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Happy, Happy New Year!
We wish you all the best,
Great work to reach your fondest goals,
And when you're done, sweet rest.



We hope for your fulfillment,
Contentment, peace and more,
A brighter, better new year than
You've ever had before.



~Joanna Fuchs



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Shirley Fowler (Vice Chair)
Debbie O'Neil (Treasurer)
Nicole Shuglo (Secretary)

N.L.F.F.A. STAFF

Diane Molloy
Executive Director
dianemolloy@nfld.net

Lori Petersen
Social Worker
loripetersen@nfld.net

Amy Powell
Administrative/Financial Assistant
amypowell@nfld.net

Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association

Suite 105, 21 Pippy Place
St. John's, NL, A1B 3X2
Tel: 754-0213 Fax: 754-5007
Toll Free: 1-877-754-0218
E-mail: nlffa@nfld.net
Web: www.nlffa.ca

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

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Greetings from Board Chair



Welcome to our first newsletter for 2019!

Our Christmas break was pretty wonderful this year and I hope yours was as well.

January has brought about some changes for me that aren't just wonderful, but most exciting: we are awaiting our first adoption order (we have another adoption in the early stages); I began my paternity/adoption leave, returning to work in November; and a week ago I received notice that I can apply for my CPP a month before my birthday this year! Oh my, I can hardly wait until February.

In the Fall the Board traveled to Grand Falls-Windsor for a Training Day and in-person Board meeting. The workshop topics were Positive Discipline and Children's Gender Diversity: Beyond the Myths and Examining our Biases. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend. I hope you enjoyed the sessions and took something away that you could implement right away. Our next training day will be in Corner Brook in March and we are really looking forward to it.

Last June the Telegram ran an article about the impending adoption of my step-son Daniel, Rosie Mullaley did a terrific job covering how important the adoption was to my adult son and me and how easy the process was; just this week we learned that article inspired the adoption of an adult who had been in foster care years before but who still longed even at 30 to be adopted. Thanks to her boyfriend and former Foster Dad that dream is going to come true this year! (see story on page 3)

These stories are so touching and carry a very strong message for all of us (not just Foster Parents) that the need for human connection, belonging and the sense of family that permanency provides is inherent long after children reach the age of maturity. It also (to me) sends a message that we need to share more of our stories in hopes that others may be inspired to open their homes and hearts to children and work with our professional team members to create permanency plans intended to last a lifetime for children now and in the future.

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



MAY 31 – June 2, 2019

**Annual Symposium
Capital Hotel
St. John's**

Comments from 2018 Symposium Evaluation

This has been my 8th Symposium. I have never walked away disappointed. Loved the training.

It was an excellent weekend. So Happy that I was able to participate. I have gained knowledge I will use in my daily work. Excellent job!!

Executive Director's Report

As I write this report, we are half way through January and my wish is that 2019 will be a great year for you and your family. We had a very busy Fall and planning is now underway for our Annual Symposium in June. We are very pleased with the progress made in the first six months of our Strategic Plan.

In November, we travelled to the Labrador North Coast and met with our foster parents in Postville and Hopedale. We had a good turnout at both meetings and there was some great discussion. This was our first visit to Postville and was in response to a request to come to the community from a foster parent who attended our Symposium last June. Financial and time constraints make it difficult to visit all communities on the Coast but we try our best. This year we were also scheduled for Nain and Natuashish but due to being on weather hold for two additional days in Postville, we did not get to these communities which was very disappointing. However, the extra time in Postville allowed us to attend a community event where we had the opportunity to talk about fostering and the barriers to recruitment. In Hopedale, we also met with Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) staff. In the Fall, we also met with foster parents in Gambo where we enjoyed a lovely potluck supper and had some great conversation. I also met with CSSD staff from the Lewisporte, Botwood and Summerford offices. At the end of this month we will be travelling to Labrador City, Goose Bay and Sheshatshiu.

In November, I met with Assistant Deputy Minister, Susan Walsh (recently moved to position of Deputy Minister) and the Regional Directors to talk about fostering matters and review our Strategic Plan. A number of our strategic goals require support from the Department particularly in the areas of communication, training and supporting Local Associations. We are pleased to share that the Department continues to be very supportive of our work. They appreciate us sharing the experiences of foster families and identifying areas where change is required. We have a good working relationship which allows us to be effective advocates for change.

Since the beginning of the school year, Lori has provided our Different Kinds of Families presentation to approximately 3166 students at twenty-four schools. Thirteen of these schools were new and eleven were repeat schools. In the Fall, the presentation was also reviewed again by the English School District and found to be appropriate and relevant. We continue to receive positive feedback from students and teachers. We still have sixteen schools we are hoping to get to this year and the requests continue to come in. Unfortunately, due to financial restraints we are not always able to get to every school that requests each year but we do prioritize when we are determining which requests can be accommodated the following year.

We had a great training day in Grand Falls-Windsor in November and are now planning our next professional development opportunity for Corner Brook in March. This is not only an opportunity to gain some new skills but also an opportunity to get together with other foster parents in your area. Social workers are also invited to the training events. Lori and I will be in Stephenville and Corner Brook for meetings with foster parents, CSSD staff and school presentations a few days prior to the training. Information will be forwarded when details are finalized.

It is with sadness I share that foster mom Melinda Hopkins from Englee passed away recently. We extend condolences to her husband Kevin, their children and all her family and friends. Our thoughts are with you during this difficult time.

In closing, I want to encourage all of you to follow us on Facebook. We are using this social media platform to share ongoing activities, regional travel and training opportunities. We also post articles and information we think may be of interest to you. We are always looking for suggestions on ways to better engage foster families.

Diane

Highlights/Ongoing Activities

- Personal Support
- Allegation Support
- Peer Mentoring Program
- Training Days
- Facebook/Twitter
- Waypoints Pilot
- Regional Travel
- School Presentations

This wonderful story was written by Rosie Mullaley and originally published in The Telegram on January 15th, 2019. It reinforces the important message that we all need a place to belong and reminds us again why permanency planning is so important in the foster care program.

Hope you enjoy reading it as much as we did.

Thirty-year-old St. John's woman excited to finally be adopted by foster family



Jessica King and her boyfriend, Ryan MacFarlane, officially filed legal documents at Newfoundland and Labrador Family Court in St. John's last week to have King, 30, adopted by her foster family. - Joe Gibbons

Jessica King will soon be able to legally change her surname to that of the family that took her in as an infant

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. - It has been three weeks since Jessica King eagerly sat by the Christmas tree with her boyfriend in their St. John's home on Christmas Day morning to open gifts. But she's still on Cloud 9 after receiving the one gift that would change her life forever. "It was the most significant gift I've ever received," King said.

Wrapped in pretty paper, with a ribbon and bow — decorated meticulously by her boyfriend of four years, Ryan MacFarlane — a box contained something she had waited decades to receive: a declaration that she had an official family. Amidst sheets of tissue paper were adoption papers, which would see the 30-year-old woman officially be adopted by the foster family that raised her from the time she was six months old.

"For a few minutes, I was in complete shock," King said, describing the moment she opened the box and saw the documents. "I thought, what's happening? What am I reading? Is this real?" When she realized what it was, she broke down in tears. "No words can describe it," she said.

King was born in Stephenville and raised by the Pilgrim family, who took her into their home and cared for her after her birth mother wasn't able to. Even when she required emergency heart surgery in St. John's for a ventricular septal defect at six months old, her foster family was there. King had a wonderful childhood, with loving, patient, steadfast and supportive foster parents, Clayton and Dinah Pilgrim, but deep down, she always wished they would adopt her, she said. She gave up on the idea once she became an adult.

But a trip to a St. John's supermarket gave MacFarlane the idea of making it happen for her. In June of last year, he was in a checkout lineup when he saw a copy of The Telegram that featured a story about a Conception Bay South family adopting their 24-year-old stepson. That set the wheels in motion and MacFarlane contacted King's foster father. It turned out that the 87-year-old, who lives in Deer Lake, had been thinking about it for years. He and his wife, who died in 2007, had adopted their other foster children, but they were prevented from adopting King because her birth mother had been fighting any attempts to go to court, he said. When some time had passed and King's birth mother had died, her foster father wanted to finally make it happen, but was overwhelmed by the court process.

