directions and take your medication as directed.
- **Unwind.** Stress can aggravate eczema, so try to relax.



## Dealing With Eczema

There's good news if you have eczema — it usually clears up before the age of 25. Until then, you can learn to tune in to what triggers eczema and manage the condition. For example, if you have eczema and can't wear certain types of makeup, your dermatologist may be able to recommend some brands that are less likely to irritate your skin.

Your self-esteem doesn't have to suffer just because you have eczema, and neither does your social life! Getting involved in your school and extracurricular activities can be a great way to get your mind off the itch. If certain activities aggravate your eczema, such as playing soccer in the grass, suggest activities to your friends that won't harm your skin. Even if sweat tends to aggravate your skin, it's still a good idea to exercise. Exercise is a great way to blow off stress — just try walking, bike riding, swimming, or another sport that keeps your skin cool and dry while you work out.

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

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## 5 Ways to (Respectfully) Disagree

It's easier to agree than disagree. But we can learn a lot from conversations where we don't see eye to eye — if we can listen and talk rationally, that is. Unfortunately, many of us either shy away completely from disagreements or lose it when things don't go our way. These 5 tips can help keep disagreements constructive — whether you're talking to a parent, friend, or anyone else:

**Don't make it personal.** If you get upset, it can help to remember you're mad at the idea or concept your parent (or friend, coach, etc.) is raising, not the person.

**Avoid putting down the other person's ideas and beliefs.** If you've ever been on the receiving end of someone's tirade or put-downs, you know how important it is to use respectful language and behavior. So instead of saying what you might be thinking ("That's a stupid idea!"), try: "I don't agree, and here's why." Resist the temptation to yell, use sarcasm, or make derogatory comments. You'll have a much better chance of getting your point across.

**Use "I" statements to communicate how you feel, what you think, and what you want or need.** Using "you" statements can sound argumentative. For example, telling your mom or dad, "You always remind me about my chores on Wednesdays when you know I have a lot of homework" has a very different tone from "I'm feeling pressured because I have a lot of homework tonight. Can I do those chores tomorrow?"

**Listen to the other point of view.** Being a good listener is a way of showing that you respect and understand the other person's perspective. That makes it more likely he or she will do the same for you. When the other person is talking, try to stop yourself from thinking about why you disagree or what you'll say next. Instead, focus on what's being said. When it's your turn to talk, repeat any key points the other person made to show you listened and heard what was said. Then calmly present your case and why you disagree.

**Stay calm.** This is the most important thing you can do to keep a conversation on track. Of course, it's a huge challenge to stay calm and rational when you feel angry or passionate about something — especially if the person you're talking to gets heated. You may need to be the mature one who manages the conversation, even if the other person is a parent or someone who should know better.

Respect goes beyond difficult conversations, of course. Being helpful and considerate toward family members, teachers, or coaches in our everyday actions helps all of us (again, parents included!) establish a foundation for those times when we might disagree.

Source: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

# Children's Pages

## Pear Hedgehog

**Ingredients:** 1/4 cup slivered almonds, 1/2 (15 ounce) can pear halves (drained), 12 raisins

**Directions:**

- stick slivered almonds all over pear halves so they resemble spikes, leaving the pointy side of the pear empty for the face.
- stick 2 raisins in the face part for eyes and one on the front for the nose.



## Hand Print Polar Bear

**What you need:** colored construction paper, white paint, black marker



**Directions:**

- start by making a white hand print with the fingers at the bottom of the paper.
- under the thumb, place another thumb print. This creates the head.
- create the ears by placing two tiny fingerprints made with the pinky finger on top of the thumb areas.
- make a fingerprint tail on the edge of the palm - opposite the thumb.
- when it dries, draw on bear claws and facial features.

# ANIMALS

### Riddles

**Q:** What do the numbers 11, 69, and 88 all have in common? **A:** They read the same right side up and upside down.

**Q:** The more you take, the more you leave behind. What are they? **A:** Footprints.

**Q:** What two keys can't open any door? **A:** A monkey and a donkey.

**Q:** What invention lets you look right through a wall? **A:** A window.

### Tongue Twister

If two witches were watching two watches:  
which witch would watch which watch?

