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Happiness Buffet

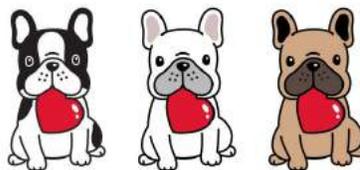


Happy New Year to you!
May every great new day
Bring you sweet surprises--
A happiness buffet.



Happy New Year to you,
And when the new year's done,
May the next year be even better,
Full of pleasure, joy and fun.

Joanna Fuchs



EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Eddie Newton (Chair)
Lori Hudson (Vice Chair)
Debbie O'Neil (Treasurer)
Lana Brennan (Secretary)

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CENTRAL REGION

Dawn Evelley Vacant
Gambo

LABRADOR REGION

Lori Hudson Vacant
Happy Valley-Goose Bay

GRENFELL REGION

Shirley Fowler **Marilyn Bridle**
Roddickton Red Bay

WESTERN REGION

Debbie O'Neil **Lana Brennan**
Stephenville Pasadena

ST. JOHN'S REGION

Eddie Newton **Angela Blundon**
Conception Bay South St. John's

EASTERN REGION

Melvina Elliott **George Blake**
Newman's Cove Hant's Hr.

Community Representatives

Susan Onalik
St. John's

Edward Nuna
Sheshatshiu

Youth Representatives

Brittani Dixon
Victoria

Jessica Wall
St. John's

Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development

Provincial Representative

Vacant

Regional Representative

Barry Rice
Baie Verte

Greetings from Board Chair



In the Fall the Board traveled to Clarendville for a Training Day and in-person Board meeting. The workshop topic for the day was Understanding and Healing the Impact of Trauma, delivered by Renee Piercey and Natalie Ginn from Waypoints. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend. I hope you enjoyed the session and learned something new and of value to assist you in your daily engagement with children in your care. We also did a Board Development session which was facilitated by Bettina Ford from the Community Sector Council.

It was great to meet our two newest Directors in person for the first time, Brittani Dixon and Edward Nuna. We also had to say so-long with a gift of appreciation to Board members Cathy Morris and Nicole Shuglo. Their active participation and support around the board table will be missed - thank you ladies! At our November meeting,

we also reviewed the progress we are making with our Strategic Plan and approved a new Reconciliation Plan for the Association.

Our next training day will be in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in March. Travelling to the Big Land is always a trip to look forward too! We encourage foster parents and social workers in the area to participate in this learning opportunity. There are great Local meetings and training sessions offered throughout the province and I do hope you are taking advantage of whatever is offered in your community.

This is an election year for the Board and we are looking for foster parents to fill some important roles locally and on the Board. I hope you will give some serious thought to committing to those roles, and connecting with Diane about them. We would certainly appreciate your support!

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

Why Ongoing professional development is so Important!

"The Trauma Informed Care session was one of the most informative and eye-opening sessions I have had - it allowed me to think about certain situations that occurred with children and left me wondering "why" and now I understand "why". Foster Parent

Please Mark your Calendar!

Annual Symposium

**June 5-7, 2020
Capital Hotel
St. John's**

Executive Director's Report

As I write this report we are two days back in the office following the eight day state of emergency in St. John's. The snow is piled up higher than the windows in my office, my street still only has one plow cut and I am enjoying the balmy -2 temperature. I really am looking forward to Spring!

November was a busy month with our travel in the Eastern and Central regions. We had meetings with foster parents in Harbour Grace, Marystown, Clarenville, Bonavista, Springdale, Gambo and for the first time Summerford and Fogo. We are very optimistic that we will have a new local in Summerford in the next couple of months. We also met with CSSD staff in Bay Roberts, Harbour Grace, Marystown, Bonavista, Clarenville and Lewisporte. Lori completed school presentations in various schools throughout these areas and we offered a Training Day in Clarenville in November. Renee Piercey and Natalie Ginn from Waypoints facilitated a full day session: Understanding and Healing the Impact of Trauma. We had twenty-eight people in attendance and feedback was extremely positive. I would encourage all foster parent to make the time to attend these educational opportunities when they are offered in your area. The importance of ongoing professional development cannot be overstated. The next Training Day will be in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in March.

After all the Fall travel it was great to get back in the office in December to catch up on other pieces of work. I participated in a Cultural Safety in Indigenous Health webinar and met with staff at the Centre for Innovation at Memorial University to discuss their training resources and ways we may be able to work together. I was also a guest on Vocm's On Target with Linda Swain which was a great opportunity to talk about the challenges/rewards of the fostering experience and the need for more homes.

In early January, I participated in a Youth Engagement Session organized by the Community Sector Council. It looked at ways of effectively engaging young people in meaningful ways. I had the opportunity to share some of our experiences in this area. We had Eastern Health do a presentation for staff on e-mental health services that are available in the province. If you want to have a presentation for your Local, you can contact Meghan Churchill and she will connect you with a resource person in your area.(See page 10 for more information).

I also met with Linda Clemens-Spurrell, the Assistant Deputy Minister in January to discuss a number of matters; some related to our Strategic Plan and others more general in nature. One of the issues raised was the need to have training for foster parents and social workers on developing cultural connection plans. Two sessions are already scheduled for social workers and the expectation would be that they will work with foster parents and other team members to develop the plans. We also talked about the importance of the Department offering a Train the Trainer for PRIDE to ensure there are trained foster parent who can facilitate with social workers. The ADM advised that the Waypoints Expansion Proposal is part of the discussion underway for the upcoming budget year. The ADM is always willing to meet whenever we feel it is necessary and we really appreciate this level of support.

We have now started using our new data management system ARMS which is a learning curve for all of us. So far, we are finding it much more efficient then our previous system. A huge thanks is expressed to Amy for all her work in importing all our existing information. You will be receiving information in the mail in the next little while explaining the new system. In November, our Board approved a Reconciliation Plan for the Association which will guide some of our work over the next few years.

We have already starting planning our 2020 Symposium which is being held June 5-7 at the Capital Hotel in St. John's. We hope you will consider joining us this year for an amazing weekend!