With her foster father's blessing, MacFarlane got to work, notifying the rest of the family and collecting all the necessary signatures and legal papers. Having kept it a secret from her for weeks, he couldn't wait to see her reaction on Christmas morning. "The way she broke down, I saw 30 years of pain finally being released," MacFarlane said. "It had been burdening her and holding her down her whole life. ... She was shaking two hours later. ... I have never seen her, or anyone, so happy in all my life. It was overwhelming for both of us. I've shed as many tears as she has."

In the box with the adoption papers, MacFarlane included an introductory letter, in which he wrote about the importance of a family name. "Our name is our lineage, our history, our culture and tradition. It is the context of our very being and without it, we are adrift in this world like an iceberg at sea," the letter states. "You've been deprived of your name for far too long, Jessica. And so, this Christmas morning, it's time to finally say, with utmost resolve: Hello, Jessica Pilgrim."

She was so grateful for such an incredible gift. "I feel like a weight I've been carrying for the past 30 years is finally gone. I feel complete. I'm finally (officially) a part of my family." In an Instagram post on Boxing Day, King said, "The gift represents the truth and allows me to let go of many insecurities that I have carried with me for the past 30 years. Thoughts and doubts of never being good enough in all aspects of my life, of not belonging.

"On Dec. 25, 2018, I have received the gift of belonging thanks to my Dad, my sisters and last, but certainly not least, the love of my life, Ryan MacFarlane. I was born with a hole in my heart, but my heart is finally whole."

Last week, the couple filed the adoption papers at Newfoundland and Labrador Family Court. Once approved by a judge, the documents will officially be issued at the department of vital statistics. King will then be free to officially change her name. The process is expected to be completed by the end of February.

MacFarlane said he is glad he was at the supermarket that day to see The Telegram article, which inspired him to do what he did. "The result was there was another family brought together and I hope to pay it forward," he said. "Maybe after seeing this article, another family or 100 will be inspired to be brought together in a similar way."

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Regional Reports

Central Region

Exploits Central Foster Families Association

Happy New Year Everyone!

Thanks to the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development for inviting us to Tea Time at the Baie Verte office on October 26 to celebrate Foster Families Week.

We also appreciate the Provincial Association Board of Directors hosting an educational opportunity for foster parents and social workers in Grand Falls-Windsor on November 3rd. Two sessions were offered and well attended; Children's Gender Diversity: Beyond the Myths and Examining our Biases and Positive Discipline.

Our Local invites all foster families in our area to a Valentines swim at the YMCA in Grand Falls-Windsor on Saturday, February 9th from 3-4pm . Please let us know if you are attending by replying to my Facebook message or phone 709-263-6983. The Y needs to know the exact number of swimmers to determine how many lifeguards will be needed. Please make a special effort to attend and get connected with other foster parents in our area. It is also really nice for the children to get together and create friendships.

I would like to wish you all the best in 2019! We all look forward to a highly successful, healthy and productive year. Thanks for all you do for Children and Youth in our province. Your value is immeasurable and the contribution you make to our communities is greatly appreciated.

Coralee Roberts, Chair

Kittiwake Central Foster Families Association

On November 20th, 2018 we had our annual potluck dinner meeting at the Gambo Medical Center at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Laurie Wicks, Dawn Evely, Doug Evely, Tonia Pritchett, Margie Melvin and two staff from the Provincial Association, Diane and Lori. Diane shared information about the new Strategic Plan and we also had an opportunity to talk about our experiences and any challenges we were having. Dawn and Doug also agreed to share their fostering experience for a post on the Provincial Association Facebook page. It was a really good evening.

We had our annual Christmas Party for the children planned but unfortunately it had to be postponed due to unforeseen circumstances. We will now be taking the children swimming and to McDonalds for supper on January 26th. We are looking forward to a fun time for all.

Thanks to the Provincial Association for the Training Day that was offered in Grand Falls-Windsor in the Fall. Unfortunately I was unable to attend but a couple of people from our Local did and found it to be very interesting and informative.

On behalf of our Local, I want to wish you all a happy and healthy 2019.

Laurie Wicks, Chair

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

Buddha

Eastern Region

Bonavista Foster Families Association

Our Local held a Christmas social for foster families on Sunday, December 2nd at Bishop White School in Port Rexton. Despite low numbers in attendance; those that were there had a great time completing some Christmas crafts such as making Christmas cards and some activity and coloring sheets. This was followed by an hour or so in the gym playing games such as: pass the parcel, snow spoon race, oven mitt game and playing with the various sports equipment. Each child received a goodie bag and Christmas activity book to take home. We look forward to being able to host a few other holiday themed events throughout the year and encourage all foster families in our area to attend if schedules permit as it allows our children to meet and enjoy themselves as well as an opportunity for foster parents to socialize. I would encourage other Locals in the province to use their schools for activities in the future, if you do not already do so, as your children may be already comfortable/familiar with the space and the building is a community resource that is there to be used for such activities.

The Vista Family Resource Centre in Bonavista offered the Nobody's Perfect program in October/November and some of our Foster Parents attended these sessions. The next program planned to start in January was Handle with Care - Promoting Mental Health in Young Children, however, it has been delayed until a later time. We will keep our foster parents informed when it is rescheduled as we firmly believe in professional development/training for our foster parents; we can always learn something new.

Our next Local meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 11 at 7 P.M. at the CSSD building in Bonavista. We hope to have a guest speaker arranged and hope to discuss planning our next event for the children. We look forward to seeing everyone at this time. Continued thanks for the support we receive from the CSSD office in Bonavista and special thanks to Social Worker, Laurie Anne Connors for her support to our Local.

Jim Miller, Chair

Burin Peninsula Foster Families Association

Happy New Year to everyone from the Burin Peninsula!

The past year has been good to everyone. We clued up the year with another great breakfast get together and a secret Santa gift exchange with all the kids. We will be meeting soon to discuss some upcoming events. We hope the new year is full of promise and laughter.

Melanie Smith, Chair

Bay Roberts/Harbour Grace Foster Families Association

Happy New Year from our Local Association. We hope everyone has an amazing 2019! Now that we are past the busy holiday season, it's a good time to relax and enjoy everything winter has to offer. We had a wonderful Christmas party in December and approximately 30 of our children in care attended. Santa was there with gifts for the children and it was also a great opportunity for the foster parents in our area to spend an afternoon together. We are in the process of planning a spring meeting for foster parents. If you are a new foster parent in this area or have not been receiving calls from our Association, please contact either Debbie Sellars, Anne Marie Tilley or myself and we will add you to our list. I can be reached by email at kimnewman@hotmail.ca or by phone at 589-8686.

Kim Newman, Chair

Western Region

Deer Lake-Pasadena Foster Families Association

Happy New Year! I hope 2019 brings you all much love, happiness and good fortune.

Our Local ended 2018 with an information session by Amy Parsons from the Autism Society. She was very informative and we had a great show of foster parents from the Deer Lake and Corner Brook Associations. We are in the process of planning our next meeting for February. We will be in contact when we have finalized the details.

I hope to see everyone at our next meeting.

Vickie McCarthy, Chair

Stephenville Foster Families Association

Happy New Year! I can't believe it's 2019; time sure goes by fast. In September we had a Local meeting with a great turnout. October saw us celebrating Foster Families Week with a swimming and pizza party. We had so many people in attendance that we even discussed having to get a bigger place next year. Unfortunately, we didn't get to have a Christmas party this year; there just didn't seem to be time so next year we will have to start planning much earlier.

At our Local meetings in November and December we had Sean Hillard come and do a presentation on drug and alcohol addiction. He provided some great information and everyone enjoyed the sessions.

Debbie O'Neil, Director

Corner Brook-Bay of Islands Foster Families Association

Happy New Year! The Christmas season is behind us and we are well into the new year! I hope everyone had a relaxing and joyous holiday season.

We have taken a small break from holding training in our area. Our regular attendees suggested to hold off until the new year to start again. I have a few calls made to arrange some training sessions for the next few months. As well, most foster families said they would rather get together for the kids in February/March rather than a Christmas party. So we are planning an event with the Deer Lake/Pasadena Foster Families Association in the near future. We will send invites through email.

We were invited to attend training with the Deer Lake/Pasadena Foster Families Association. Three foster parents from the Corner Brook/Bay of Islands area attended. They had Kayla from The Autism Society give presentation on what Autism is, what to watch for, etc. It was a very interesting evening. Thanks for the invite!!

We look forward to Diane and Lori coming to our area for a meeting in March. Please make every effort to attend! The Provincial Association will also be offering a Training Day in Corner Brook in March. I really encourage all of you to register for this event. I know from past experience that these training opportunities are very valuable for foster parents and social workers.