G E S U O M H N W R B W C W L  
X D A Q H J X O O M L T H W J  
B W S H N L H T P I C R A W M  
Y W M E F F A R I G L K D O G  
R C K R R R S Y K T H I P P O  
J T O W I E F B X X L Q R J E  
D R O T A G I L L A E B Z H X  
T H N X P I C L F C R V Z S Z  
V N H R S T H E T D R I B I Q  
N Z A C S T Y X L W I N H F L  
W U Q H K L J A E A U F A H F  
V Q Q D P O Y K N V Q Z A T V  
X M T L Q E T J Y E S Y R C H  
T A C K Q C L K M O N K E Y R  
P T S H W L Y E T D R A H T L

- |          |          |           |       |
|----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| CAT      | HIPPO    | MOUSE     | TIGER |
| DOG      | SQUIRREL | MONKEY    |       |
| BIRD     | GIRAFFE  | ALLIGATOR |       |
| ELEPHANT | FISH     | LION      |       |

**Would you like to win a prize? Color this page to enter our Winter Coloring Contest. Four prizes will be awarded. Send your picture to Suite 105, 21 Pippy Place, St. John's, NL, A1B 3X2 before February 28, 2018. Copy the page and share it with a friend!**



Name:	_____	Address:	_____
Town:	_____	Province:	_____
Postal Code:	_____	Telephone:	_____
Age:	_____		

## Educational Section

### What is Bullying?

Many children have a good idea of what bullying is because they see it every day! Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending themselves. So, everyone needs to get involved to help stop it.

Bullying is wrong! It is behaviour that makes the person being bullied feel afraid or uncomfortable. There are many ways that young people bully each other, even if they don't realize it at the time. Some of these include:

- Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
- Spreading bad rumours about people
- Keeping certain people out of a group
- Teasing people in a mean way
- Getting certain people to "gang up" on others

The four most common types of bullying are:

**Verbal bullying** - name-calling, sarcasm, teasing, spreading rumours, threatening, making negative references to one's culture, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, unwanted sexual comments.

**Social Bullying** - mobbing, scapegoating, excluding others from a group, humiliating others with public gestures or graffiti intended to put others down.

**Physical Bullying** - hitting, poking, pinching, chasing, shoving, coercing, destroying or stealing belongings, unwanted sexual touching.

**Cyber Bullying** - using the internet or text messaging to intimidate, put-down, spread rumours or make fun of someone.

Bullying makes people upset. It can make children feel lonely, unhappy and frightened. It can make them feel unsafe and think there must be something wrong with them. Children can lose confidence and may not want to go to school anymore. It may even make them sick. Some people think bullying is just part of growing up and a way for young people to learn to stick up for themselves. But bullying can have long-term physical and psychological consequences. Some of these include:

- Withdrawal from family and school activities, wanting to be left alone.
- Shyness
- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Panic Attacks
- Not being able to sleep
- Sleeping too much
- Being exhausted
- Nightmares

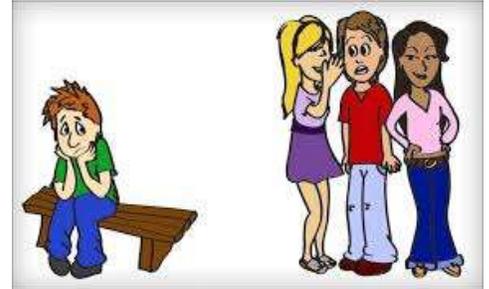


If bullying isn't stopped, it also hurts the bystanders, as well as the person who bullies others. Bystanders are afraid they could be the next victim. Even if they feel badly for the person being bullied, they avoid getting involved in order to protect themselves or because they aren't sure what to do.

Children who learn they can get away with violence and aggression continue to do so in adulthood. They have a higher chance of getting involved in dating aggression, sexual harassment and criminal behaviour later in life.

### **Bullying can have an effect on learning**

Stress and anxiety caused by bullying and harassment can make it more difficult for kids to learn. It can cause difficulty in concentration and decrease their ability to focus, which affects their ability to remember things they have learned.



### **Bullying can lead to more serious concerns**

Bullying is painful and humiliating, and kids who are bullied feel embarrassed, battered and shamed. If the pain is not relieved, bullying can even lead to consideration of suicide or violent behaviour.

### **How common is bullying?**

Approximately one in 10 children have bullied others and as many as 25% of children in grades four to six have been bullied. A 2004 study published in the medical Journal of Pediatrics found that about one in seven Canadian children aged 11 to 16 are victims of bullying. Studies have found bullying occurs once every seven minutes on the playground and once every 25 minutes in the classroom. In the majority of cases, bullying stops within 10 seconds when peers intervene, or do not support the bullying behaviour.

Students are most vulnerable to bullying during transitions from elementary to junior high school, and from junior to senior high school. There is a correlation between increased supervision and decreased bullying. Bullies stop when adults are around.

### **What are the myths about bullying?**

**Myth #1** - "Children have got to learn to stand up for themselves."

Reality - Children who get up the courage to complain about being bullied are saying they've tried and can't cope with the situation on their own. Treat their complaints as a call for help. In addition to offering support, it can be helpful to provide children with problem solving and assertiveness training to assist them in dealing with difficult situations.