Diane



NUNATSIAVUT
kavamanga Government

Inosiagsiagiktotitsigasuannimi amma
Nunalinnik Pivalliatiksigasuannimi
Health and Social Development

Atelihai!/Hello,

The Child and Youth Advocate released a report titled, "*A Long Wait for Change – An Independent Review of Child Protection Services to Inuit Children in Newfoundland and Labrador*" on September 4, 2019 in Nain, NL. This is a public document and can be found here: <https://www.childandyouthadvocate.nf.ca/pdfs/IndependentReview2019.pdf>. The report indicates there are 150 Inuit children in care with 85 children placed in Labrador and 65 placed in Newfoundland. The need for more foster homes in the Nunatsiavut region is thus a priority for the Nunatsiavut Government.

We are excited to introduce our positions as the foster home recruitment and retention social workers with Nunatsiavut's Department of Health and Social Development. We work within a new program *Caring for our Children* and the program aims to recruit foster parents and caregivers as well as supporting current foster parents within the Nunatsiavut region. This support is offered in conjunction with social work staff from the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD).

As a current foster parent or caregiver our Department thanks you for opening your heart and home while helping to care for our children who require out of home placements. We strive to have children and youth grow up in an Inuit community where our children remain connected to their family and culture. This will support their sense of belonging and identity.

In our position, we will work closely with CSSD staff and the communities to help secure placements for children and youth needing out of home care. This includes recruitment efforts, completing foster home assessments and recommendations. We know that our most successful recruitment strategy is current foster parents. Your role is so important in caring for children and youth and helping to increase the number of foster homes available to children and youth.

Our hope in writing this is that you will encourage people living in the Nunatsiavut region or Upper Lake Melville to reach out and learn more about ways they can help support children and youth. Our contact information is as follows:

Krista Mogridge
Email: krista.mogridge@nunatsiavut.com
Phone: (709) 896-4417

Megan Edmunds
Email: megan.edmunds@nunatsiavut.com
Phone: (709) 896-9750

We encourage anyone to reach out to learn more about the new program, our positions or to pass on any suggestions and ideas.

Nakummek / Thank you,
Krista Mogridge & Megan Edmunds

Notice of Election Year for Board of Directors

2020 is an election year for our Board of Directors. The present Directors will be completing their terms in June at the Annual General Meeting. While some Directors can be elected for another three year term, others are completing their second term and have to leave in accordance with the bylaws. The Board is comprised of twelve foster parents, two youth Directors, two community Directors and government representation (ex-officio) and the Executive Director(ex-officio). Both our youth Directors and one of our community Directors have just started their first three year term. Susan Onalik, our second community Director will be leaving in June after completing two terms.

We ask all foster parents to consider this opportunity to represent foster families in your region at the provincial level. Participation on the Board is a great opportunity for personal and professional development. If you are interested in one of these positions, contact your Local Association prior to **March 15, 2020**. If there is no Local in your area, contact the Provincial Association office to express your interest. If elections are required, they will be coordinated by the Local Association or in the absence of a Local, by the Provincial Association through mail-in ballots.

Current Status of Foster Parents on the Board

St. John's Region

Edie Newton	completing second term, new director needed
Angela Blundon	completing first three-year term, new director needed

Eastern Region

George Blake	completing first three year term, eligible for re-election for one more term
Melvina Elliott	completing second term, new director needed

Central Region

Dawn Evelley	completing first three year term, eligible for re-election for one more term
Vacant	new director needed

Western Region

Lana Brennan	completing first three year term, eligible for re-election for one more term
Debbie O'Neil	completing second term, new director needed

Grenfell Region

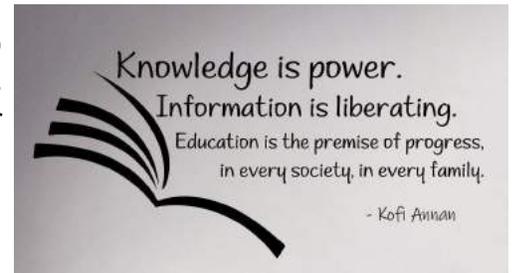
Shirley Fowler	completing second term, new director needed
Marilyn Bridle	completing first three year term, eligible for re-election for one more term

Labrador Region

Lori Hudson	completing term of Eunice Earle, eligible for two more terms in her own right
Vacant (North Coast)	new director needed

Waypoints Supporting Foster Parents Training

These sessions are free for Foster Parents and their assigned CSSD social workers. However, registration is required for all training sessions and we ask that you register by the date(s) indicated. Please confirm your attendance by emailing monicawhite@waypointsnl.ca or call 722-9377. The exact location of the training will be provided upon registration. Refreshments will be provided



February 26, 2020 - (6:30 – 8:30 pm) – Metro

Love Languages – Speaking and Understanding Emotional Love

Children express and receive love in different ways — some through acts of service; others through affirming words; still others through gifts, quality time or physical touch. Each of these expressions of love represents a different "language." Gary Chapman introduced this concept in his book *The Five Love Languages*. By understanding the five love languages, we can more easily discern the emotional needs of our children. This workshop will provide a description of each of the five love languages as well as opportunities to learn to identify our own and others' primary ways of expressing and receiving love. **Register by: February 21, 2020**

February 26, 2020 - (10:30 am – 1:30 pm) – Harbour Grace

Mental Illness in Children and Teens

How do we as caregivers recognize and support children and teens that might be experiencing mental illness? This presentation will cover some of the mental illness diagnoses and offer strategies to support young people, as well as looking at some of the community supports and services available. **Register by: February 21, 2020**

March 18, 2020 – (10:30 am – 12:30 pm) – Harbour Grace

Addictions – The Impact on Family

This introductory overview provides a basic awareness of substance use and abuse issues. It is intended to increase the foundational knowledge and skill base associated with understanding the process of addiction, the effect of drugs on an individual as well as explores some critical issues related to substance use and/ or addiction within a family. Through exploring the impact on family, it's intended to increase the knowledge level and skill base for those individuals working with or supporting those individuals and families where addiction is present. **Register by: March 20, 2020**

March 25, 2020 – (6:30 – 8:30 pm) – Metro

Increasing Resilience

Resiliency is often described as an ability to "bounce back" from challenging or adverse experiences. We sometimes refer to individuals, particularly children, as being resilient, as if it is an innate quality. This session will explore what resiliency is, and offer participants an opportunity to understand, recognize and increase resilience in themselves and others by offering practical strategies. **Register by: March 20, 2020.** *Please note this session can be attended in person at NLHHN Charter Ave., or by webinar.

Regional Reports

Central Region

Exploits Central Foster Families Association

Happy New Year Everyone!