Stephanie Lowe, Chair

Labrador Region

Hopedale Foster Families Association

Greetings from the north coast of Labrador! I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy New Year. I would also like to thank the United Church Women of Chapel Arm for their kind donation of winter clothing to the community of Hopedale which was shipped courtesy of PAL Airlines/Air Borealis just before Christmas. This was very much appreciated and warmed many hearts! (Thank you to the Provincial Association for arranging this kind donation).

In 2018 our Local Association was fortunate to welcome some informative guest speakers to meet with us who shared information on a variety of topics. Now that the 'hustle and bustle' of Christmas is behind us, we look forward to continuing this initiative in the New Year. We were especially happy to welcome Diane and Lori to our local Hopedale meeting in late November as they shared a very informative evening with us over 'a taste of Labrador' (bakeapple and redberry tarts). We are so very grateful for their continued support; an 'in-person visit' means so much (particularly given our geographic isolation).

Wishing everyone all the best in 2019,

Nicole Shuglo, Co-Chair

Labrador West Foster Families Association

In December, our Local had its annual Christmas party. We had a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus and the kids were super excited about that. We also had food, free play and games. Thank you to those who were able to come out and attend this event.

Also a big thank you to our local community businesses for sponsoring this Christmas party: Canadian Tire, Pizza Delight, IGA and First Steps Family Resource Center. Looking forward to working together in this new year!

Eunice Earle, Chair

Grenfell Region

Grenfell Island

Happy new year from our very snowed in Grenfell area. We hope you all had a great Christmas with your family and friends.

We had our Halloween party a little later on November 6th. It was hosted by our Local and CSSD. The kids came in their costumes and we had a potluck supper with a great spread of food. There were 67 in attendance and all the kids went home with treat bags; everyone had an awesome evening.

Our Christmas party was on December 28th, with a beautiful potluck supper. There were 57 in attendance. We played a game for the kids and had a few draws on gift cards for the parents. There was a visit from Jolly Santa who gave out gifts and treat bags to all the kids. It was a great night.

We had a sad start to 2019 with the loss of foster Mom, Melinda Hopkins. On behalf of our Local, I want to express condolences to her husband Kevin and their children. Rest in peace Melinda. You will be missed

Shirley Fowler, Director

St. John's Region

St. John's/CBS Foster Families Association

Another fabulous quarter is behind us and we are well into our plans for 2019!

In the Fall we finally voted on official roles. Janine, Roxanne, Ruby and I are eager to maximize the potential of our Local Chapter this year and for many more to come. We have had 3 events since the last newsletter and just as many meetings.

One of our local foster parents (FP) , Jen Y, convinced Twin Rinks to donate an hour of skating and tons of snacks to our families! She also arranged for Play It Again Sports to loan skates and helmets to those who needed them.

Another FP, Vanessa M, pulled some strings and utilized some serious organizational skills to arrange a movie night for local foster parents. Close to 50 foster parents and friends attended a showing of "Instant Family".

Finally, we had fabulous Christmas Party! It was truly fantastic to see so many like-minded families in one room. There were a TON of people that worked very hard to make this party a success. Foster parents, social workers and volunteers! Santa, Pathfinders, RBC, and Sandra St. Clair Photography are a few of the external people and organizations that volunteered their time and services during this event.

Santa, with the help of our energetic elf, Jen Y, made sure all of our kiddos got a gift and some special one on one time with the big guy. The Pathfinders and RBC helped decorate, clean up and execute many activities. Sandra St. Clair Photography and Angela gave our families an opportunity to capture some memories that will last a lifetime. The mini photo shoot went off without a hitch and the pictures we received are stunning. So many foster parents helped plan and execute the party. Janine, purchased and brought what seemed like a truckload of food and decorations. Ruby, had RBC hook us up with various supplies like the table coverings. She also arranged for volunteers from RBC, a local Pathfinder group, and her family. Her family kept everyone safe on the bouncy castle and her son was non-stop, doing everything he could to ensure the party ran smoothly. Roxanne S, planned, purchased and with the help of some volunteers executed the most adorable Christmas craft. Calvin, kept the food table fully stocked and organized. He also methodically took care of the set up and tear down. Denise L, baked and donated DOZENS of the most stunning and delicious cupcakes that you have ever seen. Jen Y, managed the music and Santa. She made sure the kids got their gifts and their loved ones got pictures of the excitement. Lori and Diane from the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association contributed as well! Lori and her daughter welcomed our families as they arrived, they discreetly placed Christmas gifts under the tree, and at times they helped FP's with kiddos that were overstimulated. Lastly, as our families departed they took with them some reindeer food that was prepared by Diane.

We started off 2019 with a meeting in January. Some of our goals for the 4th quarter include getting a monthly grief support group off the ground, having an Easter Party and setting up a recycling program. Angela secured a fabulous donation for our families to enjoy in March, the Nevaeh Fan Stand donated over 80 tickets to a Growlers Game!

Lastly, we have our Facebook group up and active! If you are a Foster Parent in the Metro/CBS area be sure to join! We will inform foster families of our events via email and our Facebook group.

Daphne Richards, Chair

**It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely
try to help another without helping himself.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Foster Parents Share Experiences

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. While not everyone is comfortable writing about themselves; 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.

*She understands that as a foster family we will care for the girls for a "while,"
that we are their family for now, but likely not forever.*

Nearly nineteen months have passed since we made the hasty and life-changing decision to care for two little girls who needed a home. As a first-time foster family we really had no idea what lay ahead but it has been an amazing journey. I went alone by plane to bring the girls to our home. I will never forget the moment I first saw them or the way the littlest one cried when her mom handed her to me when it was time to board the plane. They were truly brave! I sometimes try to put myself in their shoes and it amazes me how courageous these little ones have to be when they leave everything they know and are immersed into a new community, new home and new family.

Nineteen months is a long time in the life of a child. Two birthdays, two summers, two Christmas seasons and nearly two school years. They have long settled into a life with us as we have settled into a family of five. They have made many friends, are involved in the community and have settled into our school.

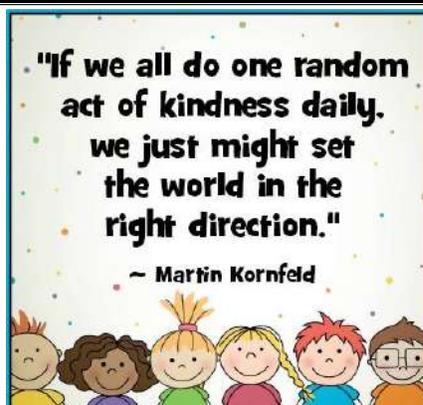
Our daughter, an only child and just six years old when they joined our family, embraced the girls like she'd been waiting her whole life for their arrival. She has had to share everything: her parents, her home, her toys/things, her friends and her extended family. It has been truly amazing to watch how they have become an important part of her life. She understands that as a foster family we will care for the girls for a "while," that we are their family for now, but likely not forever.

We have had our struggles but the girls have brought us much joy as we watch them grow and learn, as we celebrate accomplishments, as we witness the sparkle in their eye on Christmas morning, and as we look toward whatever the new year brings.

Nineteen months ago we made a decision that in the end will impact the lives of two little girls even more than it impacts our own. Looking back I can confidently say that I'd make the same decision all over again.....Years from now I hope two young women will say that the decision we made was the right one.

Carla Colbourne

Thanks for sharing you experience Carla!



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.



Madison, age 12

**Madison, Thanks for the great artwork.
It is awesome!**

Teen Corner

For Teenagers: A Guide to your Parents

Is your relationship with your parents more difficult than it used to be? Even if you got along great all through your childhood, it's normal to experience more frequent conflict and misunderstanding in the teen years. Teens often feel that adults don't understand them, but you may also have a hard time understanding your parents. This article might give you some insight into how your parents are thinking, and help you communicate with them more effectively.

Why do your parents act the way they do?

Why do parents put so many demands and expectations on teenagers? Why do they make such a big deal out of so many things? The short answer is, they're worried. They know the kinds of trouble teenagers can get into. Some of them got into trouble themselves as teens.

They worry that you'll hang out with the wrong crowd, that you'll get (or make somebody) pregnant, that you'll drink too much and pass out in a ditch or get into a car driven by a drunk friend. They worry that you might be sexually or physically assaulted. They worry that if you fall behind in school, you won't get a good enough education. They also worry because they feel they are running out of time.