**Myth #2** - "Children should hit back - only harder."

Reality - This could cause serious harm. People who bully are often bigger and more powerful than their victims. This also gives children the idea that violence is a legitimate way to solve problems. Children learn how to bully by watching adults use their power for aggression. Adults have the opportunity to set a good example by teaching children how to solve problems by using their power in appropriate ways.

**Myth #3** - "It builds character."

Reality - Children who are bullied repeatedly, have low self-esteem and do not trust others. Bullying damages a person's self-concept.



**Myth #4** - "Sticks and stones can break your bones but words can never hurt you."

Reality - Scars left by name-calling can last a lifetime.

**Myth #5** - "That's not bullying. They're just teasing."

Reality - Vicious taunting hurts and should be stopped.

**Myth #6** - "There have always been bullies and there always will be."

Reality - By working together as parents, teachers and students we have the power to change things and create a better future for our children. As a leading expert, Shelley Hymel, says, "It takes a whole nation to change a culture". Let's work together to change attitudes about bullying. After all, bullying is not a discipline issue - it is a teaching moment.

**Myth #7** - "Kids will be kids."

Reality - Bullying is a learned behaviour. Children may be imitating aggressive behaviour they have seen on television, in movies or at home. Research shows that 93% of video games reward violent behaviour. Additional findings show that 25% of boys aged 12 to 17 regularly visit gore and hate internet sites, but that media literacy classes decreased the boys' viewing of violence, as well as their acts of violence in the playground. It is important for adults to discuss violence in the media with youth, so they can learn how to keep it in context. There is a need to focus on changing attitudes toward violence.

Source: Government of Alberta

### Canadian Bullying Statistics

- Canada has the 9th highest rate of bullying in the 13-years-olds category on a scale of 35 countries.
- At least 1 in 3 adolescent students in Canada have reported being bullied recently.
- Among adult Canadians, 38% of males and 30% of females reported having experienced occasional or frequent bullying during their school years.
- 47% of Canadian parents report having a child victim of bullying.
- Any participation in bullying increases risk of suicidal ideas in youth.
- The rate of discrimination experienced among students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-identified, Two-Spirited, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) is three times higher than heterosexual youth.
- Girls are more likely to be bullied on the Internet than boys.
- 7% of adult Internet users in Canada, age 18 years and older, self-reported having been a victim of cyber-bullying at some point in their life.
- The most common form of cyber-bullying involved receiving threatening or aggressive e-mails or instant messages, reported by 73% of victims.
- 40% of Canadian workers experience bullying on a weekly basis.

### Understanding Early Sexual Development

To parents of infants and toddlers, their children's sexual development may seem a long way off. But actually, sexual development begins in a child's very first years. Infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and young school-aged kids develop an emotional and physical foundation for sexuality in many subtle ways as they grow.

Just as they reach important physical and emotional milestones, like learning to walk or recognize mom and dad, young kids hit important milestones in how they recognize, experience, and feel about their bodies, and how they form attachments to others. The attachments established in these early years help set the stage for bonding and intimacy down the line. By understanding how your kids grow and learn, you can play an important role in fostering their emotional and physical health.

## Infants and Toddlers

Babies' earliest emotional attachments are formed with their parents through physical contact that expresses their love. Being held and touched, kissed and hugged, snuggled and tickled allows babies to experience comforting, positive physical sensations associated with being loved.

The unique type of physical intimacy and emotional attachment between parent and infant can be the early foundation of more mature forms of physical intimacy and love that develop later as part of mature sexuality.

Many parents have called their doctors expressing concern because their kids touch their genitals during diaper changes or their baby boys have frequent erections. They're reassured that these behaviors are perfectly normal and told that even the youngest children naturally explore their bodies. And many kids, especially toddlers, enjoy being naked.

How you react — your voice, the words you use, your facial expressions — is one of your child's first lessons in sexuality. By not responding with anger, surprise, or disapproving words, you teach your child that this curiosity about his or her body is a normal part of life.

By age 2 or 3, a child starts to develop a sense of being a male or female. This awareness is called gender identity. Kids this age start to understand the difference between boys and girls, and can identify themselves as one or the other. Some people think gender identity is biologically determined and some say it's a product of a child's environment. Most likely, it's a combination of both.

At this age kids begin to associate certain behaviors, called gender roles, with being male or female. Gender roles are culturally derived. What is masculine? What is feminine? How do boys and men behave? How do girls and women behave? As you decide what you want to teach your kids about gender roles, be aware of the messages they get both in and out of the home.



## Preschool (Ages 3 to 5)

By preschool, most kids have developed a strong sense of being a boy or girl, and continue to explore their bodies even more purposefully. It's not a good idea to scold them when they touch themselves — this will only prompt a sense of guilt and shame.

