

# Advisor

NEWSLETTER

.....  
*Summer 2014*

## *Featuring*

**What is a Learning Disability?**

**Helping Children Cope with  
Loss, Death and Grief**

**Healthy Foods on a Budget**

**Motivating Kids to Get Fit**

## *Plus*

**The latest news &  
announcements,  
workshops, updates  
and more!**



**SASKATCHEWAN  
FOSTER FAMILIES**

# Healthy Foods on a budget

by Sesame Street



“ The whole family can help make choices that fit into your routines.

## A Simple Start

You can make healthy choices as a family, one small step at a time. Even small changes in your routine can help save money. And getting started doesn't take much time.



- **Make a shopping list.** Keep a shopping list in place that's easy to see so you can add to it any time. Checking your list as you shop can help you stick to your budget. Children can help write or draw items on the list, or check things off while shopping.
- **Look for generic or store brands.** These usually cost less than name brands and taste just as good!
- **Start the day with a healthy breakfast.** A healthy breakfast gives the whole family energy to stay focused all day. It can also be the most affordable meal of the day, whether

you make it at home or participate in public school breakfast program. You can get creative with breakfast, too—try a healthy breakfast burrito with beans, salsa, low-fat cheese, and a whole-wheat tortilla.

## Thinking Ahead

Whether you are shopping at a large supermarket, a farmers' market, or a local grocery store, simple steps can help you save money. Spend just a few minutes planning ahead and you can save a lot of time and money in the long run!

Planning ahead gets easier over time. The whole family can help make choices that fit into your routines.

- **Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season.** Although most fruits and vegetables are available throughout the year, keep in mind that some cost less when they are in season. Farmer's markets offer seasonal produce, and many accept SNAP cards or WIC vouchers. To find out what's in season, search for "seasonal produce" online, or ask someone working in your local market.
- **Buy in bulk.** You may save money by buying in bulk (if you will use large quantities) or stocking up on sale items.
- **Be in the know.** Find out when stores publish weekly flyers or announce sale items. Ask a store manager or clerk about current or upcoming sales.

Continued on page 4...

# Message from Chairman, Kevin Harris

At long last summer is here! I just hope that the temperatures match what we are expecting summer to be! It's been a busy year, many of you had an opportunity to meet with MLA Greg Lawrence as he was tasked by the Minister of Social Services to provide input to her on the state of the foster care system in the province. We have not seen the outcomes of this report but will communicate to the membership as soon as we are able to.

Earlier this year I sent out a letter to the membership on behalf of the board articulating 3 things.

- the role of the board,
- the role of the SFFA office,
- a snap shot of the vision that I have been developing for our organization.

I don't want to repeat that information all over again, but I would like to reiterate that the role of the board of directors has two fundamental and concurrent roles. On behalf of the membership of the SFFA, our dual roles are:

**1) Leadership:** To decide where the organization should be heading now and in the future

**2) Stewardship:** To ensure that as it moves forward, the organization's assets are as sound (or better) at the end of the individuals' director term on the board as they were at the beginning. This pertains to not only financial assets but also the organization's reputation in the community and society.

The board's job is to govern the organization: determine what will be done, at what cost, and by whom. The individuals who are allocated these tasks are held accountable by the board for the outcome. The core tasks of the board are to:

develop the strategic plan (the vision and what strategic goals need to be accomplished in order to achieve the vision), approve the budget, establish rules (policies), and monitor compliance.

No individual board member, including the chairperson, has any authority unless granted by the board—all authority is vested in the board as a whole. As organizations grow, the need to employ professional staff is required.

In this membership letter I also had told you about a book I am currently reading titled *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, by Jonah Berger. The author talks about six key "STEPPS" which are ingredients or principles that were developed based on research in business. However, as I look at these principles, I see a relationship between the STEPPS and the work and vision of the SFFA. The vision and challenge before us are to present the SFFA and the work of fostering in such a way as to make it "contagious." As such, I have taken the liberty to interpret these six STEPPS in the context of fostering:

I would like to make some comments on Principle 1: Social Currency - How are people perceived when they talk about fostering? We need to get people talking about fostering. We need to find our inner remarkableness and make people feel like insiders.

Over the course of the last few months I have been consciously looking for *how people are being perceived when they talk about fostering* and I have been encouraged and blessed by many of our new and young foster parents who will be caring the "torch" for years to come.

*Continued on page 5...*

## Inside

- 2 Healthy Foods on a Budget
- 3 Letter from our Chairman
- 4 National Entitlements
- 5 Advocate optimistic about Saskatchewan's budget
- 6 Child welfare legislation review
- 6 Fun places to visit
- 6 Conditions of child welfare under Senate review
- 7 What is a Learning Disability
- 13 Peer Support Program
- 13 Appeals/Conflict Resolution
- 14 Earnings gap highlights
- 15 Helping Children Cope with Loss, Death and Grief
- 16 How to Respond to your Child or Teens Anger
- 18 Motivating kids to get fit
- 20 Book Corner

### SASKATCHEWAN FOSTER FAMILIES ASSOCIATION

#### SUPPORT STAFF

- Deb Davies  
Executive Director
- Wayne Roman  
Caregiver Training Consultant
- Nicole Eiler  
First Aid Coordinator
- Kendra Mazer  
Program Coordinator
- Raj Narang  
Financial Administrator

- Hayley Petrow  
Foster Family Advocate
- Pam Kostyk  
Program & Office Assistant
- Barry Fraser  
Damage Assessor
- Jessica Cochrane  
Community Liaison
- Julia Bubnick  
Assistant Liaison (Summer)
- Kristine Scarrow

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Kevin Harris  
Chairman
- Tim Adams
- Anthony Carr
- Stephen Clark
- Davis McKay
- Christine Fullawka
- Ernest Swehla  
Directors



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## In the Long Term

There are even more steps your family can take to make healthy choices on a budget over time.

- **Create a weekly menu.** As you get used to planning ahead, preparing weekly menus can help you save money and make food last longer.
- **Plant a garden.** Growing your own food can be a great way to have fun as a family and save money. Plant things like tomatoes, peppers, and herbs outdoors or in pots at home, or look for community gardens in your area. Gardening helps children learn where food comes from. They'll also be excited to try the healthy foods that they helped grow!



“Gardening helps children learn where food comes from.”

- **Stay healthy on weekends and during the summer.** You may find summer breakfast programs, weekend services or community meals in your neighborhood. You may also find free summer activity programs or events, such as playground playtime, where your child can get healthy snacks, too.