Parents know their job is to prepare you for adulthood, and by the time you get to be 15 or 16 they might think they have to try even harder to teach you good habits and values. Above all, they worry because they care about you. So, even if it seems like a pain sometimes to have a parent demand to know where you are going, what you'll be doing, when you'll be home and if your homework is done, try to see the plus side. They care about what happens to you. That's a good thing.

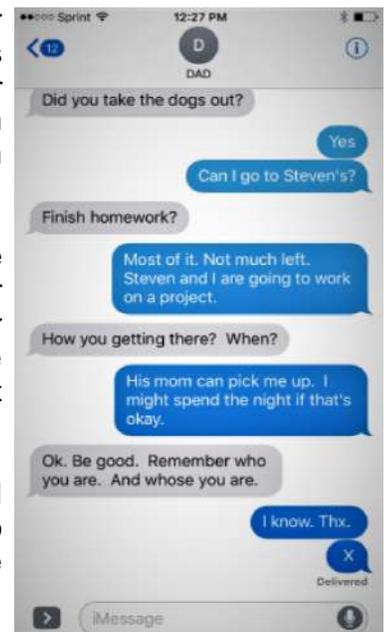
Helping your parents worry less.

Less worried parents means less hassle for you. Here are a few things you can do to help your parents have confidence in you and feel less of a need to worry about you.

Stay in touch: Nothing makes parents worry more than not knowing where you are or when they'll hear from you. It's not like you have to keep them informed of your every move. But taking some initiative for staying in touch, rather than always making them hunt you down, will reduce your parents' anxiety and increase their confidence in you. That should get them off your back a little bit. So try letting them know where you are going, if you won't be home for dinner, or how they can get in touch with you (if you don't have a cell phone).

Show them you have a plan: If you want to do something your parents aren't sure they are comfortable with, showing them what your plan is might increase your chance of getting their permission. For example, if you want to go to an event a fair distance from home, how are you getting there? Where are you staying for the night? Is there a phone number they can reach you at? How are you going to get home?

Be reliable: Parents worry more when kids don't seem reliable. If you usually call when you're going to be late getting home and follow through when you agree to do something, your parents should develop more confidence and trust in you. On the other hand, if you said you'd spend your Sunday afternoon on your history essay, don't be surprised if they get upset if they find you playing video games at 2pm.



Talking so Parents will Listen

Teenagers often say parents don't understand. Meanwhile, parents say kids don't listen or won't talk. Regardless of whose fault it is, you can only control what you do. And any positive step you take in the communication department helps your parents be more positive with you. Here are some things you can try:

Initiate pleasant conversations: Some parents and teens have no trouble finding things to talk about. But for others conversations are often tense or strained. As a result, the teenager avoids talking to the parent, which frustrates the parent even more. You can see where this is going. If that's your situation, it can help if you start up neutral, positive conversations every once in awhile, when you're both in a reasonably good mood. Try telling Mom or Dad a funny or odd thing that happened at school or ask how their day went. If you have more pleasant, relaxed conversations about everyday things, it might help move you in the direction of better overall communication.

Try not to fan the flames of anger: You and your parents are going to get mad at each other sometimes. It's normal. The trick is to avoid saying or doing things that make it worse, such as insults, sarcasm and yelling. Remember, angry, upset parents sometimes do unreasonable things — like take away cell phones or computers for a month. Obviously parents have a big responsibility to keep anger from escalating, but you can help too.

Tell them when you'll do the tasks and chores they want you to do: One common source of parent-teen conflict occurs when the parent asks a teen to do something and the teen says, "I'll do it later." To a parent, later sounds like, "I'll just keep putting it off and then you'll forget about it." That often leads to nagging. You are more likely to get agreement about delaying chores by committing to a time that works for you: "I'll do it right after I finish watching this video, which will be in about an hour."

Ask for their help: Teenagers are sometimes reluctant to ask for help because they don't want to be lectured about why they should have avoided the problem in the first place. But asking for your parents help in solving everyday problems is a good way to initiate some positive communication and build your relationship. And parents can actually be a big help sometimes

Raising difficult topics: Bringing up difficult topics with parents is seldom easy. One good tactic is to start right off by telling your parents that this could be a difficult conversation but that you really want to talk. "I don't think you're going to like what I have to say, but you need to know about this and we need to work things out." That signals to your parents that this is serious, so they need to be on their "best behaviour." Parents don't like to get bad news, but they do want you to be open with them and seek their help

Tell them what you need from them: Before you approach your parents, think about what you want out of the conversation and tell them. "I need your advice," or "I'm have a problem and I need help," or "I just need you to listen." Parents will often respond very well to a direct and sincere statement about what you want from them.

Pick a good time: If possible, try not to start a potentially difficult conversation when your mom or dad is already upset or stressed out (or when you are). Pick a calm moment when you both have time to talk. However, don't delay if it is something really urgent.

When you're in BIG trouble.

If you've done something really wrong, and you know it, the best way to reduce your parent's angry reaction is to take responsibility for what you did right away. "Look, I know I shouldn't have done that. I don't know what I was thinking, but I really regret it." If you feel that you've been unfairly blamed, by all means tell your side of the story. But own up to your mistakes. If you spend most of your time defending yourself, your parents will most likely feel they have to counter that with a strong response to show you that you were wrong.

You may get an upset, angry response at first, but try not to take it too personally. The truth is, much of the anger parents express when teenagers get in big trouble is either about the parents' fear of the even worse things that could have happened, or their anger at themselves for not being able to prevent what did happen.

What to say when your parents are being unreasonable

Whether or not parents are actually being unreasonable depends partly on whether you're the kid or the parent. But most teens feel their parents are unreasonable at times. When that happens to you, here are some tactics you can try.

- Ask what their concerns are. Don't tell them they are stupid to be concerned. Find out what's worrying them — maybe you have solutions for some of their concerns.
- Ask what you could do to help them be comfortable with the situation.
- Give them as much information as you can. Parents often say no simply because they don't feel they have enough information to be able to say yes.



In the end, you may still lose the argument. But even so, these tactics may help you negotiate successfully more often in the future.

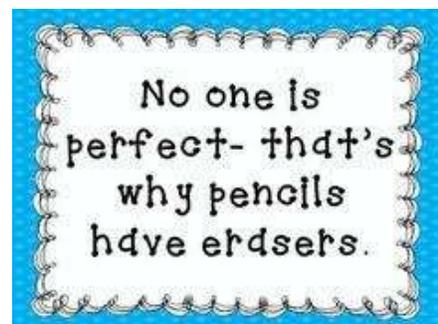
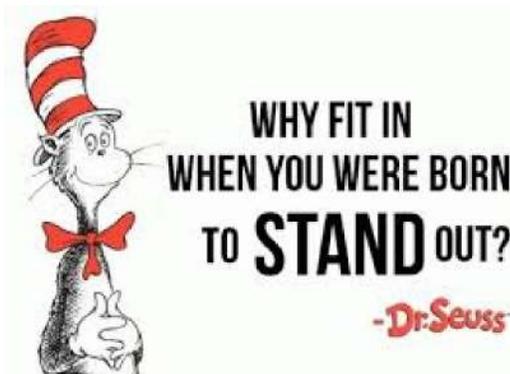
When your parents disapprove of your style

Sometimes a teen's choice of hairstyle, clothing, music, or some other aspect of a teenager's interests, is really upsetting to his or her parents. Honestly, there may not be that much you can do to fix this problem (unless, of course, you're willing to tone down your wardrobe to make your parents happy). All you can do is keep finding little ways to help your parents remember that behind that piercing, tattoo or hairstyle is their child who is a good person. Sometimes it takes parents a while to get used to teen culture. Relationships may even be strained for a few years. But don't give up. Difficult parent-child relationships often "come back" when the teen years are over.

If you're having serious problems with your parents

Find someone to talk to about it, perhaps a guidance counsellor at your school, a close friend, or an adult you can trust, such as a teacher or relative. If you don't know who to turn to, call Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868. They have trained counsellors available 24 hours a day and can connect you with local services if that's what you need.

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Children's Pages

Banana Snowman

Ingredients: 1 banana, peeled and sliced (3 banana slices for each snowman), 5 mini chocolate chips, 1 pretzel stick, 1 baby carrot, 1 strawberry, sliced into quarters

Directions:

- Take three banana slices and line them up as illustrated.
- Use two mini chocolate chips for the eyes.
- Use the other three for the buttons on the snowman.
- Slice a sliver of the carrot off and poke it under the eyes to serve as the nose.
- Break the pretzel stick in half and poke into the middle banana slice for arms.
- Place one of the strawberry quarter slices above the top banana slice to serve as the hat.