Special thanks to Diane Molloy and Lori Petersen from Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association who were so willingly to meet with our Local in Springdale November 24. Thanks to all who attended. My advice to any foster parent would be to get involved if you ever get the opportunity to attend either a Local get together or a fostering educational session. You can trust me when I tell you that it is very beneficial for our children in care and yourself.

November 2019 was a month we will never forget. We had a terrible traffic accident in our area that took the lives of two precious children, their grandfather and another person. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the families involved.

On behalf of our Local, I want to send out a big CONGRATULATIONS to William and Doris Freake from Springdale who are retiring after 35+ years of fostering. They have impacted many children and families in that time. CSSD had a thank you reception for them in December with family and former children in care in attendance.

I would like to wish you all the best in 2020! We all look forward to a highly successful, healthy and productive year. If you have any ideas on what we can do together to strengthen our Local, shoot me a facebook message or email. coraleeroberts@nlesd.ca. Looking forward in hearing from you.

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

A yellow rectangular box containing the text: "WHAT DO PEOPLE DO WITH ALL THE EXTRA TIME THEY SAVE BY WRITING 'K' INSTEAD OF 'OK'?"

Eastern Region

Bonavista Foster Families Association

Our Local held its first meeting on November 13 which was also our annual visit from Diane and Lori from the Foster Families Association office. Cst. Rumbolt from the Bonavista RCMP detachment was also in attendance and shared with us information on local drug awareness, vaping and other issues that are relevant in our region. It was very informative and it was decided that maybe someone from the detachment could attend a Local meeting again in the future. Diane and Lori provided an overview of the work of the Foster Families Association and how they can be of help to foster families and provincial issues that are now being discussed at the Board and government tables. This was followed by a Q & A session and a social... part of which was done during an unexpected power outage.

Some ideas were also discussed for potential training sessions/workshops for our Local in the near future. It was encouraged by Diane, Lori and others that foster parents should avail of any training that is offered as one can always learn something new or be refreshed. Everyone was reminded that on November 16 there was a Training Day in Clarendville, the topic being, "Understanding and Healing the Impact of Trauma". At the time of our meeting, registration from our region was low despite reminder letters and emails going out. Some discussion was held on how training may become mandatory as part of annual review of foster parents and those in attendance agreed that it's something that should be strongly considered.....as the saying goes, "Every day is a learning day".

Our Local will now focus on some training/workshops for our Foster Parents, however, it can only be a success if we get folks attending. We hope to set a regular schedule for meetings throughout the rest of the Winter in order to encourage more foster parents to participate. We also hope to arrange for some presentations on local issues and matters, however, those activities/events again can only work and be successful when we have involvement and interest. We encourage those in our area to reach out to us and let us know what you would like to see your Local offer. Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 18 at 6:30 pm at the CSSD Office with notifications going out to foster families shortly.

As always, thank you to the CSSD office in Bonavista for your support.

Jim Miller, Chair

Burin Peninsula Foster Families Association

Our Local held a meeting in November to elect a new Chair as Melanie Smith and Ann Marie Legge decided to step down. On behalf of our members, I would like to thank Melanie and Ann Marie for everything they did during their time as Co-Chairs.

In October, CSSD staff in Marystown organized a lovely afternoon social to celebrate Foster Families month. This event was enjoyed by everyone who attended. Early in November, Diane and Lori were in Marystown for their annual meeting and there was some great conversation and information shared. We are already looking forward to their next visit.

We had a Christmas party in December with lots of fun, food and of course a visit from Santa (not all our kids were impressed lol). We are planning some winter activities such as sliding, winter walks and a fun party at our local YMCA. Wishing everyone a safe and fun filled winter.

.... "you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think"
Christopher Robin

Pauline White, Chair

Bay Roberts/Harbour Grace Foster Families Association

Happy New Year! We wish everyone a safe, happy and healthy 2020.

We had a Local meeting in November and were very happy to have Diane and Lori in attendance. They covered a number of very informative and interesting topics. Thanks so much Ladies for visiting with our Local and sharing your vast knowledge with us! At that meeting, we decided to have a follow up meeting in order to elect a new Treasurer for our Local in order to fill that vacant position and to decide on future opportunities that we can explore in our area. We encourage all foster parents to attend this meeting so we can plan our future as a group and to explore some possibilities for activities with our children in care.

We are also in the process of setting up a Facebook group for the foster parents in our area. If you do not get an invitation to join, please contact either Anne Marie Tilley or myself. I can be contacted via email at kimnewman@hotmail.ca, on my cell at 589-8686 or Kim Gosse Newman on Facebook or Messenger. 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

Western Region

Deer Lake-Pasadena Foster Families Association

Happy New Year to you all! Hope that this year is the best ever and that it has started on a good note for each and every one of you! My resolution is to not stay mad or hold a grudge; and surprisingly, it has been working! My days are much better because of it!

We had our Foster Family Appreciation Party on October 24. It was held at the Hub in Pasadena with a Halloween theme. Several families came out from the Deer Lake, Pasadena, and Corner Brook area. A good time was had by all. On November 19, we had Agnes McGrath, from Addictions and Counselling, speak to our Local about Teens, Drugs and how to teach your child to say No to Drugs. It was a very interesting presentation with some great ideas for parents! Unfortunately, our Christmas party was cancelled on Dec 8. With so many things on the go during December and so many commitments, we were looking at only a couple of families who could commit. We may look at holding it in November next year. We are certainly open to suggestions!

In my role as a Director on the provincial Board, I attended the Fall In-Person Meeting and Training Day in Clarendville on the weekend of November 15-17. We had a full day session on Trauma Informed Care and Dealing with Challenging Behaviors. It certainly was a great learning session and so nice to meet Foster parents from the area. We also had a board development session which was facilitated by Bettina Ford. What a motivational speaker! Some of the topics she covered included; role of a director, fiduciary responsibilities, confidentiality, communication and conflict resolution.

Our next Local meeting is going to be held next week over coffee! We are looking forward to seeing our parents and discussing ideas for the next few months.

Lana Brennan, Chair

Corner Brook-Bay of Islands Foster Families Association

Happy New Year!

It's been pretty quiet with our local. We are hoping to schedule some training in the near future. If any foster parents have any particular topics they want covered, please let me know.

