

Advisor



LIFELONG E-LEARNING

MYTH VS REALITY ABOUT FOSTERING

SAFEGUARDING YOUR FAMILY WHILE FOSTERING

IN HOME SUPPORT

FINDING WAYS TO SPEND LESS ON ENTERTAINMENT

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF & LOSS IN FOSTER CHILDREN

MAINTAINING A NUTRITIOUS DIET

MEDICATION SAFETY AND STORAGE

2021 AGM ANNOUNCEMENT

FOR A CHILD, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LASTS A LIFETIME

RECONNECTING WITH FAMILY

HELPING KIDS TO PLAN THEIR OWN DAY

GOOD READS

Advisor

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OUR MISSION

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Association exists to support and encourage Foster families through education and advocacy, helping create healthy homes, positive environments, and brighter futures for children and youth across the province.

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7



14

Contents



4



8

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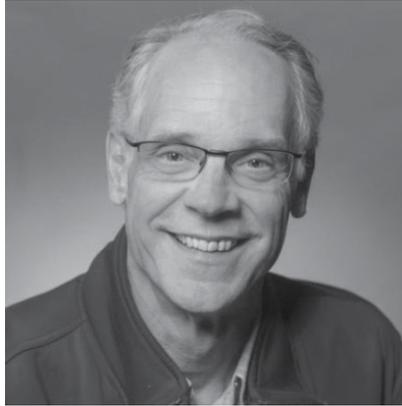
- 3 MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
- 3 2021 AGM ANNOUNCEMENT
- 4 LIFELONG E-LEARNING
- 5 MYTH VS REALITY ABOUT FOSTERING
- 6 UNDERSTANDING GRIEF & LOSS IN FOSTER CHILDREN
- 7 MEDICATION SAFETY AND STORAGE
- 8 SAFEGUARDING YOUR FAMILY WHILE FOSTERING
- 9 GOOD READS
- 10 MAINTAINING A NUTRITIOUS DIET
- 11 IN HOME SUPPORT
- 12 FOR A CHILD, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LASTS A LIFETIME
- 14 RECONNECTING WITH FAMILY
- 17 FINDING WAYS TO SPEND LESS ON ENTERTAINMENT
- 18 HELPING KIDS TO PLAN THEIR OWN DAY

Message from the Chairman of the Board

We all have been through interesting times these last months. You have been inundated with COVID-19 updates, issues, briefings etc, so nothing I can say on that topic will make much difference. However, I want to commend many of you for tireless efforts to care for the children entrusted to you, but also your willingness to keep the children and youth connected to their families in these trying times. You are not alone in this as I have heard of the number of homes that the SFFA office staff have been supporting. My thanks to the office staff for all your assistance.

I was privileged to be on the organizing committee for the IFCO 2020 which was being hosted in Montreal but had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. A number of efforts are underway to try and deliver some of that content in a virtual way.

I was recently asked in my role as the President - Canadian Foster Family Association for a statement that recognizes the importance of education and training for foster parents. I am proud to say



that Saskatchewan and the SFFA leads the nation in our endeavors to equip foster parents in caring for children/youth. The statement that was provided to the members of the CFFA comes out of my personal belief in the importance of having the best equipped foster parents in the country. The statement reads: The Canadian Foster Family Association (CFFA) recognizes the importance of education and training for foster parents to ensure children receive the highest possible standard of care when placed in a foster home. The Association believes that best practice dictates that foster parents need to be able to identify new strategies, techniques and skills to care for children who have often experienced trauma.

As I look towards the start of this year, I am encouraged by the continued partnership with the Ministry in recruiting new foster families and training them as well as for our existing homes. We lead the country in our ability to adapt our training so that we could go 100% virtual, so training continues. Our Video Conferencing technology has been critical in accomplishing this task.

I wish I had a crystal ball to know what will happen next, but rest assured our organization has proved to be nimble and flexible. We will continue to advocate for our foster parents as well our in-home support program will continue to assist families wherever we are called to go.