Olaf the Snowman

What you need: toilet paper roll, white construction paper, black and orange pom poms, 2 googly eyes, Fine point black marker, 2 twigs for arms, 3 tiny twigs for hair, glue stick, scissors, white craft glue, stick pin, toothpick



Directions:

- Cover the cardboard tube in white construction paper using a glue stick.
- Cut 2 circles from additional white paper and glue them to the bottom of the tube for Olaf's feet.
- Glue black pom poms to the front of the cardboard tube.
- Roll the orange pom pom to flatten it out a bit and glue it on for the nose.
- Glue the googly eyes above the pom pom nose.
- Use a black pen to draw the eyebrows, smile and tooth.

The easiest way to make a hole in the side of the cardboard tube (for the arms) is to poke a stick pin through it first, then poke a toothpick into the hole to make it larger. Now you can poke the twigs through the hole. Glue the small twigs (mine are actually leaf stems I found outside) inside the top-front of the tube.

Riddles

Valentine Word Search Fun

T R A E H F
S E F U R Y
S Q E I S D
I E E W Q N
K N Y J S A
D I P U C C

CANDY HEART
CUPID KISS
FRIEND SWEET

What are some other words
that relate to Valentine's Day?

Q: What 5-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?
A: Short

Q: Why did the math book look so sad?
A: Because it was full of problems.

Q: Why did the cookie go to the emergency room?
A: Because he felt crummy.

Q: In a one-story red house, there was a red person, a red cat, a red dog, a red table, a red chair, a red telephone, a red shower— everything was red! What colour were the stairs?
A: There weren't any stairs, it was a one-story house.

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, 2019 Copy the page and share it with a friend!

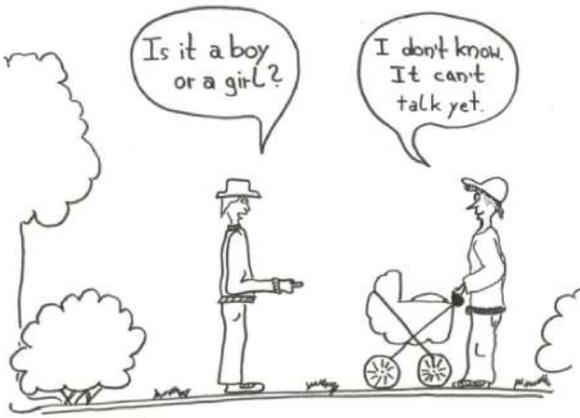


Name: _____
Town: _____
Postal Code: _____
Age: _____

Address: _____
Province: _____
Telephone: _____

Educational Section

Gender Identity



Although we often associate gender development with puberty and adolescence, children begin showing interest in their gender early in life. This article discusses how gender identity typically develops and how parents and caregivers can promote healthy gender development in children. It's important to remember that each child is unique and may develop at a different pace.

What we mean by gender: Some useful terms

Assigned sex: When children are born, they are assigned "male" or "female" based on their external sex organs. When a child has a penis, the assigned sex is male. When a child has a vulva, the assigned sex is female. In rare cases, a child is born with external sex organs that are not clearly male or female.

Gender identity: Gender identity is "who you know yourself to be". While gender has generally been used to mean male or female, we now understand that gender exists on a spectrum. A person's gender identity may be male, female, or it may be somewhere in between, including "neither" or "both".

Gender expression: This is how you express your gender to others, whether through behaviour, clothing, hairstyle, or the name you choose to go by. Words to describe someone's gender expression could be "masculine," "feminine," or "androgynous".

Sexual orientation: This refers to the gender of the people to whom you are typically sexually and/or romantically attracted. A person can be attracted to those of the same gender and/or different gender(s). Your gender identity does not define your sexual orientation.

Transgender: When a person's gender identity is not the same as their assigned sex at birth, they may be referred to as "transgender" (often shortened to "trans"). For example, a child born with female body parts may say that they are a boy. A child may also say that they are not a boy or a girl, but just "themselves" because they don't want their sexual characteristics to define who they are. Indigenous people may use the term "two-spirit" to represent a person with a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics.

Gender dysphoria: Describes the level of discomfort or suffering associated with the conflict that can exist between a person's assigned sex at birth and their true gender. Some transgender children experience no distress about their bodies, but others may be very uncomfortable with their assigned sex, especially at the start of puberty when their body starts to change.

How does gender identity develop?

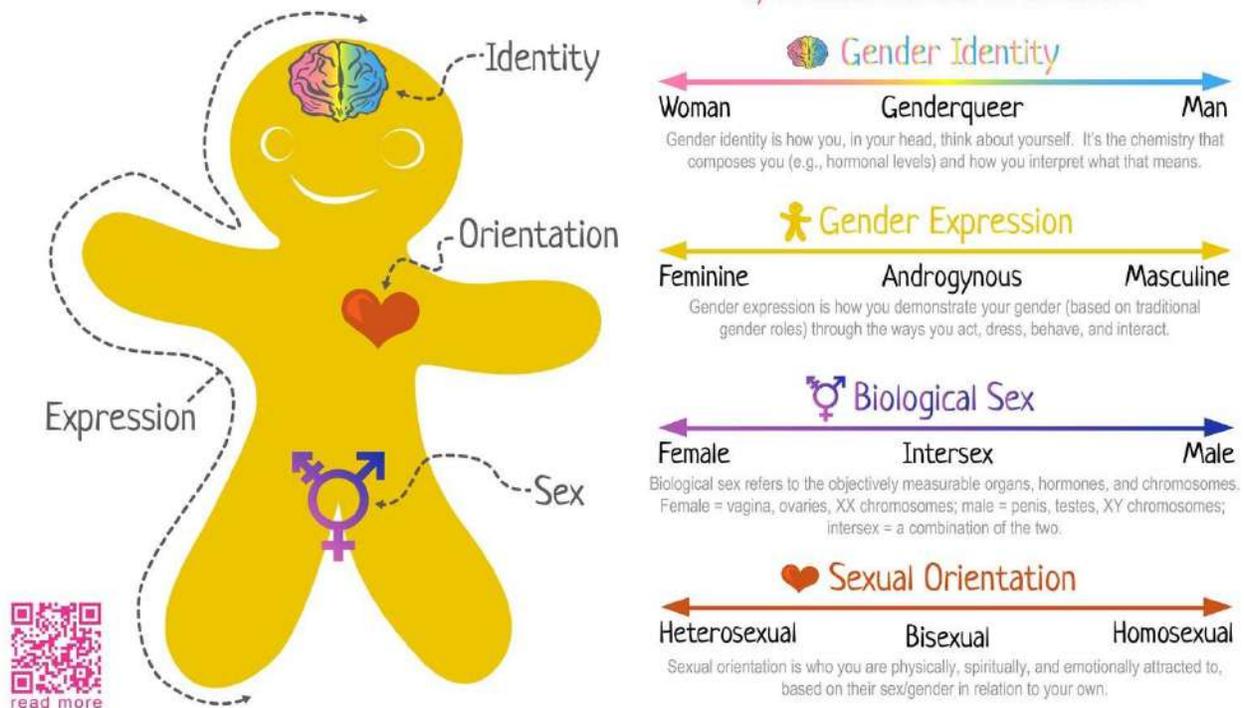
Most children have a strong sense of their gender identity by the time they are 4 years old. Here is what you can typically expect at different ages:

- **2 to 3 years old:** At around 2 years old, children are aware of physical differences between boys and girls. Most children can identify themselves as a "boy" or "girl", although this may or may not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Some children's gender identity remains stable over their life, while others may alternate between identifying themselves as "boy" or "girl", or even assume other gender identities at different times (sometimes even in the same day). This is normal and healthy.