Diane and Lori from the Provincial Association will be coming to Corner Brook on February 12 to meet with foster parents. The meeting will be at the CFFA office in Brakes cove at 6:30pm. I will email a reminder to everyone. Please make every effort to attend.

Stephanie Lowe, Chair

Stephenville Foster Families Association

Happy New Year!. Hope everyone had a great Christmas!

On December 1st we had our Christmas party with the best turnout ever, roughly 70 people! Santa also made a surprise visit and had presents for all the kids. We had pizza, garlic fingers and cake for everyone. There were lots of treats, thanks to all the foster parents who contributed. The children and adults enjoyed it very much! We didn't have a meeting in December but we will resume our regularly scheduled meetings on the last Thursday of January. Diane and Lori from Provincial office in St. John's will be coming out to meet with us on February 10.



The meeting will start at 6:30 and will be at the CSSD office in Stephenville. This is always a great opportunity to talk about our fostering experiences and learn more about the work of the Association. Hope many of you will be able to come to the meeting.

I want to add that this is my last term on the Provincial Board so we will need someone to take my place. It's a wonderful experience to meet so many people and learn so much. If anyone is interested in the position, please let us know. I can answer any questions you may have and share my experience with you.

Debbie O'Neil, Director

Labrador Region

Lake Melville Foster Families Association

Happy New Year from Upper Lake Melville!

As the new year takes off I would like to put my information out there. I am very interested in setting up a local in our area and if anyone is interested in being a part of the Local, please let me know. You can reach me on Facebook - Lori Hudson. You can also reach me through email - lhudson@innueducation.ca or via home telephone at 896-9025.

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much" - Helen Keller

Lori Hudson, Director

Grenfell Region

Grenfell Island

Hello from the beautiful snowy Grenfell Region and wishing everyone a very Happy New Year.

In November, I went to Clarenville to meet with other foster parents and social workers in the area for a workshop on Understanding and Healing the Impact of Trauma; the Community Sector Council also facilitated a Board Development session on the responsibilities of a Director; and we had an in-person Board meeting to finish up our weekend.

In December, we had an ugly sweater Christmas party. We had a great spread of food and an awesome ugly sweater cake. There were also some games for the children, a few draws for gift cards and an ugly sweater winner was selected. We had a great turn out with 87 in attendance. The kids went home with a little treat and it was an enjoyable night for all. We hope you all have a great Winter.

Well, this is the beginning of the end for me on the Provincial Board of Directors as my term will be up in June. It's been awesome meeting such a great group of people from all over Newfoundland and Labrador. The experience on the Board was a never ending friendship with people that are accepting and there to help you if you are new just coming on the board or you've been there for awhile. Now we need a new Director to represent our great region. So, if you would like to meet an awesome group of people and work with our Local, I encourage you to think about putting your name forward to take on this responsibility.

Shirley Fowler, Director

"Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things work out." Art Linkletter

St. John's Region

St. John's/CBS Foster Families Association

We ended 2019 on a great note with a huge Christmas Party on December 22. The Town of Paradise donated the venue, Dominos donated pizza, Verafin donated money for extra gifts for the children, Foster Parents donated door prizes and Denise baked and delivered absolutely delicious cupcakes. We were able to execute our largest social event yet with help from RBC, Girl Guides, Waypoints, Social Workers and Foster Parents. We would like to extend a genuine thank you to everyone who helped make our 2nd Annual Christmas Party possible. Because of your efforts, we were able to provide a safe place for our children to party and a fabulous environment for Foster Families to socialize with like minded people.

This past Fall, we have been thrilled to see new faces at our meetings and we welcomed Nicole Pittman to our Leadership team. We are pulling together some ideas to continue engagement strategies in 2020. Our Facebook group is hands down the best way to stay in the loop. If you need to be added please text me at 709-764-0525, or email daphne_r@live.ca.

Daphne Richards, Chair



Did You Know...

Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the provinces at the forefront of advancing e-mental health services. These services are important for many reasons; they are evidence based, improve access, give individuals greater choice and control, and promote early intervention and wellness. Did you know we currently have 16 e-mental health services in the province for a wide range of ages? If you'd like to learn more, visit bridgethegapp.ca or contact Meghan Churchill, Regional E-Mental Health Manager, to set up a presentation with your agency or team.

Meghan Churchill MSW, BSW, RSW
Regional E-Mental Health Manager
Mental Health and Addictions
Eastern Health
709-752-4618
meghan.churchill@easternhealth.ca



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.

I always believe in keeping the lines of communication open with their families

After my own children moved out to further their education, I decided to become a foster parent. It was something that had come to mind from time to time.

I have been fostering for twenty-three years now and still enjoys every day. My husband and I are currently caring for two girls who have been with us for ten years. The youngest turned 10 years old in January and she came to our home in January, 2010. She was placed in our care right from the hospital at four days old. Her older sister was placed in our care in April the same year at twenty-two months old. They are like our own children and we are now in the adoption process.

In the twenty-three years, we have had over fifty children and youth in our care. It has been the most wonderful, challenging, and rewarding opportunity to care for so many children and to know 90% of them still keep in touch by visits, facebook, cards on birthdays and Christmas. By rewarding, I mean to watch them grow into young adults, have their own families, go out into the workforce and work as team. One of my favourite memories is a young man who came back as a Dad and while introducing me to his girlfriend said, "this is the woman who taught me how to be a parent."

Children bring a smile when I realize that we made a difference even though sometimes when they leave, you are unsure if you impacted their life especially with teenagers. Most of the children came and stayed for a long time, until they were twenty-one. Some were short term and we also provided holiday and weekend and summer respite. With teenagers I learned at times to become one of them in order to understand them. I taught them to take each day forward and learn from their experiences whether good or not so good. I learned to listen and help them in any way I could.

One important factor, I always believe in keeping the lines of communication open with their families. Maintaining the family connections, as at the end of the day children need to know who they are and where they are from.

The experience of being a foster parent is an experience like no other. I can write a book and go on and on but my advice is to be the best you can and do it with a heart and a half. To be compassionate is very important.

Donna

Donna, Thank you for sharing your experience. You really highlight the importance of maintaining connections!

"Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind you." — Walt Whitman

"To those who see with loving eyes, life is beautiful. To those who speak with tender voices, life is peaceful. To those who help with gentle hands, life is full. And to those who care with compassionate hearts, life is good beyond all measure." Author Unknown

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.