Stay safe and keep engaged with the SFFA.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Harris".

Regards
Kevin Harris

A • N • N • O • U • N • C • E • M • E • N • T



AGM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The SFFA's upcoming AGM will be held on June 12th, 2021. Please watch for further details.



Using Covid-19 as catalyst for **lifelong e-learning**

Over a very short period of time, Covid-19 has helped business and education to replace and complement physical face-to-face channels by digital and online ones. This radical change also opened the way for more and better lifelong learning – via e-learning platforms.

Lifelong Learning: Meaning and importance

Literally, lifelong learning refers to all learning that takes place throughout one's life. In practice, it mostly stands for the voluntary, self-motivated and continuous learning that takes place after one has completed formal education. It typically refers to the learning that takes place throughout and as part of one's career – from first to last occupation.

Lifelong learning is important at three levels:

- **For the individuals who learn**, it increases their knowledge and skills and thereby increases their employability for future jobs and satisfies their desire to learn and develop.
- **For organizations** it is an important source of innovation and helps making sure that they can keep up with the changes in their environment and be an attractive employer.
- **And for society**, lifelong learning increases the likelihood that key challenges such as poverty, inequality and climate change can be resolved.

Enter Covid-19

Professional reskilling and lifelong learning have been important for many years. But Covid-19 is a strong catalyst with the potential to substantially accelerate and enlarge its adoption. Specifically, it is a catalyst

for lifelong e-learning – learning online rather than through traditional face-to-face channels.

The Covid-19 crisis has two catalyzing effects that, in combination, are a substantial impulse for lifelong e-learning. The first effect is rather obvious and is directly related to the specific nature of this crisis. Due to the social distancing following Covid-19, businesses and education have replaced and complemented their physical channels by digital and online ones in a blink of the eye. A study showed, in three months Covid-19 caused an increase of e-commerce penetration that would normally take ten years. This also applies to e-learning, which was already growing at a 100% growth rate per year. We hated that Covid-19 was the catalyst, but it has made us achieve in four months what would normally have taken ten years.

Source: <https://www.ouritnews.com>

Distance-learning services & educational resources

With most schools and institutions falling back to some form of online instruction, finding a way to keep yourself and your kids engaged academically during a pandemic can be very challenging.

Here are some online tools you can try:

- MasterClass - <https://learn.masterclass.com>
- Scholastic Learn at Home - <http://scholastic.ca/learnathome/>
- Age of Learning - <https://www.ageoflearning.com>
- Prodigy - <https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/>
- Mystery Science - <https://mysteryscience.com/distance-learning>

Myth vs Reality

ABOUT FOSTERING

Myth

Reality

People who are single can't become foster parents.

Yes you can! We have single parents fostering now.

If parents are both working, they can't become foster parents.

Yes you can! We have many foster families where both parents work. However, there may be some cases where a particular child who needs consistent care can't be placed with them.

If you have a history of mental health problems, such as depression, you can't become a foster parent.

Each situation is assessed at the time of your application to foster. People with a history of mental health problems are not ruled out just because of that – other factors come into consideration.

If you've had any contact with the child welfare system – even if you were yourself previously in foster care – you can't be a foster parent.

Again, each situation is assessed during the application process. If you have previous involvement with the Ministry of Social Services depending on the circumstances, you may still be able to become a foster parent.

If you've never had children of your own, you can't become a foster parent.

Yes, you can! It does help to have some experience working with children but people who haven't parented their own children can be excellent foster parents.

If you are LGBTQ+, you can't be a foster parent.

Yes, you can! Diversity and inclusion are important values, and LGBTQ+ foster parents are welcomed.

All the children who are placed with foster parents are very difficult and disruptive.

The children placed in foster care have experienced trauma and loss. Sometimes they are not able to talk about what they need so it show in their behaviours. Foster parents get training and ongoing support to help them support the children in their homes.