Parents may, however, want to explain that even though it feels good, touching should be done in private — preschoolers are old enough to understand that some things are not meant to be public. They're also old enough to understand that no one — not even family members or other people they trust — should ever touch them in a way that feels uncomfortable.

Your preschooler will continue to learn important sexual attitudes from you — from how you react to people of the opposite sex to how you feel about nudity.

**Endless questions.** As kids become curious about everything, it's common for preschoolers to pose questions to their parents like "Where do babies come from?" or "Why doesn't my sister have a penis?"

When you get questions like these, try to answer as honestly and matter-of-factly as possible. Answers like "The stork brought you" not only dismiss a child's curiosity, but also make parents look less credible when kids find out the truth. Being truthful now also encourages your kids to come to you with their questions in the future.



Find out exactly what your child wants to know and then answer the specific question — there's no need to go into elaborate detail when it might not be necessary. For example, you might say that a man and woman can make a baby and that the baby grows inside the woman's belly. If this satisfies your child, you might not need to provide additional information about how the baby is actually made until later.

**Playing doctor.** At this stage, kids tend to be curious not only about their own bodies, but about others' too. If you find your preschooler playing doctor with another child around the same age, it's important not to overreact — to them it's just an innocent game. Of course, if an older child or adult is involved, your concern would be legitimate. Calmly ask your child to get dressed and distract him or her with a toy or game. You may want to take this as a clue that your child is curious about the body, and facilitate learning about it in some other way, like a children's book on the subject that's geared to preschoolers.

**Preschool "boyfriends" and "girlfriends."** Some parents of preschoolers are alarmed when they hear their kids talk about a boyfriend or girlfriend. If your youngster says this, remember that kids don't attach the same meanings to the word that adults do. Most experts agree that it's best to react to this kind of news in a neutral way — don't encourage the behavior, but don't express concern either.

### Elementary School (Ages 6 to 10)



"I think it's time you discuss the facts of life with your son. He's been telling his classmates you got him on eBay."

Kids this age are especially interested in pregnancy, birth, and gender roles — boys usually play with boys, and girls with girls. This is also the age where their peers and the media begin to have a bigger influence on sexual attitudes. If you aren't a reliable resource, your child may turn to a peer or perhaps an older child for information about sex, sexual organs, and reproduction — and chances are slim that the facts will be correct and that the words learned will meet your approval!

If your school-age child isn't asking you about sex, consider initiating some age-appropriate conversations. If you've previously said that a man and woman make a baby, now your child might want to know how. As always, be honest — kids of this age will jump to their own conclusions when they're missing information. Many kids in elementary school assume that babies are made when a man and woman lie next to each other, sleep in the same bed, hold hands, kiss, or swim together.

Issues that parents of elementary school-age kids might face include:

**Bad language.** Children will pick up bad language and inappropriate slang from lots of places — TV, movies, their friends, and especially you, if you use it. Many times, they use these words without even knowing what they mean. It's a good idea to calmly explain why the word is inappropriate and suggest better words to use next time.

**Inappropriate jokes.** You'll often find kids this age giggling over "dirty" jokes about sex, body parts, sexual orientation, etc., but do they really understand them? And do they realize that some of those jokes can hurt people? As with bad language, kids often tell these jokes without understanding them.

Calmly explain why the joke is inappropriate, then tell a more kid-friendly one as an example of an appropriate joke that will still get some laughs. And it's important to be a good role model for your child — don't tell inappropriate jokes, especially ones making fun of a particular group of people. Tolerance and respect are learned behaviors.

**Birds do it, bees do it . . . but why?** Kids sometimes see their pets or other animals engaged in sexual behaviors. Some react with surprise, disgust, or embarrassment, but most are curious even if a bit giggly. After a class trip to the zoo, the hot topic of conversation for a group of 9-year-olds is often the funny-looking mating

behavior they witnessed between a pair of the zoo's creatures. When kids ask about what these animals are doing, this is another chance for you to send the message that sexuality is a natural part of life. Encourage natural curiosity, provide accurate information, and model an attitude of respect about reproduction.

### **As Kids Grow**

As kids continue to understand and experience their bodies, and the physical changes of puberty emerge, your attitude and acceptance will continue to play an important role in their healthy development.

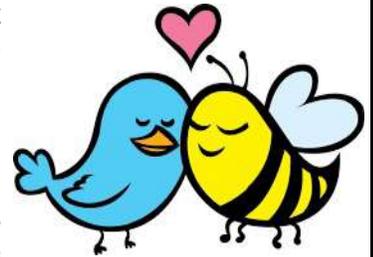
As kids mature sexually, they're often both excited and scared about growing up — especially when they notice hair growing in new places, get their periods, or start having wet dreams. They spend a lot of time wondering if they're "normal" and comparing themselves with their friends. Kids — especially early and late bloomers — need lots of reassurance as they head into this uncharted territory.