I became really close with them and they became my family instantly.

I am the oldest in my family. We became a foster family when I was 11 and our first experience with a child in care gave me the chance to be the little sister. It also made me open my eyes about how I am a big role model for my little sisters.

I became really close with the children who came to our home and they became my family instantly. We watched movies and went swimming together, they showed me things that I would have never experienced; the things that made them who they are and who I wanted to be. It also inspired me to be the big sister that I am today with my two new foster sisters as well as my little brother and sister.

Our previous child in care left an emotional toll on my family. However, there will always be a place in our hearts for her and others who need a home. Just for the simple logic that everyone needs a home and more importantly a family to love. Especially if it means having an older sibling to admire or a younger sibling to be their role model.

No matter the situation, the person, the parents or their first impression. Everyone needs a home, where they are loved and cherished in the end.

Katelynn, age 15

Thank you Katelynn for sharing your story!

FUNDRAISING ORGANIZATIONS

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Teen Corner

Jealousy

Jealousy is an emotion that is typically experienced when you compare yourself to someone else, or want something that someone else has. It's common to compare yourself to friends, and sometimes this can cause jealousy. You may feel jealous about your friend's:

- dating relationships
- popularity
- grades
- family
- athletic ability or other talents
- clothing
- physical appearance

It's pretty common for friends to be jealous of each other, and it's not always obvious when someone is jealous. Feeling jealous is OK — what matters is how you deal with this challenging emotion.

Try not to compare yourself to others. Often, jealousy is a result of not feeling good enough. When you compare yourself to someone else, it can make you feel even more insecure. Remember that everyone has different strengths, including you.

Focus on what you have, not what you don't. Concentrating on your strengths and the things you're grateful for can help you feel happier with yourself.

Talk about your feelings with someone you trust. They may be able to point out some of the strengths you don't see in yourself, which could help to change your perspective.

Spend time with people who help you feel good about yourself. Hanging out with friends and family who appreciate and accept you for who you are can boost your confidence.

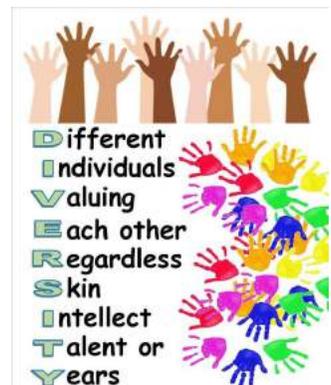
Source: www.kidshelpphone.ca

Embracing differences: What you can do about prejudice

Everyone has different beliefs, skills, looks and backgrounds. Sometimes, these differences can be the reason certain people are targets for prejudice. Everyone benefits from being around people with differences. Prejudice and discrimination is when people make assumptions based on these differences. This negatively impacts the people who experience prejudice.

People can be different in many ways including:

- moral beliefs
- cultural background
- physical appearance
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- intellectual strengths
- social preferences
- tastes, interests and hobbies





What is a stereotype? A stereotype is when someone assumes people of shared characteristics have certain attributes. Stereotypes can be dangerous and unfair to the individual(s) being judged. For example, believing that women are more emotional than men.

Prejudice is a belief

Prejudice is when someone makes a negative assumption about a person based on a stereotype. The assumption is usually based on a person's membership to a certain group. Prejudice also divides people based on stereotypes. Examples may include:

- Racism: negative attitudes toward certain races, ethnicities and cultures.
- Heterosexism: negative attitudes toward certain sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Sexism: believing sex and gender determine status.
- Ableism: believing physical and mental ability determine status.
- Religious intolerance: negative attitudes toward certain religious beliefs.
- Classism: believing economic class determines status.
- Lookism: believing appearance and looks determine status.
- Ageism: believing age determines status.

Discrimination is an action

Discrimination is when someone acts on their prejudiced beliefs. Examples may include:

- a person losing a job promotion to someone else (due to gender identity or sexual orientation)
- a person being watched by the authorities more than someone else (due to skin colour)
- a person being served after someone else in a store (due to class)

When a person hears or thinks negative things over and over, they may begin to believe they're true (even if they're not). People who experience discrimination often have lowered self-esteem.

They may feel:

- challenging emotions
- lacking control of their own life
- losing hope in the future
- unable to trust others

Discriminatory Bullying

Discriminatory bullying is when someone is targeted because they are perceived as "different" by someone else. This type of bullying is especially harmful because a person is being attacked for who they are. Discriminatory bullying can be based on:

- ethnicity
- skin colour

- religion
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- appearance
- abilities
- nationality

It's important to recognize that judging someone based on a part of their identity is not only bullying — it's prejudice and discrimination. If you're experiencing discrimination, hate or violence, help is available. You can talk to a safe adult or call Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868.

What can I do about prejudice?

There are many ways you can help reduce prejudice. Here are some ways you can help take a stand against prejudice:

- don't laugh at racist, sexist or heterosexist jokes
- refuse to watch movies, read books, play video games or participate in activities promoting prejudice
- challenge friends/peers who express prejudiced beliefs
- work with a diverse group of people at school/in your community
- support organizations that help address the roots/effects of prejudice



If you have questions about prejudice, you can talk to a safe adult such as a parent/caregiver, relative, teacher, etc. Need more information or support? You can contact Kids Help Phone 24/7.

Source: www.kidshelpphone.ca

The Seven Wonders of the World

A group of junior high students were studying the Seven Wonders of the World. At the end of the lesson, the students were asked to list what they considered to be the Seven Wonders of the World.

Though there was some disagreement, the following got the most votes: Egypt's Great Pyramids, Taj Mahal in India, Grand Canyon in Arizona, Panama Canal, Empire State Building, St. Peter's Basilica and China's Great Wall.

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one student, a quiet girl, hadn't turned in her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The quiet girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't quite make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help."

The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the Seven Wonders of the World are: to touch, to taste, to see, to hear, to feel, to laugh and to love."

The room was so quiet, you could have heard a pin drop. May this story serve as a gentle reminder to all of us that the things we overlook as simple and ordinary are truly wondrous - and we don't have to travel anywhere special to experience them.

Enjoy your gifts!

Children's Pages

Make a Snowman That Won't Melt.