Once you are a foster parent, there is little or no support for you.

Not true! You will be assigned a Resource Worker who will support you. You also become a member of the SFFA, who can support you through Advocacy, Training, and In Home Support if assessed.

If you are Aboriginal or from a culture or background that makes you a minority in Canada, you can't become a foster parent.

Yes, you can! In fact, we seek to match children to foster homes with similar backgrounds. Since our client population is very diverse, we need a diverse group of foster parents as well.

Most of the children coming into foster care are babies.

Children come into foster care at all ages, and the numbers are constantly fluctuating. Sometimes we do have many babies, other times we have more teens than any other age group.

Being a foster parent is very expensive, you have to pay for a lot of things out of your own pocket.

Foster parents are provided basic maintenance payments monthly to assist with caring for children in care. Special needs payments may be available for exceptional needs.

Some things that are TRUE:

- Most children who come into foster care return to their families after a brief or longer period of time. It can be tough to say good-bye to a child you have been caring for. Your Resource Worker will support you and your family during this transition.
- If you are going through some challenging times in your family life, we'd encourage you to wait until things settle down before applying to foster.

Source: <https://www.facswaterloo.org/foster/myths-and-realities-about-fostering>



Understanding Grief & Loss

IN FOSTER CHILDREN

by Carrie Craft

When a child enters your home, whether through adoption or foster care, they come with a tremendous amount of grief and loss. Losses that include birth parents, extended family, home, pets, neighborhoods, schools, friends, treasured belongings, and in some cases culture.

Don't discount the loss of "the little things" like a favorite climbing tree. I've had children talk about their favorite toys, friends, or even the lunch lady at school.

People and things make a big impression on us, this is the same for our children. If we want to help the child grieve we must first better our understanding of grief and loss.

The Stages of Grief and Loss

Grief is very personal. Each person will go through grief at her own pace, time, and order. When I speak of order I'm referring to Kubler-Ross' well known stages of grief established in 1969. They are:

- Shock/Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Despair/Depression
- Acceptance/Understanding/Resolution

Here is an example of what grief and loss may look like in a child who is missing her birth family after entering a foster or adoptive situation:

- **Shock/Denial** - 'My family will be here soon to pick me up.' The child stands by the door and waits, peering out the window from time to time.

- **Anger** - 'I hate Social Workers. They don't understand anything about my family' or 'Police officers lied about my dad. He wouldn't do any of the things they said he did.' The child may cry uncontrollably or become angry at the foster/adoptive parents for making simple requests like asking the child to get ready for bed or being told 'no.'
- **Bargaining** - The child may now realize that they will be in the foster/adoptive home for some time. The child may silently pray or believe the following: 'If I'm allowed to go home I'll be the best kid. I will help keep the house clean. I will get the top grades in school.'
- **Despair/Depression** - 'Who is going to take care of me? Did I make this happen? I give up. Why me? I'm so alone.'
- **Acceptance/Understanding/Resolution** - 'I'm here in this home, but I'm safe. This is not my fault. I did not make this happen. Adults make choices for me. I need to do my best to share my feelings with adults around me that I trust. I will get through this and be OK.'

Some children may get stuck in a stage, like 'Anger.' Others will bounce between stages many times before hitting 'Understanding.' And still others will 'Bargain,' before going through 'Denial.' Kubler-Ross stated that it could take an adult 2 years to grieve the death of a loved one. It was also noted that an 18-month old child who loses her parents could take up to 6 years to fully grieve and come to a resolution of that loss. Again, grief is personal.

Source: <https://www.youthdynamics.org>

Medication-safety & storage

Too many children visit the emergency department every year for problems related to medication reactions and errors in giving medication. Errors commonly involve pain and fever medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen. In order to prevent these errors, safeguards must be put in place.