Puberty can be a very confusing time, with lots of physical and emotional changes, and kids need to know what to expect in the months and years ahead, even if they're too shy to ask.

By being open to your young child's questions about bodies, babies, love, and sex, you set the stage for continued conversations and openness when puberty begins. Welcoming the questions about your child's changing body and sexual issues — and not treating them as dirty or embarrassing subjects — will help foster a healthy sense of self-acceptance in your child. It also makes it more likely your child will use you as a resource for information and guidance.

Gathering written materials, like pamphlets or books, might help you find effective ways to provide the facts about sex, sexual health, and the physical changes your child may be going through.

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)



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## **Caring for Siblings of Children with Special Needs**

As a parent, you want to give equal attention to all of your children. But when parenting a child with special needs, that can be hard. Your child with a disability needs you. But so do his or her siblings. It may feel like there's never enough of your attention to go around — and your other kids might begin to feel left out.

It can help to understand what your typically developing child or teen might be thinking and feeling. Kids love their siblings. They want to understand why there are some things that a sibling with a disability cannot do, and how they can help.

By answering questions in an age-appropriate way and being open and honest, you can help ease worries, clear up any confusion, and maybe even give your other kids a chance to help out. Kids who feel understood, loved, and secure about their place in the family can thrive — and the bond between siblings can grow. Here's what might come up with kids at different ages and stages of development.

### **Preschoolers (Ages 3 to 5)**

By nature, preschoolers feel that everything is about them and what they want — from the game they want to play to the toy they ask for at the store. So helping them understand why a sibling might need more of your time or attention can be hard. It can help to set aside one-on-one time with your child. This can be a challenge, but even a few minutes spent playing ball or allowing your little one to "help" you in the kitchen at mealtime can provide the mommy or daddy time that your child needs.

When kids ask about their sibling's abilities, explain the condition using simple language in a way they can understand. Use real words, like "cerebral palsy" instead of "boo boo." This prevents confusion in kids who get their own cuts and scrapes — you don't want them to be overly concerned about a bump on the head. Say something like, "Your brother has trouble walking because he has cerebral palsy." If your child asks, "What is cerebral palsy?," state in simple terms that it's a condition that makes it harder for a child to do the same things other kids do.

Kids this age are also "magical thinkers" — so, the drink poured at the tea party is very hot and the monsters under the bed are very real. When kids have a sibling with special needs, this type of thinking can mean that they worry that the disability is an illness, like the common cold. Reassure your child that he or she cannot "catch" a condition like cerebral palsy, and that nothing either child did created the condition — it is no one's "fault."

### **Big Kids (Ages 6 to 12)**

By elementary school, kids start to better understand the "why" of a diagnosis. Expect that you will get more complicated questions, and don't be afraid to answer them. For example, for questions about a sibling with limited mobility, your explanation might expand to "His legs don't work because he was born with a health problem." The next question might be, "Will he ever walk?," to which you need to answer honestly: "I don't know if he will, but we're going to try to help him do that. That's why he has therapy."

Your child might be sad or worried about his or her sibling's health. But playing together and enjoying each other's company can help. Encourage your typically developing child to read books to his or her sibling, build block towers together, and do craft activities with fingerpaint or clay. This is also the age when kids start having to explain their sibling's condition to their friends. Some friends might ask rude questions or even participate in bullying behavior such as name-calling, which can leave your child feeling embarrassed, angry, or guilty.

You can help your child weather these encounters by rehearsing some conversations. If someone asks, "What's wrong with your sister?," for example, your child can simply say: "She has cerebral palsy." Or if a classmate uses an unkind term to describe the sibling with special needs, let your other kids know that as hard as it is, they must not act out in anger. Instead, help them explain the situation: "It's harder for my sister to learn new things than it is for you or me, but that doesn't make it OK to say mean things about her."

Sibling rivalry also builds at this age, so don't be surprised if kids act jealous of their brother or sister with special needs. After all, they see their sibling getting extra attention, or being allowed to stay up later or excused from doing chores. Comparisons are normal, but explain that while it seems unfair, this is simply the way it has to be. Just as a child might feel that the sibling is getting extra attention, there are many opportunities that the sibling with special needs cannot have. Fair does not always mean equal.

### **Teens (Ages 13 and Up)**

During the teen years, siblings often feel increased pressure to care for their siblings with special needs. You might rely on your teen to babysit or help more with chores around the house. Teens might feel pressure to take on more responsibility than they should at this age.