What you need: toilet paper rolls, white paint, paint brush, black marker, glue, coloured paper (orange is a must for carrot nose), scissors

Directions:

- Paint the paper roll white and let it dry.
- Cut a strip of coloured paper for the scarf and a carrot shape out of orange paper.
- Wrap the strip of paper around the paper roll (just above the middle). Glue together to make a scarf.
- Draw eyes, mouth and buttons with a black marker.
- Glue on the nose and your Snowman is done!



Apple Peanut Butter Teeth

Ingredients: apple, peanut butter, mini marshmallows



Directions:

- Start by coring and cutting the apple into slices.
- Then cut them into smaller slices.
- Spread about a teaspoon or two of peanut butter onto each slice.
- Put a row of mini marshmallows across one apple slice then sandwich them together.
- Press firmly until they stick and you have your teeth! Enjoy

Riddles

Q: People buy me to eat, but never eat me. What am I?

A: A plate

Q: What is full of holes but still holds water?

A: A sponge

Q: What answer can you never answer yes to?

A: Are you asleep yet?

Q: What word is spelled wrong in the dictionary?

A: Wrong



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 29, 2020. Copy the page and share it with a friend!



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Educational Section

Working with Indigenous Children, Youth and Families Policy Preamble

**Source: Protection and In Care Policy and Procedures Manual June 28, 2019
Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development**

This preamble was written by members of the Nunatsiavut Government, Mushuau Innu First Nation, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation and Miawpukek First Nation. It is intended to provide an Indigenous lens through which policies, standards and procedures that impact Indigenous children, youth and families must be viewed. Our intent is to foster increased awareness about our unique cultures and the importance of understanding very different Indigenous worldviews about child welfare.

As Indigenous Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador, we have had a long history of raising healthy children living within healthy families and groups. In our traditional ways, childrearing responsibilities were shared by the extended family and the larger group to ensure that all of the needs of a child were met from birth through adolescence. Children raised in this way became adults who were able to be healthy and competent parents.

Over the course of thousands of years, sophisticated Indigenous parenting practices evolved to become perfectly suited to our land based cultures. Living in close relationship to the land that provided for our survival, we took our lessons from the natural world. Traditionally, our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness depended on living in harmony and balance within ourselves, our family and our group. At the center of our social relationships were our children.

After Europeans came to our land, our time-tested ways of living were systematically eroded by successive government and church policies; policies which brought about traumatic changes and a breakdown of cultural competencies. Our parents and elders were forced into dependence on outsiders for guidance, assistance and even survival. Over time, this greatly damaged every aspect of our cultures. Most critically, it affected how we raised our children. This traumatic legacy of colonization resulted in the imposition of culturally inappropriate and ineffective government services to replace our once healthy ways of living.

Today, many Indigenous men and women struggle with the intergenerational impacts of trauma and have been disadvantaged on all of the social determinants of health. This often results in us being judged by non-Indigenous people as inferior and unfit to be parents. In turn, this has led to a disproportionate number of our children being removed from their parents' care and in all likelihood placed outside our communities and cultures with little or no prospect of returning home. We say this, to not take away from the strengths of our Indigenous families and groups, but to bring attention to losses brought about from outside, from non-traditional policies, standards and procedures. In spite of so much loss, we continue to have many Indigenous families in our communities today that are leaders in Indigenous child rearing practices.

Now more than ever, there is an acknowledgement of the traumatic legacy inflicted upon all Indigenous peoples by generations of culturally oppressive policies, practices, and attitudes. A clear example of this is the residential school system in Canada, which existed from 1831 to 1996. In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to examine the legacy of this system in depth. In 2015, the TRC published their report with 94 calls to action. The first five calls to action focused specifically on the child welfare system and the need for profound change to a system that continues to result in poor outcomes for Indigenous children and families.

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) Newfoundland and Labrador, recognizes the need for change to the child protection system as it impacts Indigenous children and families. CSSD supports culturally appropriate and sensitive approaches to the delivery of Indigenous child welfare services through both new legislation and policy development. More importantly, there is a commitment between CSSD and Indigenous

peoples that services impacting Indigenous peoples are to be delivered through a collaborative model. This means that immediate and extended families themselves are very important partners in the collaborative process, along with Indigenous Governments and Organizations.

A guide to this collaborative work is found in the Touchstones of Hope, a reconciliation process for Indigenous child welfare work developed by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and Cindy Blackstock, MSW, PhD.

This process brings a broad Indigenous lens to the work that is being done in Indigenous cultures across the country in order to reach the best outcomes for children and families. This way of looking at Indigenous child welfare also resonates for us, in our distinct cultures today.



The following principles underlie the Touchstones of Hope and should be applied to work in Indigenous child welfare in Newfoundland and Labrador:

Self-Determination: Indigenous peoples make the decisions that affect their communities and lead the development of laws, policies, research and practice.

Culture and Language: Indigenous cultures are ingrained in all theory, research, policy and practice that affect their communities.

Holistic Approach: Approaches to working with Indigenous communities recognize and reflect the distinct realities of the whole community including culture (traditions, spirituality and social customs), language, environment and socioeconomic factors.

Structural Interventions: We stand up to injustices to protect the rights of all Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, including children and youth.

Non-Discrimination: Indigenous peoples are entitled to equal access to resources and services that are responsive to their needs and the unique cultural context of their experiences (The Caring Society, 2018).

Implementing the principles of Indigenous child welfare allows work in child protection to be undertaken in the following four connected phases:

Truth Telling: The process of open exchange (listening and sharing) regarding the story of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Acknowledging: Affirming and learning from the past and embracing new possibilities for the future.

Restoring: Addressing the problems of the past and creating a better path for the future.

Relating: Having recognized that Indigenous peoples are in the best position to make decisions about Indigenous peoples, we move forward together in a respectful way, along a new path, to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (The Caring Society, 2018).

We advocate that these principles and this way of working together be the shared vision for moving forward in a good way to support the increased well-being of Indigenous children, youth and their families in this province.

Reference: The Caring Society. (2018). Touchstones of Hope - Background. [online] Available at: <https://fncaringsociety.com/touchstones-hope-background> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2018]

New Year's Resolutions for Parents

If you're a parent, there are some resolutions you can make to not only improve your life, but also the life of your entire family. The suggestions below will not only influence your well-being, but your children's as well.

1. Read more

A great way to bond as a family is reading stories. This year, commit to reading more. Choose a night of the week where everyone sits together and reads their own book, or choose one book for the whole family to read then discuss when you're finished. Reading inspires creativity and discussion within families, and it's a great wholesome activity that you can all do together. If you have children who are too young to read, then read out loud to them.