## Stretch Your Dollar

These tips can help you make healthy hearty meals that fit your budget.

- **Choose low-cost resources of protein.** Dried beans, peas, and lentils; canned fish; eggs; and peanut butter are healthy, inexpensive sources of protein.
- **Buy frozen or canned fruits and vegetables.** In addition to fresh produce, try to pick canned food that is labeled “in its own juice,” “no added sugar,” or “low sodium.” If these aren't available, drain and rinse other types before eating.
- **Swap foods and coupons with friends.** You may have many cans or boxes of kind of food, or extra coupons. Ask friends if they have different extra items or coupons to exchange. Swapping can help you add variety to your meals—and save money, too!
- **Try powdered milk.** Its long shelf life makes it an easy, affordable option. You can use it instead of regular milk in just about any recipe, from creamed vegetable soups to rich fruit smoothies.

## Save for Later

Leftovers can be made into delicious and healthy meals. At home, save time and money by making more servings than you need, then saving the rest.

- **Refrigerate or freeze leftovers quickly.** If you plan to eat leftovers within a day or so, refrigerate them. If you plan to eat them later than that, freeze leftovers in reusable containers.
- **Thaw foods safely.** Leaving foods to thaw on the counter can make them unsafe to eat. Thaw foods safely in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave.
- **Divide portion sizes.** Separate leftovers into single serving sizes for easy preparation.
- **Mark and date.** To keep track of when you put the foods in the freezer or refrigerator, mark the containers with the date and what's inside.

Reprinted from: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/food-and-fitness/eat-smart/healthy-foods-on-a-budget/>

## National Entitlements of Foster Parents

The CFFA has developed National Entitlements of Foster Parents. We hope that this document will be helpful for Foster Parents and others across Canada.

Download a PDF of the document at:

[www.canadianfosterfamilyassociation.ca/category/announcements/](http://www.canadianfosterfamilyassociation.ca/category/announcements/)



The second principle is about Triggers. Triggers - How do we remind people to talk about fostering? Triggers are stimuli that prompt people to think about related things. People often talk about whatever comes to mind, so the more people thinking about fostering the more it will be talked about. Top of mind leads to tip of tongue. This principle is critical to connect principle 1: Social and principle 3 which is Emotion (more

to follow on this in subsequent notes). I wish I could put names forward to you that in my view are shining examples of people that talk and live fostering in a way that evoke strong and positive emotions in people around them, but I fear that by singling them out I will miss some others that deserve recognition.

This is my last note to you as chairmen of the board of directors as my

term is completed this June. I have enjoyed my time in this capacity and have learned much. My hope is that moving forward the board that you as members have put in place will pick up these ideas and carry them forward in whatever capacity they can. Thanks for your support and have a great, safe and restful summer.

*Kevin Harris*

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## Advocate optimistic about Saskatchewan's budget

SASKATOON – Bob Pringle, Advocate for Children and Youth, was pleased to see that the Government of Saskatchewan has increased spending in the Child and Family Agenda by another \$8.7 million in the 2014-15 budget, and committed to establishing independent legal representation for children and youth involved in child protection with the establishment of a Council for Children.

"I'm encouraged with the direction Government is taking in addressing the education and employment gaps for First Nations and Metis people, developing a mental health and addictions action plan, and adding more prekindergarten and childcare spaces, positive parenting programs and other services for families," Pringle said.

"I'm also very happy that the Government is establishing a program for independent legal representation for children and youth in child welfare court proceedings. We've worked with the Pro Bono Law Society of Saskatchewan since 2007 so children and youth would have access to these services, all while advocating that they need to be independently structured and funded. With this new Counsel for Children, we can guarantee that children and youth involved in child protection cases will have lawyers to help them with the court process, and make sure that their opinions are heard and taken into consideration."

Pringle was also encouraged to see new investments for Autism interventions, intensive Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) prevention programming and community supports, anti-bullying and cyberbullying strategy, the HUB model, affordable housing, and more support for adults with disabilities.

The Government also announced funding for a pilot "hotspotting" program in Saskatoon and Regina to provide better health care services to a small number of people who have been relying on repeated visits to the emergency room for health care.

"I know that something isn't working when people are visiting the emergency room many times a year. Finding a way to help these vulnerable people in the community or in their homes is both less expensive, and makes for better care. It's a great example of taking a different approach when things aren't working."

"It's also a good example of the high cost of poverty, which is at the root of so many of these intractable issues in our society," Pringle said. "I'd like to see all of this work as part of a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy."

"At the moment, Saskatchewan is one of only two provinces without such a strategy, the other being British Columbia. Our Government is already well on its way to developing such an overarching strategy, with investments in the Child and Family Agenda, and initiatives such as the anti-bullying and cyberbullying strategy and upcoming mental health and addictions action plan," he said.

Finally, Pringle would have liked to see an increase in food allowances for families living on social assistance. "Sometimes families have to choose between paying the rent and putting food on the table; I think we can do better here."

The Advocate for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. He leads a small team of regional advocates, investigators and other staff who work on behalf of the province's young people. Our vision is that the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth are respected and valued in our communities and in government legislation, policy, programs and practice.

For more information contact:

**Fleur Macqueen Smith**  
Senior Advisor, Communications  
(306) 933-6700 or (639) 471-8585

## TOP PLACES TO VISIT in Saskatchewan with kids

Saskatchewan is the kind of fun place that both adults and kids will enjoy—your only problem is going to be finding the time to fit all the great places to visit in! Because many of Saskatchewan's must-see attractions offer kid-friendly activities and exhibits, you won't have to miss out on any of the province's diverse culture and history. As you explore the multitude of fun things to do in Saskatchewan with kids, you'll definitely create memories that will last and last. For an amazing list of things for families to do this summer, visit: <http://www.familydaysout.com/kids-things-to-do-canada/saskatchewan>. Attractions are listed in a number of different categories. You'll find something everyone will enjoy!



## Senator Hubley – Inquiry into Canadian Children in Care

On January 28th, Honourable Senator Elizabeth Hubley recently addressed the Senate regarding addressing issues regarding Child Welfare in Canada. A PDF of her speaking notes can be downloaded on the Canadian Foster Family Association website at: <http://www.canadianfosterfamilyassociation.ca/category/announcements/>

## Child welfare legislation review engagements begin

As part of the Ministry of Social Services' Child Welfare Transformation Strategy, the ministry is conducting a comprehensive review of its child welfare legislation and is holding sessions across the province.