As a parent, make sure you are not asking too much of your teen. Make certain responsibilities, such as babysitting, a choice. This will help teens feel that they have control over how much they help out. For example: "It would be great if you could watch your sister, but if you want to go out with your friends, that's OK." Also, be sure that you don't expect too much when it comes to chores, schoolwork, or extracurricular activities. Typically developing children sometimes feel pressure to be perfect so that their parents don't have to worry about them.

Teens are struggling with their independence from parents. And a teen who has a sibling with special needs also may struggle with the idea of life apart from that sibling. Let your teen know that wanting more independence and experiencing more of the world is normal, healthy, and encouraged, within safe limits.

As teens near adulthood, they might start to worry about the future, and wonder who is going to help care for the sibling once they've moved out — or if something happens to you. Reassure your teen that whatever the future holds, help with caring for his or her sibling will depend on how much your teen is comfortable taking on. Then, have a plan ready for when changes come that will benefit all members of the family.

## Handling Strong Emotions

Just as parenting a child with special needs can be joyful and frustrating, kids and teens who have a brother or sister with special needs will have ups and downs.

Some siblings roll with the punches and don't let much bother them, while others are more sensitive and take things to heart. These kids need healthy ways to work through their emotions. Writing in a journal, being physically active, or participating in creative arts like dance or music are good ways to handle strong emotions.

But if you notice changes in your child's sleep routine, appetite, mood, or behavior, it could be a sign of anxiety, depression, or another problem. If this happens, seek help from a mental health professional for your child.

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

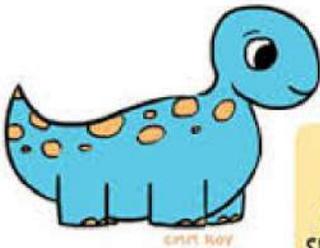
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## Your Needs Matter: It's Okay to Take a Turn

So much of parenting has to do with meeting needs:

- those of your children,
- your spouse,
- and your own.

Additionally, parenting involves teaching your children how to meet some of their own needs and helping them understand that other people also have needs.



SELF-CARE IS NOT  
LAZY OR SELFISH.  
SELF-CARE IS HEALTHY.  
SELF-CARE IS IMPORTANT.  
SELF-CARE IS NECESSARY.

All people, no matter their age, have certain needs which can't be denied without negative consequences.

- You have to take care of physical needs (such as food, water, shelter).
- You need a degree of intellectual stimulation of some sort.
- You have a need for social contact with other people so as not to feel isolated.
- You have emotional needs to feel loved, appreciated, and competent, to name a few.

## Unmet Needs

There is a direct correlation between high stress and unmet needs. Needs become more acute in times of stress, and needs that are insufficiently met may cause stress.

- If you feel burned out, you may become frustrated and find it difficult to be patient with your children and appreciate their needs.
- As your children's needs are not met, they may become more stressed.
- This can result in a downward spiral of unmet needs, increased stress, and greater frustration.

If you feel depleted, exhausted, drained, and burned out, you will not feel like taking care of your children's needs. You may feel resentful and not be physically or emotionally up to the task. You may miss out on the joys and pleasures of parenting your children.

## Times of High Stress

You may experience this vicious cycle very strongly during certain stages of parenting, such as when you have:

- a newborn,
- an active toddler,
- teens.

You may also feel increased stress and less able to handling your needs or those of your children during times of transition, such as:

- a divorce,
- move,
- or serious illness.

## Reasons for Not Getting Your Needs Met

### 1. Unhelpful Thoughts

Certain beliefs may get in the way of you meeting your needs:

- Children's needs always come first.
- I can only be happy when my children are . . . happy . . . well-behaved . . . quiet . . . minding me . . . doing well in school, etc.
- I have no right to put myself first.
- I must be a "perfect" parent.
- I asked for this!
- I can do it better myself.
- I can not rely on anybody else to help me.
- It is too much work to get my needs met.
- It doesn't count if I have to ask for help.
- Only other people can satisfy my needs; I can't take care of myself.
- It is weak to have needs.

In addition there are certain parenting realities which are obstacles to getting your needs met.

- You may not even know what would make you feel better.
- You may not have enough support from other people.
- There may be time or money constraints holding you back.

"How can I fit in anything for myself when I am already doing as much as I can in a day. I have a toddler who is on the move all the time and a child in elementary school who has extra-curricular activities. Plus I am working part-time. When I get back from getting the older one where he has to be, I still have to cook dinner, help with homework, and do the bedtime routine....."

You can fill in the details of your own life, but you get the picture. Doing something for yourself might feel like one more thing on your "to-do" list.