General Medication Safety Tips

- Keep medication out of the reach of children, and keep childproof caps on the container.
- Cold medications often have multiple medications mixed together in one bottle. For example, do not give a fever reducer again if it is already in a cold medication. Remember simple, single medications are usually best to avoid confusion.
- Check the medication label and read the expiration dates. Expired medications can lose their strength and can be harmful.
- Young children pay attention to adults who take medication. Sometimes a 2-year-old will tell you they have a headache or stomachache to get attention or to find out more about taking medication. Watch the symptoms and give your child attention or education in ways other than giving medication if it is not needed.

Dosing Safety

- Give the correct dose. Measure the dose out exactly.
- Use a medication syringe or dropper to measure the correct amount because they are more reliable than a measuring spoon. When possible use medication syringe or dropper that came with product. One teaspoon = 5ml (cc). Kitchen teaspoons & tablespoons are not accurate and should not be used.
- Give the medicine at the prescribed times. If you forget a dose, give it as soon as possible and give the next dose at the correct time interval following the late dose.
- Give medications that treat symptoms (such as: persistent cough) only if your child needs it and never to children under two. Continuous use is usually not necessary. Talk with your health care provider.
- Be especially careful with over-the-counter medications. Some adult strength medications are never used with children. Talk with your health care provider or pharmacist.
- Fever reducing medication can be given for fever over 102°. Remember that fever can be the body's way to fight infection. Be careful not to casually use fever-reducing medication.



Medication and Food

- It is usually best not to mix medication with food or drink because it might interfere with the medication's effectiveness or dilute the dose.
- Ask your child's doctor or pharmacist before mixing medication with food or liquid.
- If medication is mixed with food or liquid, ALL of it must be taken.
- Your child may be given something to drink immediately afterward to help with the taste, if necessary.

Helping Children Take Medication

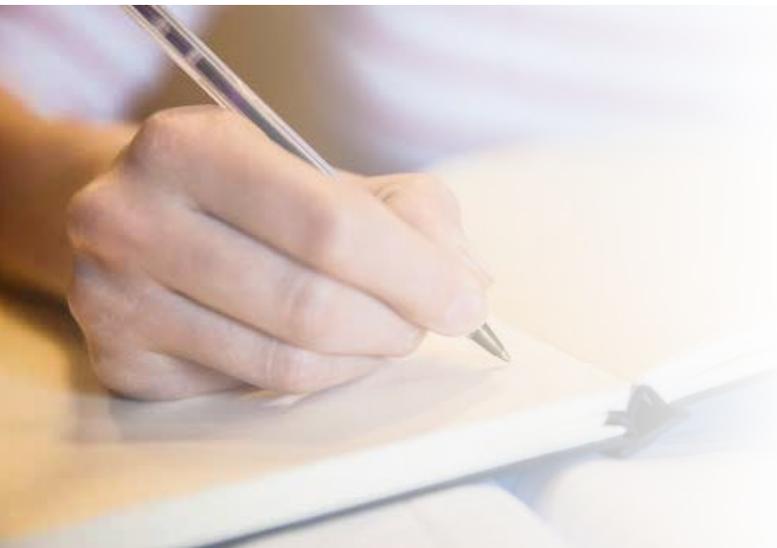
- Some medications do not taste very good. Your child can suck on a popsicle beforehand to help numb the taste. Or you can offer your child's favorite drink to help wash it down.
- If the medication is not essential (such as most nonprescription medication) then discontinue it. If you are not sure, call your health care provider.
- If the medication is essential, be firm, help them take it and give a reason for the need.
- Should your child need to take medication, either at home at school or at child care, be sure to talk with the program director. When your child is well enough to return to school/childcare, the staff may be able to assist you in monitoring your child during this time, be able to share information about your child's symptoms and how they may be responding to the medication and other comfort measures.