From April 28 to June 30, 2014, service providers, First Nations and Métis organizations and citizens, other child welfare stakeholders, and the general public in Saskatchewan will engage with the ministry in one of three ways:

- Engagement sessions – select delegations will be invited to meet with ministry officials to share their views on child welfare legislation, as well as provide written submissions.
- Written submissions – select individuals and organizations will be invited to provide a written submission.
- Online engagement – anyone with an interest in child welfare in Saskatchewan may complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire can be accessed from April 28 to June 30, 2014, on the Government of Saskatchewan's website. For more information on the review and to fill out the online questionnaire, please visit [www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/CFS-Adoption-Discussion-Guide](http://www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/CFS-Adoption-Discussion-Guide).

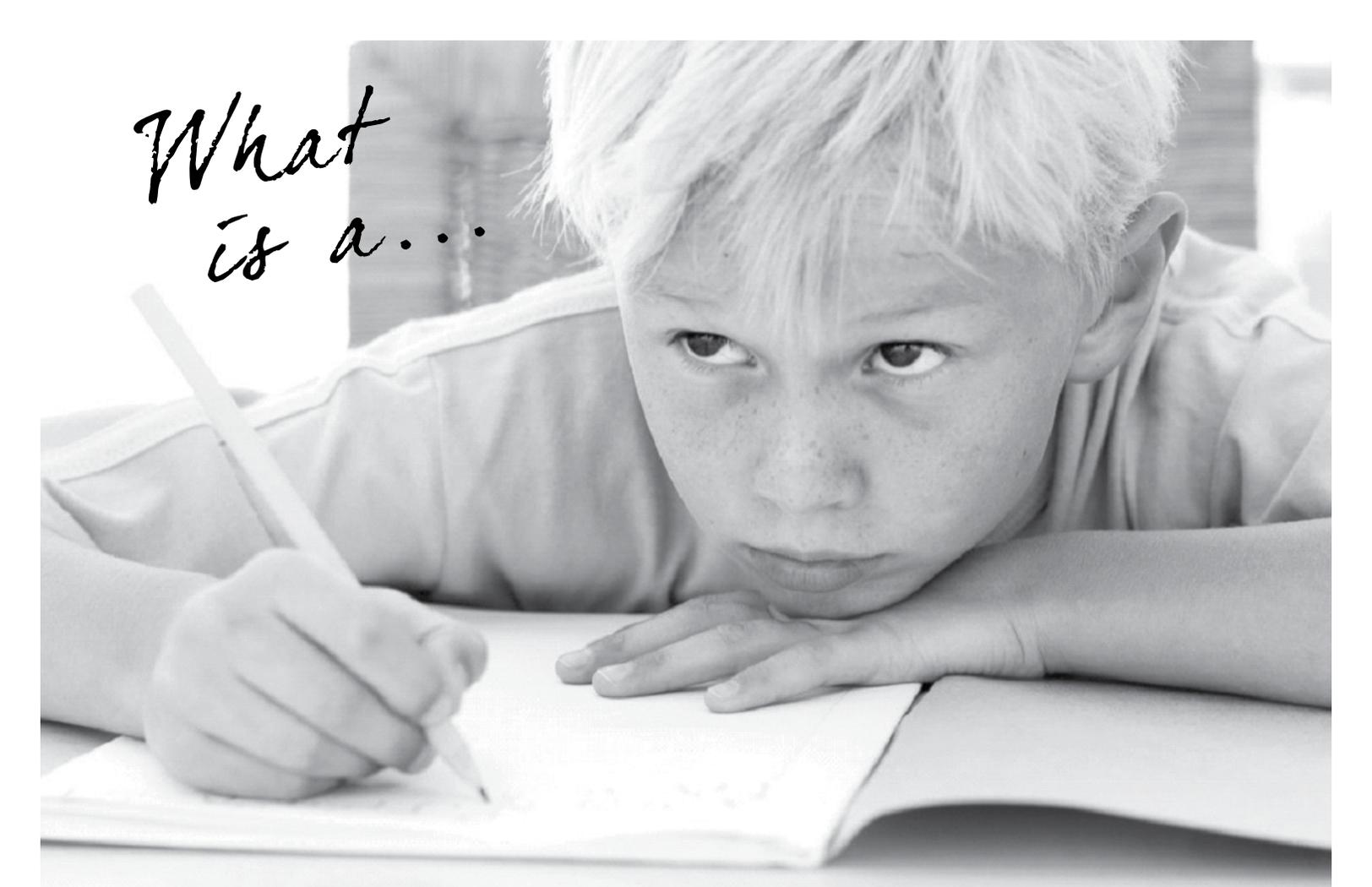
"The protection of children and their overall well-being is a priority that we all share, and one that I take very seriously," Social Services Minister June Draude said. "Reviewing and updating our legislation is a critical step toward transforming the child welfare system and shaping the future for children and families in our province."

The Child and Family Services Act and The Adoption Act, 1998 are the two pieces of legislation that are being reviewed. These two Acts not only guide the ministry in their daily work, but also form the foundation of the child welfare system here in Saskatchewan.

"Your input and suggestions are vital as we move forward to help make life better for Saskatchewan children," Draude said. "I encourage you to participate in this important work by submitting your feedback."

If you have questions or if you or someone you know would like to request a paper copy of the discussion guide, please feel free to contact the Ministry of Social Services toll-free at 1-800-565-2400, by email at [CFSLegislationReview@gov.sk.ca](mailto:CFSLegislationReview@gov.sk.ca), or by mail at:

**Ministry of Social Services**  
**Attn: Child and Family Services Legislative Review**  
**1920 Broad St., 10th floor**  
**Regina, SK S4P 3V6**



What  
is a...

# Learning Disability?

**Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information.**

These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

**Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning.** These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making).

**Learning disabilities range in severity** and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:

- oral language (e.g. listening, speaking, understanding);
- reading (e.g. decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension);
- written language (e.g. spelling and written expression); and
- mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving).

*Continued on page 8...*

**Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.**

**Learning disabilities are lifelong.** The way in which they are expressed may vary over an individual's lifetime, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual's strengths and needs. Learning disabilities are suggested by unexpected academic under-achievement or achievement which is maintained only by unusually high levels of effort and support.

**Learning disabilities are due to genetic and/or neurobiological factors or injury that alters brain functioning in a manner which affects one or more processes related to learning.** These disorders are not due primarily to hearing and/or vision problems, socio-economic factors, cultural or linguistic differences, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching, although these factors may further complicate the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities may co-exist with various conditions including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.