- **4 to 5 years old:** While many children at this age have a stable gender identity, gender identity may change later in life. Children become more aware of gender expectations or stereotypes as they grow older. For example, they may think that certain toys are only for girls or boys. Some children may express their gender very strongly. For example, a child might go through a stage of insisting on wearing a dress every day, or refusing to wear a dress even on special occasions.
- **6 to 7 years old:** Many children begin to reduce outward expressions of gender as they feel more confident that others recognize their gender. For example, a girl may not feel that she has to wear a dress every day because she knows that others see her as a girl no matter what she wears. Children who feel their gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth may experience increased social anxiety because they want to be the same as their peers, but realize they don't feel the same way.
- **8 years old and up:** Most children will continue to identify with their sex assigned at birth. Pre-teens and teens continue to develop their gender identity through personal reflection and with input from their social environment, like peers, family and friends. Some gender-stereotyped behaviours may appear. You may notice your teen or pre-teen making efforts to "play up" or "play down" some of their body's physical changes. Others are more confident in their gender identity and no longer feel like they have to portray a perfectly masculine or feminine appearance. As puberty begins, some youth may realize that their gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. Because some children's gender identification may change, especially around puberty, families are encouraged to keep options open for their child.

The Genderbread Person

by www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com



How do most children express their gender identity?

Younger children may express their gender very clearly. For example, they may say "I am a she, not a he!", "I am not your daughter, I am your son."

Children may also express their gender through their:

- Clothing or hairstyle
- Choice of toys, games, and sports
- Social relationships, including the gender of friends
- Preferred name or nickname

Remember: Gender expression is different from gender identity. You can't assume a child's gender identity based on their gender expression (for example, their choice of toys, clothing, or friends).

My little boy likes to wear dresses. Should I let him?

Some children go through a phase of resisting gender expectations. Remember that gender expression and gender identity are two different things. The way you express yourself does not necessarily define your gender.

Children do best when their parents or caregivers show them that they are loved and accepted for who they are. Discouraging your child from expressing a gender can make them feel ashamed. Give them unconditional support. In doing so, you are not framing a gender, but simply accepting who they are and how they are feeling.

For most children, this is usually a phase. No one can tell you whether your child's gender identity or expression will change over time. What children need to know most is that you will love and accept them as they figure out their place in the world. In older children, you can also gently help prepare them for negative reactions from other children, for example, by role-playing how best to confidently respond to teasing.

What does gender-creative mean?

Gender-creative children express their gender differently from what society may expect. For example, a boy who loves to wear pink or a girl who insists on wearing her hair very short might be considered "gender-creative". Society's expectations for gender constantly change and vary in different cultures and at different times in history.

I think my child may be transgender. What should I do next?

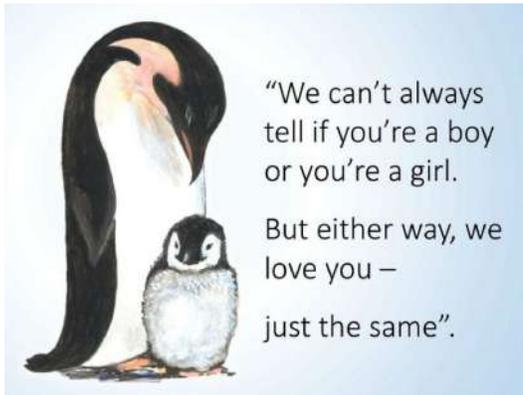
There is nothing medically or psychologically wrong with your child. Gender diversity is not a result of illness or parenting style. It isn't caused by letting your son play with dolls, or your daughter play with trucks.

If your child is transgender or gender-creative, they can live a happy and healthy life. Get support from other parents of transgender and gender-creative children, or talk to a mental health professional who specializes in the care of transgender and gender-creative children (if available in your community). Indigenous families can talk to a two-spirit elder or leader.

**If there were one word that could act as a standard of conduct for one's entire life,
perhaps it would be thoughtfulness.**

Confucius

How can I support my child?



Strong parent support is key!

- Love your child for who they are.
 - Talk with your child about gender identity. As soon as your child is able to say words like "girl" and "boy," they are beginning to understand gender.
 - Ask questions! This is a great way to hear your child's ideas about gender.
 - Read books with your child that talk about many different ways to be a boy, a girl, or somewhere in between.
-
- Don't pressure your child to change who they are.
 - Find opportunities to show your child that transgender and gender-diverse people exist and belong to many communities who appreciate and love them.
 - Ask your child's teachers how they support gender expression and what they teach about gender identity at school.
 - Be aware that a child who is worrying about gender may show signs of depression, anxiety, and poor concentration. They may not want to go to school.
 - Be aware of potentially negative issues that your child may face. Let your child know that you want to hear about any bullying or intimidation towards them.
 - If you are concerned about your child's emotional health, talk to your child's family doctor, paediatrician, or a mental health professional that specializes in the care of transgender and gender-creative children.
 - Some parents have a hard time accepting that their child's gender identity is different than their assigned sex at birth, often in cultures where this is not easily accepted. If you are having difficulties, please seek additional help through websites, printed resources, support groups or mental health providers.

Source: www.caringforkids.cps.ca

What's all the fuss about Fortnite?

I want to write about the dreaded 'f' word that's causing angst in many families. Fortnite! (Not that word!)

In the last couple months, I've been inundated with questions from parents both online and during my Parent Seminars about the game Fortnite.

There have been numerous blog posts written and also shared on social media and stories on popular news and TV programs suggesting that families were being 'destroyed' by Fortnite and that boys, in particular, were being harmed by their Fortnite 'addiction'. One Facebook post alone garnered over 60,000 comments regarding whether kids were 'addicted' to the game.

This type of scaremongering has caused many parents concerns. So in this blog post, I want to arm you with facts, not fears, so that you can make an informed choice as to whether Fortnite is a good fit for your kids and family. I'll also arm you with practical, realistic tips so if your family elects to use Fortnite, you can do so in a way that doesn't compromise your child's health and wellbeing.

What is Fortnite?

Chances are that if you've kids aged between 6 to 16 years, they're asking for (maybe even begging or pleading), or perhaps even playing Fortnite. Fortnite Battle Royale (which is the version of the game your child wants to play) is a multi-player shooting game where up to 100 players simultaneously play. There is another version of the game (probably the version of the game your child hasn't asked for) called Save the Day where they play by themselves in solo mode.



In its simplest form, Fortnite is a shooting and killing game. The purpose is to literally survive by killing other players- be the last person standing and you're declared the winner. In order to win, players need to build infrastructure to protect themselves and accumulate additional weapons to attack. Unlike other shooting games, with Fortnite Battle Royale, once you are dead, that is it. You cannot be 'respawned' nor given a second life, as is often the case in other games.

However, the violence is significantly less graphic than other shooting games which many kids and adolescents are playing (for example, World of Warcraft, Grand Theft Auto V, Sniper Elite 4 and Resident Evil 7 Biohazard). This is in part due to the cartoon depiction of characters (in some video games the graphics are so sophisticated and life-like it's sometimes difficult to recognise their animations) and also to the violent scenes shown in the game (there's minimal on-screen distressing content).

It's estimated that up to 40 million people are playing this game worldwide. While it is essentially a 'free' game, there are of course additional purchases that can be made.

Why do kids love it so much?

The 'free' element is obviously appealing to many kids. Players can unlock new items as they progress in the game, without paying anything (which can of course add to the 'obsessive' nature some players develop). However, players can purchase a 'Premium Battle Pass' to gain access to exclusive clothing and items and again your performance and ongoing participation in the game is rewarded with more options available in the shop.

The playful humour and cartoon-like characters are also appealing. Players can engage in dance moves in the game, making it quite light-hearted and fun. Some of these dance moves have transferred off-screen and have 'gone viral' with most parents having seen (maybe even attempted) the 'floss' (which is the 2018 equivalent of the 'dab' I am told). This social appeal makes the game even more appealing and adds to the social capital that the game has cleverly established (English soccer players were recently seen talking about the game at the Soccer World Cup).

It can also be played on a range of devices- Computers, PlayStation, Xbox and smartphones, meaning it can and is literally played anywhere, everywhere and at anytime (I've had kids tell me they're playing Fortnite in their Geography lessons). Again, the ease of access has resulted in its appeal and widespread adoption.

However, it's the multi-player aspect that's really why this game has had mass appeal. Kids are biologically wired for relational connection. They want to feel like they belong and playing in this online, interactive format, is socially appealing. Many kids have also started to form teams or groups to play as either a duo or squad. When they're playing with their peers, there's a sense of comradery and this social allegiance makes it a very difficult game to switch off. "Mum, I'll let my team down if I turn it off now," is a phrase many parents hear when they request that their child switches off. Again, this social appeal is very strong amongst kids and teens.

What do parents need to be aware of?