Source: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/medication-safety/Pages/Medication-Safety-Tips.aspx>



SAFEGUARDING your family while fostering

Foster care is a high-risk profession. It is demanding and can be stressful. Foster parents are in a unique relationship with the child compared to the child's birth family or guardians. While performing the day to day responsibilities of a parent, the foster family is not legally defined as a parent of a child in care. Foster parents are in a contractual relationship with the Ministry of Social Services to provide quality service for a child in need of protection who is placed in their care. The Ministry of Social Services is required to provide foster parents with adequate support to provide this service. Due to the nature of foster care, foster parents may be at greater risk of an allegation compared to other families. Stresses and limited coping capacity can occasionally lead to an environment where a foster family's parenting ability is impaired, leading to an abusive or neglectful reaction.



How can I effectively safeguard my family?

While there is no absolute way to protect your family against allegations of abuse, there are ways that foster parents can protect themselves in case of an allegation.

The Most Effective Way is to Document:

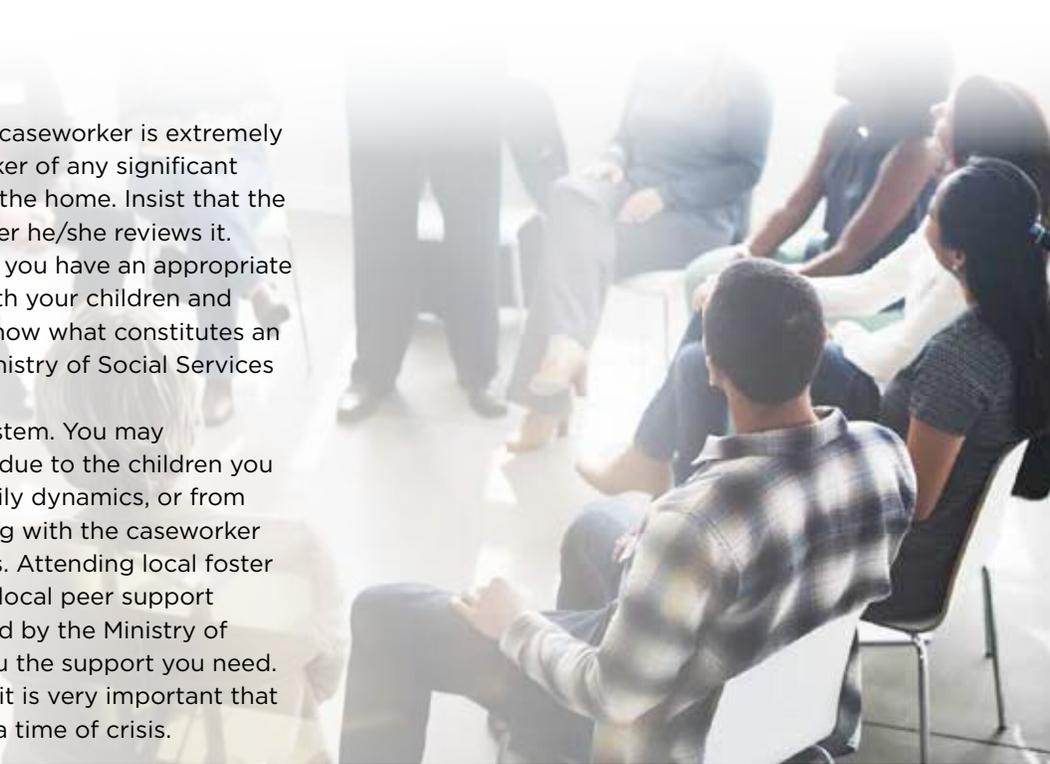
- Keep a daily log of events that occur in your house.
- Date every entry in your log or journal.
- List the activities of the day. Include the time and who was involved.
- Be sure to record both positive and negative situations that your children may have encountered each day.
- Also include any people who visit on any given day. Document who visited, when, why, and how long they stayed.
- If an incident occurred, state only what happened. You can use direct quotes but make sure you are accurate with whom you are quoting.
- Identify every reliable witness and piece of corroborating evidence.
- If possible, take pictures.