**For success, individuals with learning disabilities require early identification** and timely specialized assessments and interventions involving home, school, community and workplace settings. The interventions need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability subtype and, at a minimum, include the provision of:

- specific skill instruction;
- accommodations;
- compensatory strategies; and
- self-advocacy skills.
- disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain.
- has average or above-average intelligence

### **A learning disability is not:**

- a health problem
- a physical disability
- a visual or hearing problem
- a behavioural problem
- a mental or emotional problem
- low intelligence
- autism
- a cognitive disability

**“ Any child may occasionally exhibit one or two of these behaviours in the course of normal development.**



## Common signs and characteristics of a learning disability

No individual will show all of these characteristics. However, an individual with a learning disability may show one or more of these characteristics for a prolonged period of time:

- Difficulty reading, spelling
- Difficulty doing accurate numerical calculations
- Excellent verbal ability with good sentence structure, but cannot express thoughts on paper
- Cannot follow written direction and/or remember verbal directions
- Inability to complete a job application
- Difficulty finding and keeping a job
- Arrives late or unusually early for appointments
- Problem putting thoughts on paper
- Cannot organize belongings, time activities or responsibilities
- Short attention span, restlessness or hyperactivity
- Difficulty understanding appropriate social behaviour
- Confusion between up and down, left and right, gets lost easily

## Warning signs of learning disabilities in preschool children

Although children's growth patterns vary among individuals and within individuals, uneven development or significant delays in development can signal the presence of a LD. It is important to keep in mind that the behaviours listed below must persist over time to be considered warning signs. Any child may occasionally exhibit one or two of these behaviours in the course of normal development:

### Language

- Slow development in speaking words or sentences
- Pronunciation problems
- Difficulty learning new words
- Difficulty following simple directions
- Difficulty rhyming words
- Lack of interest in story telling

### Motor Skills

- Clumsiness
- Poor Balance
- Difficulty manipulating small objects
- Awkwardness with running, jumping or climbing
- Trouble learning to tie shoes, button shirts or perform other self-help activities
- Avoidance in drawing or tracing

### Cognition

- Trouble memorizing

- Poor memory for what should be routine (everyday) procedures
- Difficulty with cause and effect; sequencing, and counting
- Difficulty with basic concepts such as size, shape and colour

### Attention

- High distractibility
- Impulsive behaviour
- Unusual restlessness (hyperactivity)
- Difficulty staying on task
- Difficulty changing activities
- Constant repetition of ideas, inability to move on to a new idea (perseveration)

### Social Behaviour

- Trouble interacting with others, playing alone
- Prone to sudden and extreme mood changes
- Easily frustrated
- Hard to manage, has temper tantrums

Because early intervention is so important, federal law requires that school districts provide early identification and intervention services. The special education department of the local school district can direct families to the agency that provides these services. Families may also want to consult the child's doctor, who should also be able to refer the family to appropriate resources.

## Warning Signs in Elementary School Children

It is during the elementary school years that learning problems frequently become apparent as disabilities interfere with increasingly demanding and complex learning tasks. Difficulties in learning academic subjects and emotional and/or social skills may become a problem. Warning signs for this age-group may include any of those for preschool children in addition to the following:

### Language

- Slow learning of the correspondence of sound to letter
- Consistent errors in reading or spelling
- Difficulty remembering basic sight words
- Inability to retell a story in sequence
- Trouble with learning to tell time or count money
- Confusion of math signs
- Transposition of number sequences
- Trouble memorizing math facts
- Trouble with place value
- Difficulty remembering the steps of mathematical operations such as long division

*Continued on page 10...*



“ Tendency to misinterpret behaviour of peers and/or adults.

### **Motor Skills**

- Poor coordination or awkwardness
- Difficulty copying from chalkboard
- Difficulty aligning columns (math)
- Poor handwriting

### **Attention/Organization**

- Difficulty concentration of focusing on a task
- Difficulty finishing work on time
- Inability to follow multiple directions
- Unusual sloppiness, carelessness
- Poor concept of direction (left, right)
- Rejection of new concepts or changes in routine

### **Social Behaviour**

- Difficulty understanding facial expressions or gestures
- Difficulty understanding social situations
- Tendency to misinterpret behaviour of peers and/or adults
- Apparent lack of “common sense”

If teachers have not discussed the possibility of an evaluation already, the parents may request that the child’s school conduct a formal evaluation. A request submitted to the school principal must be honoured by the school system in a timely manner.

## **Warning Signs in Secondary School Children**

Some learning disabilities go undetected until secondary school. Physical changes occurring during adolescence and the increased demands of middle and senior high school may bring the disabilities to light. Previously satisfactory performance declines. Inappropriate social skills may lead to changes in peer relationships and discipline problems. Increased frustration and poor self-concepts can lead to depression and or angry outbursts. Warning signs of learning disabilities in secondary school students include the following, which occur in a pattern of behaviours, to a significant degree, and over time:

### **Language and Mathematics**

- Avoidance of reading and writing
- Tendency to misread information
- Difficulty summarizing
- Poor reading comprehension
- Difficulty understanding subject area textbooks
- Trouble with open-ended questions
- Continued poor spelling
- Poor grasp of abstract concepts
- Poor skills in writing essays
- Difficulty in learning a foreign language
- Poor ability to apply math facts

### Attention/Organization

- Difficulty staying organized
- Trouble with test formats such as multiple choice
- Slow work pace in class and in testing situations
- Poor note taking skills
- Poor ability to proofread or double check work

### Social Behaviour

- Difficulty accepting criticism
- Difficulty seeking or giving feedback
- Problems negotiating or advocating for oneself
- Difficulty resisting peer pressure
- Difficulty understanding another person's perspectives

Again, parents have the right to request an evaluation by the public schools to determine if the student has learning problems.

### Summary

Research has shown that the sooner a LD is detected and intervention is begun, the better the chance to avoid school failure and to improve chance for success in life. When parents or teachers suspect a child has learning disabilities, they should seek an evaluation.