Addiction concerns

The most common complaint I have from parents relates to concerns that the game is 'addictive'. There are compulsive loops built into the game, making it more enticing to keep playing (for example, you can unlock more features and purchase additional items in the shop, the longer you play). Fortnite also offers intermittent rewards. Statistically, kids will lose more than they'll win, but that elusive win, the adrenaline rush that they get from almost winning, is what keeps the enthralled and wanting more and more. This creates the state of insufficiency where players never feel like they're 'done' and rarely feel satisfied with their performance.

I shared a post on Facebook recently (of another blog post that adopted a scare-mongering approach) and I was inundated with personal messages from people telling me that their child was 'addicted'. Whilst I don't want to get bogged down in the scientific explanations of Internet addiction I want to say that in most instances it's unlikely that kids would be 'addicted' to the game, if applying medical, diagnostic criteria. The research tells us that only a very small percentage (<3% of kids would be considered as having a recognised 'gaming addiction'). Instead, it's much more likely that kids have formed some obsessive or problematic behaviours when it comes to playing Fortnite. I suggest that we see kids' problematic behaviours as a digital dependence or an obsession, rather than labelling it as an addiction (which is a very loaded term).

Whilst most Fortnite games last for between 15-25 minutes, some games can go on for longer periods, depending on the skill level of the player. However, after finishing one game, with so much adrenaline pumping through their bodies, or perhaps they were close to winning the previous game, players tell me that it's incredibly hard to stop after one game (I feel the same way about hot cinnamon donuts...one is never enough). It's also very difficult for players to stop mid-way through a game, as they'll literally die. So a simple strategy here is to give your kids ample warning before they switch off the game, so that they can complete a full game and not be forced to terminate mid-way in the game.

Time disappears for players

For many players, when they start playing they enter the psychological state of flow. This is where they become so enraptured and focused on what they're doing that they literally lose track of time. Time becomes meaningless when they're playing. So when your son looks at you with his puppy-dog eyes and pleads, "I've only just started playing..." And the reality is he's been playing for three hours, he's in that state of flow. This is why I think we're better to give kids boundaries around the number of battles they can undertake, as opposed to stipulating an amount of time they can play. For example, you might say, "You can have four battles today and then I want you to turn it off."

Cyber-bullying and cyber-safety concerns

As with all multi-player games, there are potential risks associated with kids being subject to cyber-bullying or being groomed by online predators. There is a text chat function in Fortnite, but it's rarely utilised by players as they find it too distracting to type and play simultaneously. Instead, many players engage in the voice chat function (which means that playing the game is often very noisy... which can be a good thing as it means it's unlikely that your child will try and play it in their bedrooms when they're supposed to be doing homework). However, I've had multiple parents telling me their child has encountered verbal abuse in this chat function.

Violent themes

We also can't shy away from the fact that it's a violent game. It's a shooting game and other players are killed. Some child development experts argue that boys are biologically wired to be mammoth-hunters and that playing these games caters for this innate desire. As I mentioned earlier, the cartoon-like graphics are nowhere near as confronting as some other shooting games that kids and adolescents play where their graphics are so

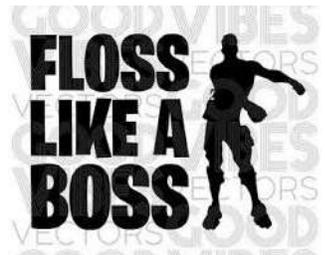
sophisticated that it's sometimes difficult to ascertain the difference between fiction and reality. However, Fortnite is still a game that promotes violence. Families each need to use their own moral compass as to whether this is something they're comfortable with and also determine if their child has the emotional resources and maturity to process such content.

We need to remember that kids have mirror neurons meaning that they are wired to imitate. So for younger children, typically under eight to ten years, who are still learning to distinguish fiction from reality, playing these types of shooting games can be problematic as they copy what they're watching and playing. We need to ensure, regardless of their age, that we have ongoing conversations with kids and teens about appropriate and socially-acceptable behaviour off-screen.

What are the potential benefits?

Despite the doom and gloom that Fortnite attracts, it's important to note that there are in fact some positive benefits associated with kids playing Fortnite.

Unlike watching TV or YouTube, playing Fortnite requires interactivity and engagement. Kids will engage in problem-solving and other higher order thinking skills such as collaboration, hypothesising, evaluating to participate in the game. They'll have to constantly evaluate their strategies and deploy better plans, based on their observations and experiences.



Given that most kids prefer to play in multi-player mode, chances are they're interacting with their peers, or other people. (I also acknowledge this can be dangerous if they're interacting with unsavoury people or being exposed to inappropriate language or concepts in voice chats). Kids are not only playing the game together but they're often spending their face-to-face social time discussing and dissecting the game and sharing tips and insights. This social collaboration is something we need to foster.

What can parents do to keep kids safe and healthy playing the game?

- Set limits – give kids quantities in terms of the number of battles they can play, instead of prescribing an amount of time they can play. “You can have three battles today and then I want you to turn it off.” It's impossible to ‘pause’ the game, as many parents have found out, so prescribing time limits is often met with frustration as kids can be almost at the point of victory and you demand that they switch it off to come to the dinner table- no wonder they're frustrated!
- Use parental controls – Gaming devices allow you to use parental controls to limit the length of gaming sessions. You can ban them from the game completely if you've realized it's not a good fit for your kids.
- Turn off voice chat – if your child is still in primary school I strongly advise that you don't allow your child to have voice chat. Some of the conversations are age-inappropriate and introduce language you don't want your child exposed to. Young kids also lack the social maturity and skills required to have these verbal conversations.
- Encourage your child to play the game in publicly-accessible areas in the home. Not only does this help you moderate and manage how long they're playing, it also makes it easier to check that they're not being harassed or groomed online.
- Play with your child or at least show an interest– kids love it when their parents or carers show an interest in their online pursuits. It shows them that you value what they're doing and also helps to subtly remind them that you're there to help should they hit turbulence. If parents are completely disinterested, or on the other spectrum if they completely prohibit these games, it can often drive behaviour underground.

- Restrict access at night and before school– this game can really hyper-arouse kids' and teens' sensory and nervous systems making it challenging to fall asleep or stay focused at school. If they're playing at night before bed, it can cause sleep delays (both from a brain that can't slow down and also from the blue-light emitted from the device). Also, we know at night that kids' and teens' prefrontal cortex stops working (this is the part of the brain that helps to make logical, smart decisions) and instead their amygdala turns on (this is their emotional brain) meaning they're much more susceptible to making careless choices and engaging in risky behaviour at night.
- Have ongoing conversations about violence and cyber-safety. These are not one-off conversations. You need to have them often as the technology and threats keep changing and your child or teen's brain is still developing so their memory-making skills are still developing (their prefrontal cortex which helps with working memory isn't fully developed until late 20s for males and early 20s for females).

Like any new fad or phase, it's highly likely that this too shall pass. Another new game or social media app will come along in due course and supersede Fortnite. In the interim, hopefully you now feel better equipped to make informed choices about how you handle the 'F' word in your house.

Source: www.drkristygoodwin.com/whats-all-the-fuss-about-fortnite/

Did you Know?

EI parental benefits are offered to parents who are caring for a newborn or newly adopted child or children.

There are two options available for receiving parental benefits: standard or extended.

- Standard parental benefits can be paid for a maximum of 35 weeks and must be claimed within a 52 week period (12 months) after the week the child was born or placed for the purpose of adoption. The weekly benefit rate is 55% of the claimant's average weekly insurable earnings up to a maximum amount. The two parents can share these 35 weeks of standard parental benefits.
- Extended parental benefits can be paid for a maximum of 61 weeks and must be claimed within a 78-week period (18 months) after the week the child was born or placed for the purpose of adoption. The benefit rate is 33% of the claimant's average weekly insurable earnings up to a maximum amount. The two parents can share these 61 weeks of extended parental benefits.

For more information visit www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-maternity-parental.html

**May the stars carry your sadness away,
May the flowers fill your heart with beauty,
May hope forever wipe away your tears,
And, above all, may silence make you strong.**

Chief Dan George

One-Minute Mindfulness

When life gets busy, it's easy to focus more on knocking items off of the to-do list and less on what you need to do for yourself. And this isn't just true for parents; kids can get overwhelmed by life too. So, we asked Julia Sen, a registered clinical and counselling psychologist in Toronto, for a quick and easy mindfulness exercise to give every family member a much-needed moment of self-care. It takes almost no time and gives everyone's oxytocin—the hormone behind the rush of warm and fuzzy emotions—a much-needed boost.