2. Unplug

Social media, computers and mobile devices have taken over many lives these days (both parents' and children's). So, for your own sake and the sake of your family, commit to spending some time unplugged. Set limits on the amount of time you will spend on social media, and designate phone- and computer-free times for the whole family. Doing so will allow you all to interact more face-to-face and ensure you're taking time to connect.

3. Have a greener home

Commit to improving the environment this year by making your home and your family more green.

Start recycling plastic, paper and aluminium and compost your leftover food and compostable trash. You can also switch out regular light bulbs for eco-friendly fluorescent ones; unplug appliances when you're not using them; and figure out ways to heat and cool your house without running the air conditioning and heater.

Consider using your own canvas bags at the grocery store, growing your own produce, and getting coffee from your local coffee shop in a reusable plastic mug. Discuss the importance of environmentally friendly practises with your children. All of these changes can lead to having a healthier environment.



How to Teach Young People Emotional Self-Regulation

Emotions provide important information about how we're doing at any given moment. They tell us when we're scared, angry, sad and when we're happy, excited or confident. As kids grow, they learn how to use emotions as tools to express themselves and communicate with those around them. As an adult, you can facilitate the development of emotional self-regulation by providing comfort in times of distress, modelling calmness and empathy and praising behaviours you want to see. This will help kids learn skills to handle emotional challenges on their own.

What is emotional self-regulation? Here are a few important things to know about emotional self-regulation:

- Self-regulation is defined as the ability to control and manage one's emotions and behaviour to meet the needs of the situation.
- When kids experience powerful, uncontrollable feelings such as anger, anxiety or sadness, you may notice the following behaviours: tantrums, outbursts, whining, defiance, fighting, etc.
- Respond to those behaviours in a soothing and non-judgmental way. This helps kids calm down and gives them the opportunity to choose other ways of responding to the situation.

Here are some conversation starters you can use when talking to the young person in your life about managing their emotions:

- "Describe the feeling. Where do you feel it? In your body? Or is it more of a picture in your mind?"
- "How are you different before and after the feeling?"
- "What's going on for you inside?"
- "What was going on before you started to feel [the emotion]?" "Where were you?" "Who else was there?"

Here are some other things to keep in mind as you're helping the young person in your life learn how to regulate their emotions:

Understanding emotions: Describe and label emotions when you or the young person are feeling them, so they learn to connect the word with the feeling. To help develop self-regulation, encourage kids to name and talk about their feelings before they get too intense. Avoid promoting the idea that "happy is good." Instead, teach young people that everyone has a range of emotions and none are inherently good or bad.

Difficult feelings: Teach kids how to manage difficult feelings early on in life. At a young age, they'll learn by watching you. Model how you would handle these feelings. For example, when you feel frustrated, nervous or angry, strategize aloud about how you'll handle these feelings.

Validation: Validation is a tool you can use to help kids calm down by accepting their feelings and showing you understand. You can do this by paying attention to them and being attuned to their body language and facial expressions. It also involves understanding their perspective in the situation and letting them know it's OK to feel the way they feel.

Active ignoring: Ignoring inappropriate behaviour such as whining or arguing can discourage kids from acting that way in the future. How to actively ignore: turn your face or body away or leave the room if a kid is engaging in minor misbehavior. It's important to turn your attention back to them when they do something you can praise.

Positive attention: Attention is the most powerful tool you have when influencing the young person's behaviour. Paying attention to and praising behaviours you want them to engage in will assist kids in adopting that behaviour.

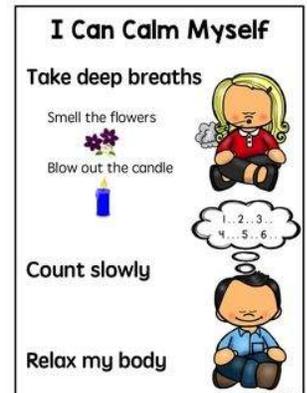
Setting expectations: To help kids with self-regulation, establish clear rules and consistent routines. It can be beneficial to warn kids of upcoming changes. For example, before stopping an activity a kid is engaged in, provide a warning such as, "In 15 minutes we'll be [going outside, getting ready for bed, etc.]."

Provide options: Asking young people to do things they don't want to do may cause difficult feelings. One way to mitigate this is by providing them with two options (either "A" or "B"). This can reduce negotiating and tension.

Planning for emotional challenges: If you know of situations that can aggravate the young person, it may be useful to talk about the upcoming event and strategize ways to overcome emotional challenges.

Problem solving: When a kid has a tantrum or outburst, your natural instinct may be to put it behind you, but it can be useful to talk about what happened afterward. Talk to the kid in a non-judgmental manner and work with them to strategize things they could do differently the next time.

Five special minutes a day: To help manage any stress kids may have, it can be effective to set aside some time in the day (even just five minutes) for you and the young person to participate in a fun, enjoyable activity of their choosing.



How To Promote Positive Mental Health At Every Age

We take our kids for regular physicals and make sure their vaccinations are up-to-date. How can we inoculate them against mental health problems, too? Our children learn early to tell us when they have a tummy ache or come running to us with a scratched knee. But too often, they hold sad or negative feelings inside.

In Canada, 15 percent of children and youth have a mental illness, according to the Mood Disorders Society of Canada. In many cases, their mental health worsens into a serious condition in later childhood or early adulthood. How can parents make it as natural for children to talk about emotional pain as it is for physical pain?

Here are tips from the experts on how to promote positive mental health, help children feel comfortable about these topics and give kids the tools to express themselves.



Preschool (ages 3-5)

Advice from Carolee Cain, director of Healthy Child Development at the Child Development Institute in Toronto.

Preschool children may get angry or easily frustrated. Because they may not be able to express themselves with words, some preschoolers may hit or push. Others may suffer separation anxiety.

“Some children are unable to self-soothe. Some can go and sit quietly and others can’t,” says Carolee. “A child may be highly anxious and can’t take any comfort from an adult and can’t be soothed with a hug.” Anxiety or a major life event, such as moving, starting school or the arrival of a new sibling, may cause a child to lose a skill she’s mastered. She may start using baby talk or regress with potty training.