*ERIC DIGEST #E603*

*Educational Resources Information Center*

*ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education,  
Arlington, VA.*

*Author: Susan Bergen*

*Publication Date: 2000-12-00*

## PARENT'S CHECKLIST



- ✓ Be optimistic and open minded.
- ✓ Don't feel shame or embarrassment.
- ✓ Be encouraging and supportive.
- ✓ Seek independent evaluation if necessary.
- ✓ Become familiar with the disability. Ask questions and seek information.
- ✓ Be willing to work with the teachers.
- ✓ Share your reading material with the teacher.
- ✓ Don't do your child's homework for them, rather with them.
- ✓ Request yearly re-evaluation to measure where growth is realized.
- ✓ Disclosure – follow good judgment (piano teacher, soccer/hockey coach, art instructor, etc.)
- ✓ Be your child's advocate until they can take on the challenge themselves.
- ✓ Kid check – ask your child what is working for them and what's not.
- ✓ Be patient – remember children instinctively want to do well.
- ✓ Make sure your child has an activity they enjoy and are successful at. (Skateboarding, baking, music, biking, sports, dance, art, etc.)

*Source: Randeah Robertson, LDAS, Past President*



*Continued on page 12...*

## Suggestions for Parents/Students/Professionals

- Get to know the upcoming teacher. Encourage educators to read your child's cumulative file. Schedule a conference with the Resource teacher/private tutor/future teacher.
- Share strategies that were implemented and are currently working.
- Ask for the list of mandatory reading material and inquire about upcoming lessons and vocabulary.
- Investigate if the books are available on tape or in large print.
- Record books, texts, etc., on a tape recorder, marking each new Chapter.
- Acquire a "talking book" library card.
- Ask for talking book catalogues no longer in circulation for home use.
- Buy pencil grips and stay away from coil bound notebooks.
- Use coloured hi-lighters and recipe cards.
- Purchase a good spell check.
- Weekly check-in with the teacher.
- Seek out a private tutor
- Encourage the use of graph paper for math work.
- Use tactile methods to practice confusing letters.
- Penmanship can be practiced using large colourful markers for a change.
- Extra time for exams may be needed (a test is a measurement of the child's knowledge of the material – period – not whether or not they can do it in the allotted time).
- Ask for oral examinations where necessary.
- Ask to answer exam questions on a tape recorder instead of writing them out.

Source: Randeah Robertson, LDAS, Past President

## Tips for Parents

### Providing Structure

- Get ready for school before going to bed
- Establish a predictable daily routine
- Use a visual schedule of daily activities
- Have a firm bedtime routine
- Give advance warning when an activity will be ending
- Insist child finish one task before proceeding to another

### Behaviour

- Teach child to "Stop and Think" before acting to control impulsivity
- Redirect behaviour, intervene before behaviour escalates
- Model and practice positive peer interactions with your child
- Use a kitchen timer for the task reluctant child
- Use a sticker chart to reinforce positive behaviour
- Give child choices when you want something done
- List problem solving strategies on the fridge and cue child to use them

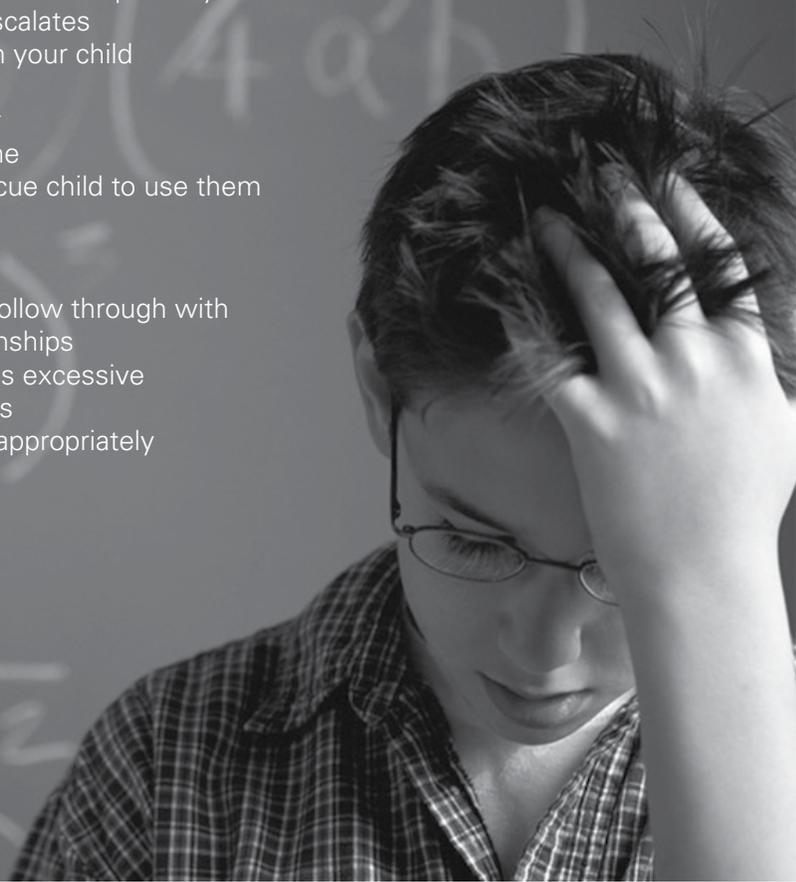
### Discipline

- Set limits and consistently follow them
- Use only those consequences you are willing to follow through with
- Spend time talking about cause and effect relationships
- Use time out when you child's behaviour becomes excessive
- Don't argue with your child about your house rules
- Notice when your child is doing well or behaving appropriately

Lynde Hill, M.Sc.  
Registered Psychologist

### For more information, please contact:

LDAS - Provincial Office  
Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan  
2221 Hanselman Crt, Saskatoon SK S7L 6A8  
Phone: (306) 652-4114 Ext 4  
Fax: (306) 652-3220  
E-mail: [reception@ldas.org](mailto:reception@ldas.org)  
Website: [www.ldas.org](http://www.ldas.org)



# Peer Support Program

The SFFA coordinates a Peer Support Program, which consists of foster parent volunteers who work to facilitate and maintain an effective communication system between the foster families, social workers and the Ministry of Social Services. Peer Support Persons can provide confidential, empathetic and non-judgmental service surrounding issues of foster care. A Peer Support Person can provide resources, current information regarding policies and assist foster families in resolving matters of dispute between themselves and the Ministry of Social Services.

Volunteers of the Peer Support Program are experienced foster parents who are trained and monitored by the SFFA. They must sign an Oath of Confidentiality and commit to the duties of the program. All volunteers work to promote and encourage practices and procedures which support foster families and fostering in Saskatchewan.



“ Peer Support Persons can provide confidential, empathetic and non-judgmental service surrounding issues of foster care.