1. Come together in a room and have everyone find a comfy spot. Allow everyone a few moments to settle down.
2. Inhale for five seconds through the nose, and exhale for five seconds through the mouth or nose. Repeat three times.
3. Visualize holding a puppy or another sweet, small animal. (If puppies aren't your thing, anything that makes you feel tenderness and love works. For small children, give them stuffed animals and ask them to pretend their stuffies are snuggling them.) Hold this sensation for 30 seconds.
4. Repeat whenever and however many times you find helpful, but at least once.



If you're leading this activity with your family, remember to be in the moment too, so you get the same benefits as the others, or repeat on your own a few more times than the kiddos.

Source: ParentsCanada magazine, Spring/Summer 2018

Top Ten Tips When Disciplining Your Children

1. Be the leader and teacher in your home.
2. Discipline means "to teach."
3. Discipline does not mean "to punish."
4. Remain calm even if you have to fake it.
5. Set clear rules and follow through with consequences.
6. Consider your children's age and abilities when making demands.
7. Be flexible but don't "cave" to avoid conflict.
8. Be on the same page with others who discipline your kids.
9. Brainstorm with your kids to solve problems.
10. Build a loving relationship with your kids so they will listen to you.

Helping Kids with Sensory Processing Disorder

As many as 15 percent of school-aged kids are estimated to have sensory processing disorder.

It's a sticky summer's day. While kids rip across the splash pad, shrieking as the spray hits their faces and cools their gangly bodies, my six-year-old son, Jackson, sits on the sidelines, watching. He won't join them. If so much as a sprinkle of water touches his skin or clothes, he will scream as though he's been showered with acid, he'll cry and rage and insist that I change his (bone-dry) T-shirt.

Though my son's reaction may sound extreme, it's not rare. In fact, with an estimated five to 15 percent of school-aged children affected, sensory processing disorder (SPD) is more prevalent than autism spectrum disorder and just as common as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. For such kids, the world is simply too much. Too loud. Too bright. Food is either too soft or too crunchy. The labels and seams on clothes too scratchy. These aren't mollycoddled complainers who need to "toughen up," but children with a genuine physiological condition that affects how their central nervous system processes input from their senses (sight, sounds, touch, taste, smell and movement), leaving them under- or over-responsive to stimuli. For them, everyday activities like eating and dressing pose an almost intractable challenge and an ever-present threat.

An overlooked condition?

SPD first entered the popular lexicon when A. Jean Ayres described the sensory integration theory in her 1979 book, *Sensory Integration and the Child*. A 2013 study by the University of California in San Francisco identified through MRI imaging "quantifiable differences" in the brain structure of otherwise typically developing sensory-sensitive kids.

Yet, incredibly, since it often coexists with other disorders, SPD isn't formally recognized as a distinct psychiatric condition in the latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Unfortunately, that means many kids aren't getting the support and treatment they need. It's a reality that concerns Ellen Yack, a Toronto occupational therapist in practice for the past 35 years and co-author of *Building Bridges Through Sensory Integration: Occupational Therapy for Children with Pervasive Developmental Disorders*. "It still amazes me how many doctors are not aware of this problem and make parents feel guilty for accommodating their child's sensory needs, or who refer kids to behaviour therapists who use punishment strategies when children have a neurological problem that is causing them distress," says Yack.

Erin Walsh, a mom of two from Waterloo, Ont., can relate. Her seven-year-old daughter, Ava, was diagnosed with SPD at age four. When Monday morning rolls around, Walsh has on hand an arsenal of at least three potential school outfits—the same soft pair of yoga pants in an assortment of colours, loose-fitting underwear, seamless socks and carefully chosen shoes—that can be swapped at the last minute. "Hair brushing has to be done in five or six segments in a morning, because she can't handle it," says Walsh. "A stroke of the hairbrush can send her into a full-on meltdown because it hurts her so much."

And so for kids like Jackson and Ava, the world shrinks and constricts little by little until many rich childhood experiences are off-limits. No playdough or fingerpaint. No bare feet on the beach or on the grass. No birthday parties, fireworks or amusement parks. Even at home there is the potential for crisis. The sudden roar of the hand blender can send my son howling and clutching at his ears.

How SPD affects behaviour

Yack says that we all respond to sensory input slightly differently. "Some people are irritated by tags in their collars, notice minor changes to their favourite bottled sauces or can't stand the sound of a chair scraping on the floor." It only becomes an issue to the extent that it inhibits and interferes with a person's day-to-day functioning. "For children with SPD," says Yack, "these inputs are not just irritating, but can significantly affect their behaviour and ability to participate successfully at home, school and in the community."

Stanley Greenspan, author of *The Challenging Child*, likens SPD to a car that is hard to keep on the road. Not surprisingly, when kids are working overtime to try to regulate their senses, their behaviour isn't always exemplary. At school, they may disrupt the class or struggle to concentrate on lessons. In the thralls of an explosive reaction to stimuli, children may feel scared and out of control. Some withdraw, while others turn aggressive.

For parents, avoiding certain situations can seem like an easier prospect than dealing with the potential fallout, not to mention the waiting judgment of a bystander. "Because Ava can't control the noise or the feel of her environment, it makes for many tears and screams," says Walsh. "We get the dreaded looks from those who think we should control our spoiled child. Sometimes people feel bold enough to tell us what we should do and how we should do it."

The sensory "diet"

Typically identified between the ages of three and 10, children may see an occupational therapist (OT), who will prescribe a series of exercises designed to help them process stimuli. Depending on the child, a sensory "diet" can involve things like jumping on a trampoline, being squished in cushions, playing with shaving foam or having his body gently brushed. The idea is that gradual, low-dose exposure will ultimately result in a more adaptive response to certain stimuli.

Sadly there is no quick fix for SPD. With time and adequate support, however, kids may grow to develop their own coping mechanisms. Often it's a case of baby steps. Jackson's OT began by touching his face with a wet face cloth and moved onto squirting him with a bottle. Swimming seems far off, but I'm optimistic that he will someday come to, if not enjoy, then at least tolerate the pool.

In the lead up to Canada Day, Ava watched videos of fireworks. She was excited about the forthcoming display, but when the first of July rolled around, the booms and bangs in the sky were too much for Ava to bear.

"We're hopeful that with time and therapies and patience—lots of patience—we'll all be able to have a somewhat 'normal' life," says Walsh. "But perhaps most importantly, give Ava the capabilities to enjoy life with us and, one day, on her own."

Coping Strategies

Carolyn Dalglish, author of *The Sensory Child Gets Organized*, offers these suggestions:

- Map out a schedule

Look for patterns. Use checklists. Certain times of day are often more challenging than others. Breaking down a situation or routine (e.g. homework plan) into simple tasks on a whiteboard prevents a child from becoming overwhelmed.

- Use visual aids

Order and consistency are soothing. Sensory kids are often visual learners who thrive when they know the system. Label bins, drawers and baskets with photos.



- Create a chill-out zone for emotional times

Keep it clutter-free, quiet and dim. Some children favor a bottom bunk, the corner of a closet, even under a desk or table. Items you may wish to include: favorite books, noise-cancelling headphones, sensory toys, a beanbag chair and/or weighted blanket. The most important factor to note here is that the chill-out zone remains a refuge, not a place of punishment.

Managing SPD at school

Tips for teachers to make kids with SPD more comfortable in the classroom.

- Listening to calming music
- Fidget toys (even hair elastics) and inflatable cushions for long periods of sitting to help with focus and concentration
- Chewable jewellery for oral cravings
- Doing wall push-ups and jumping jacks for physical stimulation
- Self-brushing in a bathroom stall to provide deep pressure
- Stretching before and after periods of sitting
- Scheduled walking and movement breaks
- Ear plugs/muffs for fire drills and assemblies
- Special place (front or end) when lining up
- Classroom seating away from distractions like bright windows or noisy radiators



Source: Julie M.Green, FEB 2, 2016, www.todaysparent.com



FOUR LAUNDRY RULES EVERY KID FOLLOWS

1. KEEP EVERYTHING INSIDE OUT.



2. MAKE SURE UNDERWEAR IS ATTACHED TO PANTS.



3. DO NOT EMPTY POCKETS!



4. IF IT TOUCHES YOU, EVEN FOR A SECOND, IT'S DIRTY.



nice mom
Every night at 8pm ET

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