If you’re concerned compare notes with other caregivers, says Carolee. “Talk about how to help the child and set up consistent routines for those who are struggling. They need predictability, a lot of support and a lot of patience.” If you are still concerned, talk with your family doctor or pediatrician.

Ways to Nurture Good Mental Health

- Provide a lot of physical connection and play.
- Go out and be with other parents and children.

Finding the Words: “At this age, talk a lot about feelings,” Carolee says. “If they hit another child, point out that the other child is crying. Ask ‘How do you think he is feeling? How can you make him feel better?’ It has to be real for them to understand, not abstract.” Look at photos and books with real pictures that identify emotions.

“Label their emotions. If they are excited because they have a new toy, say ‘You are happy.’ It is all in the context of play. That is how they understand issues of emotion and how they problem solve.”

School age (ages 6-10)

Advice from Dr. Shimi Kang, a psychiatrist in Vancouver and author of *The Dolphin Way: A Parent’s Guide to Raising Healthy, Happy and Motivated Kids Without Turning Into a Tiger*.

School age children are going through significant hormonal changes in preparation for puberty. This affects mood, energy levels, sleep patterns and brain function. “Kids at this age are also starting to distinguish themselves as their own person and will start asserting their opinions,” says Dr. Kang.

The most common mental health issues that can arise at this age include anxiety, depression and phobias. While irritability or changes in personality can be part of normal development, Dr. Kang says to note if changes are affecting functioning, such as school performance, relationships or sleep. Other warning signs include losing interest in favourite activities, a decrease in connection with family or a change in friendships. Children may also have physical complaints like headaches or stomach aches.

If you're concerned, discuss with your child's teachers. Ask for help from a school counsellor or your family doctor. Dr. Kang recommends internet resources from the Canadian Mental Health Association or Kids Help Phone.

Ways to Nurture Good Mental Health

- "The centrepiece for health is sleep. Kids this age need 10 to 12 hours," Dr. Kang says. "Forty percent of Canadian kids are sleep deprived because they are too busy. It is 100 percent affecting their health and mental health."
- Dr. Kang also prescribes unstructured play and cultivating a sense of connection through family dinners or a game night.

Finding the Words: "Talk about how everyone has stress and part of life is learning how to manage it," says Dr. Kang. "You can say, 'Remember when I freaked out in traffic? That was me not coping well.' The key is to learn from it and develop strategies to do better next time."

Talk to kids about what works for you. "For example, 'Listening to music helps me when I feel stress. What works for you?' Elicit answers instead of giving answers. Guide them versus directing them."



Early adolescence (ages 10–15)

Advice from Dr. Sandra Mendlowitz, a psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

As children transition into adolescence, it's a time of significant hormonal changes. Adolescents can be cranky, want to sleep a lot and their moods can change on a dime, says Dr. Mendlowitz.

Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health issues at this age. Dr. Mendlowitz says the hallmark of anxiety is avoidance. For example, you may think your child is trying to wriggle out of giving a school presentation, but he may legitimately be anxious about what might happen. A major sign of depression is withdrawal, including no desire to engage with family and friends or lack of motivation. Look for a significant shift in a child's mood or behaviour.

If you're concerned, check in with your child's school or family doctor. Talk with your child to problem solve together. "If they don't want to talk to you, get them to talk to another trusted adult," Dr. Mendlowitz says. She also recommends printing information from a reputable website and leaving it on the kitchen counter, for example. "By just leaving it out there, you have basically said it's OK to seek help if you have a problem. Giving permission is important."

Ways to Nurture Good Mental Health

- Encourage your child to take risks. For example, if they are anxious about doing a presentation, discuss how you can help them by listening to them practise.
- Get kids involved in sports, exercise, family outings, volunteering and hanging out with friends.

Finding the Words: Kids can feel like they are being interrogated. Instead, make space for conversations, says Dr. Mendlowitz. "If you hear about something on the news or a TV show, ask your kids what they think about it

and talk about how it makes you feel.” Don’t dismiss your child’s worries. Instead, ask why they are worried and work together to solve a problem. Listening is key, says Dr. Mendlowitz. “Parents don’t listen. They talk at a child and react.”

Late adolescence (age 16+)

Advice from Dr. Stan Kutcher, a professor of psychiatry at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

“Kids this age are dealing with negative emotions that are the result of the slings and arrows every teenager goes through – breakups, when people aren’t kind to you, you didn’t make the basketball team. The normal rites of passage,” says Dr. Kutcher. Common mental health concerns for this age group are depression, anxiety, substance abuse and bipolar disorder. “Regular teen angst happens from an external event. This is usually normal. It is time to be concerned when symptoms persist for two to three weeks and are disrupting regular routines.” If a mental health disorder runs in your family, know the signs and symptoms.

If you’re concerned, Dr. Kutcher says, “What is good for the bicep is good for the brain,” including exercise, eating well and getting enough rest. “Stress is not something to avoid or fear. Let your kids choose their university courses or go alone to that job interview,” he says. “If you protect your children from stress and normal negative emotions, it gets in the way of kids being able to adapt or cope with normal life stressors.”

Ways to Nurture Good Mental Health

- Have resources ready to discuss with your teen. Check out Dr. Kutcher’s online resources at www.teenmentalhealth.org. There’s advice for both parent and teen, including How Do I Parent My Teen? and How Do I Teen My Parent?

Finding the Words: “With younger kids you have more structured moments, like bedtime, when you can sit down and talk. With teens, you have to be ready when they are. Even if that is at 2 a.m.,” says Dr. Kutcher. He also suggests giving your teen reading material and then stepping back. “Be casual about it. Say ‘I enjoyed reading this.’ Not ‘Read this or else.’” Make your kids aware if a mental illness runs in the family, just as you would with diabetes or heart disease and talk about signs and symptoms. “Develop effective listening skills and help your teen figure out solutions to any challenges. If you can do that, you are more than halfway home as a parent of a teenager.”

Source: Originally published in ParentsCanada magazine, February 2015. Modified

Growing Good Corn

There once was a farmer who grew award-winning corn. Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbours. "How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbours when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked. "Why sir," said the farmer, "didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbours grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbours grow good corn."

He is very much aware of the connectedness of life. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbours's corn also improves. So it is with our lives. Those who choose to live in peace must help their neighbours to live in peace. Those who choose to live well must help others to live well, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others to find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all. The lesson for each of us is this: if we are to grow good corn, we must help our neighbours grow good corn. (Author Unknown)

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