*If you are interested in providing peer support, please call Wayne Roman toll-free at 1-888-276-2880.*

## Appeals/conflict resolution

When foster parents disagree with a decision made by a caseworker, they will notify the caseworker, who will arrange a meeting with the foster parents to discuss their concerns within five working days. Following the meeting, if the foster parents believe the matter has not been resolved, they may notify the caseworker, who advises his/her supervisor. The supervisor contacts the foster parents to discuss the matter and will arrange a meeting with all parties in an effort to come to a mutually satisfactory resolution. The meeting takes place within five days of the supervisor's contact with the foster parents, or as soon as practicable.

If there is not a satisfactory resolution, the foster parents may request to meet with the Director, Service Delivery or designate. The Director, Service Delivery or designate arranges a meeting with the foster parents and may include the caseworker and supervisor if

appropriate. Foster parents may invite their Saskatchewan Foster Families Association support person. The meeting will be held within fifteen working days after receiving the request, or as soon as practicable.

Following the meeting, the Director, Service Delivery or designate should meet with his/her worker and supervisor, arrive at a decision, and advise the foster parents in writing of the decision within five working days, or as soon as practicable.

In those situations involving decisions to close the foster home, if the matter is not satisfactorily concluded at the service centre level through the Conflict Resolution process, the foster parents may contact the Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association to invoke the appeal process.

Following notification of an appeal, the Executive Director of the

Saskatchewan Foster Families Association immediately informs the appropriate Director, Service Delivery and the Director, Service Delivery, Central Office to advise of the appeal. The Director, Service Delivery, Central Office arranges a meeting with an independent adjudicator, who is appointed and contracted by the Ministry to hear the appeal.

The adjudicator conducts his or her review into the concerns by gathering information from all sources, including the foster parents, Ministry employees, and SFFA employees. When the review is concluded, the adjudicator records the information he or she has gathered, completes a report and submits it to the Executive Director, Service Delivery. The Executive Director, Service Delivery, reviews the information and makes a final decision, based on the recommendation of the adjudicator.

# Earnings gap highlights need to help foster kids succeed

by Laurie Monsebraaten, Social justice reporter

Children aging out of foster care today will earn about \$326,000 less in their lifetime than the average Canadian, says a new report.

The cumulative loss to the Canadian economy over 10 years is about \$7.5 billion, says Conference Board of Canada report released Monday.

These youth also rely more on welfare and pay less income and consumption taxes for an estimated cost to all levels of government of about \$126,000 each over their lifetimes, the report adds.

It is the first-ever analysis of the lost economic opportunity facing young people leaving the child welfare system across the country.

“While these issues have been identified in the past, we’ve now been able to pinpoint the actual financial costs.

The disparity is largely due to lower rates of high school graduation and higher incidences of mental health problems among children in foster care, says the report titled *Success For All: Investing in the Future of Canadian Children in Care*.

If governments invested that money in better education and mental health support, the long-term social and economic benefits would likely outweigh the costs, it adds.

“Given the high social and economic costs of doing nothing more, Canadian governments, businesses, and the general public have a collective responsibility to act,” says the report.

The report builds on a 2012 cost benefit analysis by Ontario’s Child Advocate that said extending financial support to youth in foster care from age 21 to age 25 would pay for itself through reduced social costs and increased taxes.

“While these issues have been identified in the past, we’ve now been able to pinpoint the actual financial costs,” said Louis Thériault, the Conference Board’s executive director of economic initiatives.

“Taking on these issues not only has the potential to benefit the overall Canadian economy; even more

importantly, many foster children could have a better chance at participating more fully in society,” he said.

Canada needs a national strategy for children in foster care coordinated by the federal government and bolstered by comparable and consistent data collected at both the provincial and national level, Thériault noted. Business could help by offering skills training and employment to former foster children through public-private partnerships, he added.

A 2010 survey by the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid societies found that just 44 per cent of foster children leaving the system at age 18 had graduated from high school compared with 81 per cent of their peers. They are half as likely to attend college or university than the general population.

About 19 per cent of foster children leaving care suffer from mental health problems, compared with about 6 per cent of all youth aged 18 to 19, according to the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect and the Canadian Community Health Study. Legislative hearings in 2012 staged by youth leaving care in Ontario have led to new resources and supports, said a spokesperson for Children and Youth Minister Teresa Piruzza.

Monthly support for youth between the ages of 18 and 20 has been increased to \$850. Free college and university tuition is available to all current and former youth in care. And a \$500 monthly living allowance is available during the school year for those between ages 21 and 25. Youth up to age 25 will soon be eligible for prescription drug, dental and extended health benefits.

“We are committed to providing the right supports for youth leaving care and want everyone in Ontario to have the opportunity to connect, contribute and enjoy a high quality of life,” said the minister’s spokesperson David Mullock.

The Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies, which represents 44 of the province’s 46 CASs, welcomed the report’s national scope and “call to action.”

“It notes there is a responsibility for everybody, for government, for business and the public,” said the association’s Virginia Rowden.

Rowden was also pleased with the report’s call for better data collection.

# Helping Children Cope with *Loss, Death,* and *Grief*



## Expressions of Grief

Talking to children about death must be geared to their developmental level, respectful of their cultural norms, and sensitive to their capacity to understand the situation. Children will be aware of the reactions of significant adults as they interpret and react to information about death and tragedy. In fact, for primary grade children adult reactions will play an especially important role in shaping their perceptions of the situation. The range of reactions that children display in response to the death of significant others may include:

- Emotional shock and at times an apparent lack of feelings, which serve to help the child detach from the pain of the moment;
- Regressive (immature) behaviours, such as needing to be rocked or held, difficulty separating from parents or significant others, needing to sleep in parent's bed or an apparent difficulty completing tasks well within the child's ability level;
- Explosive emotions and acting out behavior that reflect the child's internal feelings of anger, terror, frustration and helplessness. Acting out may reflect insecurity and a way to seek control over a situation for which they have little or no control;



Give children the opportunity to tell their story and be a good listener.

- Asking the same questions over and over, not because they do not understand the facts, but rather because the information is so hard to believe or accept. Repeated questions can help listeners determine if the child is responding to misinformation or the real trauma of the event.

## Helping Children Cope

The following tips will help teachers, parents, and other caregivers support children who have experienced the loss of parents, friends, or loved ones. Some of these recommendations come from Dr. Alan Wolfelt, Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado.