## 2. Your Upbringing

If you were shamed or criticized for having needs when you were a child or your needs were not met, you may believe that:

- it is not okay to have needs.
- your needs will not be met now.
- you do not deserve to have someone comfort you now.

In addition, if your needs were not met when you were a child, you may have trouble accepting and meeting your children's needs because you it wasn't modelled for you. You may be resentful of your children's requests, or you may go overboard trying to satisfy every whim in an effort not pass on to them your childhood feelings of deprivation.

On the flip side, if your childhood history included you getting your needs predictably, you will probably:

- feel okay about having needs now and finding ways to meet them.
- be comfortable taking care of your children's needs now.
- have the ability to meet your children's needs graciously and deny some of their requests appropriately.

## 3. Children's Needs vs. Wants

Parents often think that in order to be a good parent, they must put their own needs on a back-burner so they can meet all of their children's requests. But there are some problems with this thinking.

Children do not know the difference between needs and wants. Babies wants and needs are one in the same. And of course, you do try to meet all the needs of newborns and babies. It is their developmental job to learn that the world is a safe place, one in which they cared for and loved.

It is your job as their parent to teach them that they are worthy by nurturing them and responding to their needs.

However, as your children grow, it becomes your responsibility to teach them the difference between:

**needs** – those things they need to survive and develop in healthy ways, such as food, shelter, medical care, education, and some intellectual stimulation.

**wants** – those things they desire but are not essential, such as specific brand of food, designer clothing, extra classes, electronic devices used for recreation and entertainment, or play dates every day.

Meeting children's needs is your obligation; satisfying some of their wants is a matter of choice and based on your values. Children lobby for needs and wants with equal intensity. For example, a two-year-old may tantrum just as intensely because you won't give her a cookie as she would when she needs a drink of water because she is thirsty. Your children need guidance from you to prioritize their wants and to learn to tolerate frustration and delay gratification in order to eventually function well in the world. You can do that by not meeting all their desires and saying "no" to some of their requests.

Children are not always good judges of their needs. Not giving a four-year-old a snack that she is demanding just before dinner time will reinforce healthy eating habits. She wants the snack; she needs to eat nutritious food. Not allowing a teen to drive with friends in his car when you don't think he has the judgment and skill to handle distractions even though he is assuring you that he does is a way to keep him safe. He wants to have fun; he needs more experience behind the wheel.

You can acknowledge the request but know that you do not have to agree to it. For healthy emotional development, sometimes children need to not get their wants met. Teaching a child to put her needs ahead of her wants is one of the greatest gifts parents can give.

### **Why It is Good to Get Your Needs Met**

- **You are a better parent:** When you feel rested and on top of things, you can handle situations more effectively and with more patience; this includes responding to your children. You need a degree of physical and emotional well-being so you can preserve your most important resources – your energy and your good will.

Believing that your needs matter will free you up from unnecessary guilt and give you permission to distinguish more clearly between which of your children's demands are truly essential for you to meet and which you can and should deny. Instead of feeling selfish for denying a child's request, you can view it as teaching healthy limits.

- **You are modelling self-care for your children.** How can you teach them to ask for what they need, stick up for themselves and disengage from negative relationships or interactions if you don't practice such behavior yourself?

Many parents, especially mothers, have been conditioned not to speak up for themselves and not to think of their own needs. You may end up feeling resentful if the people around you can't figure out on their own what you need.

By being assertive on your own behalf, you can increase the odds of getting what you need. Self-care means believing that:

- you deserve to have someone be there for you,
- it is okay to reach out,
- there is no shame in needing someone to lean on from time to time,
- you don't need to do everything alone, including parenting your children.

These are critical beliefs for a parent to have to avoid feeling depleted and exhausted.

**How You Can Get Your Needs Met:** Making the changes that are in your and your family's best interests will feel empowering to you and will be a step toward your being assertive on your own behalf. Below are ways to support yourself and re-charge your battery so that you can then more energetically take care of your family.

#### **1. Abandon trying to be perfect**

Aim for progress, not perfection. Remember that mistakes are opportunities to learn and to make changes in the future. Recognize them, apologize, make amends if needed, and then forgive yourself. Allow your children to make mistakes and learn from them as well.

#### **2. Identify, understand and accept your own needs**

Decide how well you are currently meeting your needs for each of the following categories:

- physically
- emotionally
- socially
- intellectually
- spiritually
- intimacy

For those categories where you are meeting your needs, congratulate yourself. For those categories where you are NOT meeting your needs, take some time to consider what might “fill you up.” Know that it might take a bit of trial and error to figure which activities and how much time you need. If you are truly on empty, you may feel like a bottomless pit. Be kind to yourself as you figure out what works for you.