- Allow children to be the teachers about their grief experiences: give children the opportunity to tell their story and be a good listener.
- Don't assume that every child in a certain age group understands death in the same way or with the same feelings: All children are different and their view of the world is unique and shaped by different experiences. (Developmental information is provided below.)
- Grieving is a process, not an event: Parents and schools need to allow adequate time for each child to grieve in the manner that works for that child. Pressing children to resume "normal" activities without the chance to deal with their emotional pain may prompt additional problems or negative reactions.
- Don't lie or tell half-truths to children about the tragic event: Children are often bright and sensitive. They will see through false information and wonder why you do not trust them with the truth. Lies do not help the child through the healing process or help develop effective coping strategies for life's future tragedies or losses.
- Help all children, regardless of age, to understand loss and death: Give the child information at the level that he/she can understand. Allow the child to guide adults as to the need for more information or clarification of the information presented. Loss and death are both part of the cycle of life that children need to understand.
- Encourage children to ask questions about loss and death: Adults need to be less anxious about not knowing all the answers. Treat questions with respect and a willingness to help the child find his or her own answers.

*Continued on page 16...*

- Don't assume that children always grieve in an orderly or predictable way: We all grieve in different ways and there is no one "correct" way for people to move through the grieving process.
- Let children know that you really want to understand what they are feeling or what they need: Sometimes children are upset but they cannot tell you what will be helpful. Giving them the time and encouragement to share their feelings with you may enable them to sort out their feelings.
- Children will need long-lasting support: The more losses the child or adolescent suffers, the more difficult it will be to recover. This is especially true if they have lost a parent who was their major source of support. Try to develop multiple supports for children who suffer significant losses.
- Keep in mind that grief work is hard: It is hard work for adults and hard for children as well.
- Understand that grief work is complicated: Deaths that result from a terrorist act or war

can bring forth many issues that are difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend. Grieving may also be complicated by a need for vengeance or justice and by the lack of resolution of the current situation: the conflict may continue and the nation may still feel at risk. The sudden or violent nature of the death or the fact that some individuals may be considered missing rather than dead can further complicate the grieving process.

- Be aware of your own need to grieve: Focusing on the children in your care is important, but not at the expense of your emotional needs. Adults who have lost a loved one will be far more able to help children work through their grief if they get help themselves. For some families, it may be important to seek family grief counselling, as well as individual sources of support.

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## Anger, Rage and Explosive Outbursts: How to Respond to your Child or Teens Anger by Kim Abraham LMSW and Marney Studaker-Cordner LMSW

Everyone gets mad sometimes, children and adults alike. Anger is an emotion that can range from slightly irritated to moderately angry, all the way to full-blown rage. A child's anger often makes us feel uncomfortable, so there can be a natural tendency to try and change the situation for your child, so the anger will evaporate. Or on the flip side, it's easy to fall into the trap of "bringing down the hammer," to put a stop to the anger through intimidation or punishment. But the fact is, your child will experience situations that may trigger anger throughout life. You can't stop the triggers, but you can give your child the tools to understand anger and deal with it.

### From zero to one hundred in sixty seconds

Parents often express concern about a child's anger in two areas: the intensity and the speed of escalation. The intensity of a child's anger is typically tied to the thoughts he is having about any situation. For instance, most people who sit down to a bowl of cereal in the morning to find there is no milk are mildly irritated. "Great, now I can't have cereal." But some people get very angry about triggers that would be mild to others. Why? Often underneath there is a thought pattern—a script—that is triggered. Some people think "Great! Whoever used up all the milk this morning is completely inconsiderate! I don't have time for this!" They take things personally.

Kids who are oppositional, defiant or who have trouble controlling impulses often lose their tempers in a

way others don't understand. Johnny's mom shared, "I just don't understand why he gets so mad, so fast...over nothing! It can be as simple as me asking if he has homework or requesting that he put his backpack away. No matter how nicely I say it, he takes it as a criticism and starts yelling." That's because Johnny sees almost everything his mom says as an effort to control him. Kids who are diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) will fight against being controlled in even the smallest way. Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED) is another diagnosis parents may hear from mental health professionals. It means a child (or adult) is having episodes of intense rage that result in behavior such as screaming, throwing or breaking things, and aggression toward others. This is a diagnosis that describes episodes of anger that come and go (intermittent) and are intense or severe (explosive). The episode may appear to come "out of nowhere," and the individual has difficulty managing the intense emotion.

### Responding to Anger

So what can parents do when faced with a supernova explosion of anger? Here are some tips:

- 1 Don't try to control your child's emotions. You can't—and that's okay. You can't expect someone to control their emotions—you can only ask them to control their behaviour. It's okay for a child to be angry, as long as that anger is expressed appropriately. It's a clue for her—and youth that she's not comfortable with a situation.



**2** Control your own emotions. A child's rage will often trigger a parent's own emotions. How do you usually handle it when people are angry? Some people are very uncomfortable with anger—it makes them anxious or fearful. If you grew up in a home where anger meant shouting and danger, your child's anger may push some of your emotional buttons. If you aren't aware of your own issues, you could respond in ways that are actually a disservice to your child (such as giving in to what they want or yelling back). If you start experiencing intense emotion yourself, take a breath and a mental step back. One trick is to picture your child as a neighbor's kid. This can give you a little emotional distance.

**3** Make sure your responses don't escalate the situation. Just because you choose not to argue with your child doesn't mean you're giving in. If your child needs some space to cool down—give it to him. If he's screaming at you, it's okay to wait to give a consequence. The time to say "That's disrespectful! You're grounded!" is not in the middle of an emotional tornado. You can always hold your child accountable later, when things are calmer.

**4** Help your child recognize when anger is building. There are physical signs of anger that your child can start to tune into: stomach clenching, a feeling of tension, feeling flushed, and clenching teeth. Sometimes when we're angry, we actually hold our breath without realizing it. If your child can notice these signs early on, it can keep anger from escalating to rage. An ounce of prevention really can be worth a pound of cure.

**5** Brainstorm with your child. Many kids will experience or express true remorse after having an emotional "meltdown." After screaming and throwing things, one teenager told his mom, "I'm so sorry. I don't know why I do these things. There must be something wrong with me." If he's open to talking and willing to learn anger management skills, you can help him work backwards from the incident: what happened right before the rage was triggered? What was said?

What was he feeling (embarrassment, frustration, disappointment, fear, anxiety?) There is always another emotion underneath the anger. Learning to recognize underlying emotions is a powerful tool your child can use throughout life. A word of caution: many kids—particularly those with oppositional defiant disorder—are not willing or trusting enough to explore this with a parent or therapist. If you make an effort to brainstorm solutions and he resists, drop the subject and see if you can come back to it at another time.

“ If your child needs some space to cool down—give it to them.

**6** Remember that emotion is different from behaviour. The problem isn't the anger; it's the behaviour that follows. You can validate your child's emotions while addressing the behaviour that is a concern: "I understand you were angry when I said you couldn't go to your friend's house. Sometimes there will be rules or limits that may frustrate you, but breaking things won't change that rule or limit and will only end in a consequence for that behaviour." Then help your child identify more positive ways he can express his emotions.

### **Minimize contributing factors**

The way your child perceives a situation is at the heart of anger. However, you may want to keep a calendar on her mood if it seems things are escalating. Does she tend to be more irritable if she doesn't get enough sleep, skips meals or has poor eating/snacking habits or otherwise isn't feeling well physically? Adolescence is well-known as a time of higher irritability for kids. This isn't an excuse for negative behaviour but it can explain why "little things" seem more irritating at different times. You may want to talk with your teen's primary care doctor if the onset of your child's anger seems to be connected to puberty.

### **Anger vs. Rage**

Some parents worry because a child's anger is beyond what they would consider "typical." While it's true some children exhibit explosive rage, you can still use the suggestions above to deescalate a situation. If your child's anger is extreme, you may want to seek counselling for him and as a family. Even if your child won't participate, you can go to get support with parenting skills. No matter what degree of anger your child exhibits, the fact is, he is still responsible for managing that emotion. And remember, it's a learning process. It doesn't happen overnight, but with support and encouragement, you can help your child continue to strengthen coping skills.

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With childhood obesity increasing at staggering rates, parents and caregivers must play an active role in protecting children's health. Eating healthy foods is a key factor in maintaining their overall well-being. But, this has to be balanced with regular physical activity.

Children who are physically active on a regular basis will reap enormous benefits. Studies have shown that they:

- Are less likely to become overweight
- Have a decreased risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Have reduced blood cholesterol levels and lower blood pressure
- Have higher self-esteem and reduced incidences of depression and anxiety
- Are more likely to build strong bones and muscles
- Are more attentive in school



# Motivating kids



*to get fit*



Now that we know why children need to be active, it's time to get them up and moving. Here's how:

1. **Focus on fun.** You don't have to call it "exercise," just consider it an activity. Find out which ones your child likes and encourage those.
2. **Limit TV and computer time.** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than "two hours of daily media exposure" for children ages two and older. When they are watching or clicking, make sure they take breaks and move around.
3. **Schedule play dates.** The key word here is "play." Have your child get together with a friend and play a game of tag, race down the block or kick a ball around.
4. **Get fit as a family.** Create some funny dance moves. Put up a net and shoot hoops. You could also visit a zoo, play miniature golf or enjoy other activities where a lot of ground is covered on foot.
5. **Choose fitness-oriented gifts.** For your child's next birthday, consider giving him or her a jump-rope, mini-trampoline, hula-hoop — something that will encourage movement.
6. **Clean up.** Chores don't have to be a bore. Sing a silly song with your child as you both wipe tables and

counters. See how long both of you can hold a funny face while folding and putting away clothes. Older kids can help wash the car. On a hot day, this can turn into water play.

7. **Skip the mall.** Go to the playground. Sure, most malls have kids' play areas. But, when the weather is nice, enjoy a local park or playground instead. Fresh air always does a body good; especially a little one.

8. **Be a model of fitness.** It's much easier to motivate kids to be active, if you lead an active lifestyle. Whether you follow a structured fitness program or are lucky to get in some morning stretches, let them see you moving. It will likely inspire them to do the same.

9. **Encourage walking or biking whenever feasible.** This is easy to accomplish if you live near stores, libraries or other places you visit regularly. If you live in a remote area, establish a safe route to tour on bike or on foot with your child.

10. **Be a fitness advocate at your child's school.** Do you know how much physical activity your child gets at school? Now is the time to find out. If you don't like the answer, gather support from other parents to enforce positive changes.

*Continued on next page...*

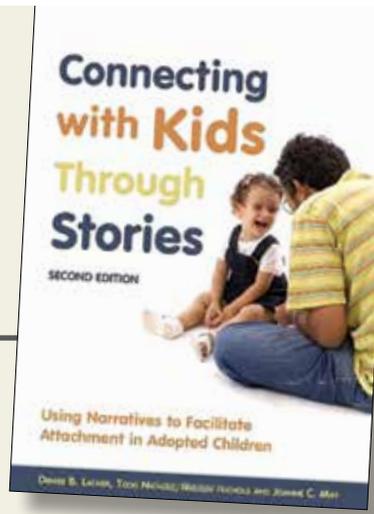
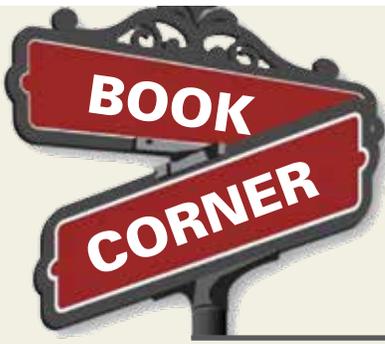
- All children age 2 and older should participate in at least 30 minutes of enjoyable, moderate-intensity physical activities every day. These activities should be developmentally appropriate and varied.
- If your child does not have a full 30-minute activity break each day, try to provide at least two 15-minute periods or three 10-minute

periods in which they can engage in vigorous activities appropriate for their age, gender and stage of physical and emotional development. Any concerns about your child's physical or overall health should be discussed with their pediatrician.

*Reprinted from: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/food-and-fitness/sport-and-fitness/motivating-kids-to-get-fit/>*



“ You don't have to call it “exercise”, just consider it an activity.



*Connecting with Kids Through Stories: Using Narratives to Facilitate Attachment in Adopted Children – 2nd edition*

By Denise B. Lacher, Todd Nichols, Melissa Nichols and Joanne May  
January 2012, 240pp, ISBN 9781849058698

Adopted children whose early development has been altered by abuse or neglect may form negative beliefs about themselves and parents, and may resist connecting with others. This book outlines how therapeutic stories can help children to heal and develop healthy attachments.

With a thorough theoretical grounding, the book demonstrates how to create therapeutic stories that improve relationships, heal past trauma, and change problem behavior. The story of a fictional family that develops its own narratives to help their adopted child heal illustrates the techniques. This second edition includes updated research on attachment, trauma and the developmental process; a new chapter on parental attunement and regulation; and a new chapter with full length samples of a variety of narrative types. The gentle and non-intrusive techniques in this book will be highly beneficial for children with attachment difficulties. This guide will be an invaluable resource for parents of adopted children and the professionals working with them.

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