### 3. Make a list of people who can help you

Remember that you can be strong and still ask for help. Because friends and relatives cannot anticipate your specific needs, let the people in your support system know how they can help you. Tell them what you need and how they can best respond:

- Do you need some childcare assistance?
- Do you need someone to listen to your feelings and give you a chance to vent?
- Do you need help with chores?
- Do you need people who will do something fun with you?

You may face resistance or criticism from certain people within your family and friend network who are happy with the status quo because things are currently working well for them.

You will need people who will:

- listen without judging you.
- respect your needs.
- appreciate your efforts to care for yourself.

#### Specific tips

- At the beginning of the day, create a “to-do” list that includes something for yourself even if it is only for 10 or 15 minutes. A small turn is better than no turn at all.
- At the end of the day, write down everything you accomplished —create a “Done” list and congratulate yourself for your efforts, successes, and what you have done well, no matter how small.
- Give yourself affirming messages. You can even keep a “Positive Journal” to record the moments that went well.
- If child care is an obstacle for you, find a babysitter, mother’s helper, or someone with whom you can take turns babysitting.
- Lower household cleaning standards, delegate tasks to other family members, eliminate some tasks, and pay for some services. You don’t have to do it all yourself to be a good mother.
- Do something fun with your children. This will enliven your relationship, increase optimism and joyfulness, and be great modelling for your children.
- On the other hand, accept your feelings about not wanting to do certain things for or with your children; for example, if you don’t like playing board games, don’t play them.
- Celebrate the things you do love to do with and for your children; for example, doing crafts or playing basketball.
- Do something fun with other adults. Personal relationships can minimize isolation and can bring joy into your life.



- Develop interests and hobbies as “de-stressors.” The more fulfilled you are as a person, the more energy you will have for your children and the less you will use your children to fulfill your needs.
- Discover and use calming techniques that work for you – music, a bath, meditation, reading, massage, etc.
- Set firm limits and personal boundaries. Learn to say, “No!” to others and “Yes!” to yourself.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle and take care of your body (this includes healthy eating, sleeping, and exercising).
- Know the importance of time management. Set priorities, reasonable expectations and structure your time.
- Take time to do things you enjoy.

What you enjoy may surprise you, especially since it may have been a long time since you have done things you like to do. In order to be good to your children, you really need to be good to yourself; and if you want your children to have fun, you need to model having fun. You may feel that you don’t have enough time to do all the things you want to do. And you probably won’t have that luxury, at least while your children are small. But you can carve out some time to do some things you find pleasurable, thereby “taking your turn.”

### **Healthy Messages to Tell Yourself**

- It is okay to have needs. My needs are important and it is essential to focus on getting some of them met. I deserve to have some of my needs and wants met. I’m not selfish; I am entitled to take care of myself.
- It is okay if I don’t know exactly what I need or how to take care of it; I can work to figure this out.
- I can take responsibility and be assertive in getting my needs met. It is okay to ask for help.
- It is important to have interests other than my children to build my self-esteem.
- Kids are better off if parents’ needs are met.
- Taking care of myself is good modeling for how my children can act as adults.
- My needs can be in conflict with each other and with other people’s needs. I can prioritize which ones I attend to.
- Imperfect is okay. The perfect parent is a myth.
- I don’t have to defend what I need.
- Doing everything for my children is not the best thing for them in terms of their long-range development. When my children learn to delay gratification or complete tasks on their own, they become more competent, resilient, responsible, grateful, and empathetic. It is okay and even healthy to deny children some of the things they want us to do for them.

Remember that your needs are important and that you deserve to get some of them met, even while you are primarily focussed on taking care of other people. Your children will be better off if they have a parent who models self-care and who has the energy to care for them. And you will be more likely to experience the joy, satisfaction, and fulfilment that parenting can bring you.

**Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association – Membership Application**

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

Mailing Address: **(include PO Box if applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate (✓) below whether you are a:

Foster Family \_\_\_\_\_ Social Worker \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership fees are \$20.00 a year per family.**

**PAYMENT METHOD:** Cheque \_\_\_\_\_ Money Order \_\_\_\_\_ Cash \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH IN THE MAIL!**

*Please Mail To:*

Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association  
Suite 105, 21 Pippy Place  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 3X2

Foster Families are entitled to discounts at various retail stores and restaurants in the province upon presentation of your membership card. Some businesses may also require a picture id.

Membership renewal is required each year.

**IF YOU ARE MOVING, PLEASE NOTIFY THE PROVINCIAL OFFICE TOLL FREE AT 1-877-754-0218 or by email: [nlffa@nfld.net](mailto:nlffa@nfld.net)**

**OFFICE USE ONLY**

Date Membership Application Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Card Mailed Out: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**REGION:**

Western    Grenfell    Labrador    Central    Eastern    St. John's

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