- State just the facts. Leave your opinion out. You may however write down your thoughts in another section.
- Document any cancellations of meetings, appointments, absences, or changes in plans.
- Document any changes in a child's health or behaviour – confirmed or suspected.
- Document any modifications to medication or medical and dental appointments.
- List any damages or changes to the child's physical environment (prescribed or not) which could affect their safety, behaviour, or quality of life.
- Report any bruises, scratches, wounds, sores, bumps, infections, headaches, etc. which have occurred through accidental injury, self-injury or any difficult to explain circumstances. From an outsider's view, injuries could be perceived as being sustained through negligence or abuse.
- Record any telephone calls with professionals or extended family or friends regarding the incident of the child's behaviour at the time of contact and the advice given verbatim.
- Document statements regarding actions to rectify a possible emergency or safety hazard, such as first aid treatment given or possible actions taken to protect the child from this hazard, such as boarding up a broken window, etc.

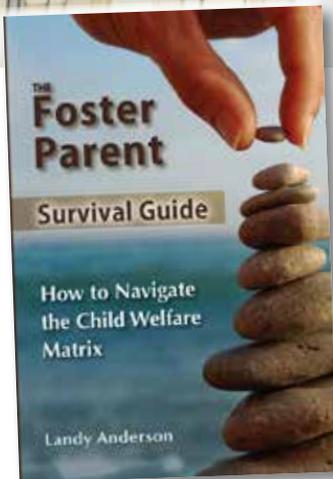
Other ways to help safeguard your family include:

- Participate in Core Training available on working with children and youth that have been abused physically or sexually.
- Make time to read books or pamphlets that will increase your awareness of abuse. Obtain a copy of the Ministry of Social Services procedures for handling allegations of abuse.
- Have 'house rules' for everyone about privacy, night wear, etc. This is particularly important when dealing with foster children who are sexually aware or who have been sexually abused.

- Open communication with your caseworker is extremely important. Inform your caseworker of any significant events or changing dynamics in the home. Insist that the caseworker sign the log whenever he/she reviews it.
- It is strongly recommended that you have an appropriate and authorized adult present with your children and foster children. Make sure you know what constitutes an authorized adult through the Ministry of Social Services regulation.
- Build and maintain a support system. You may experience additional pressures due to the children you have in your care, disrupted family dynamics, or from difficulties that arise from dealing with the caseworker or the Ministry of Social Services. Attending local foster meetings, connecting with your local peer support members, or counseling provided by the Ministry of Social Services can help give you the support you need. Keeping confidentiality in mind, it is very important that you have someone to turn to in a time of crisis.



goodreads



The Foster Parent Survival Guide provides a straightforward account of the child welfare matrix and teaches workers and foster parents how to navigate this complex social structure together.

“The Foster Parent Survival Guide is a must read book for both new and experienced foster parents. Wonderful, and interesting reading. The author’s personal experiences throughout the book make it more down to earth and real.”

– Sheila Durnford, Past President Canadian Foster Family Association

www.fosterparentsurvival.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Landy Anderson is a former Foster Care Supervisor with 27 years experience in child welfare. She has worked as a child protection worker, supervisor, and manager in several Children’s Aid Societies in Ontario for various departments, such as Intake, After Hours, Family Services, Placement, Kinship Care, Community Services, Customary Care, Foster Care and Adoption. Landy is a former Treatment Foster Parent and Licensed Group Home Operator. She has supervised staff operated group homes and foster care departments for various child welfare agencies in the greater Toronto area including an Aboriginal Children’s Aid Society. Landy also teaches part time at her local community college. Remarkably, Landy has been a foster parent to over 100 teenagers spanning a decade, where some teenagers stayed for days and others well into adulthood.



MAINTAINING A NUTRITIOUS DIET

...in the midst of a pandemic

Figuring out “What’s for dinner?”...can be yet another daily challenge. While many parents are understandably looking to ready meals and processed foods as a quick and low-cost way to feed the family, there are convenient, affordable and healthy alternatives.

Here are five ways to help feed your children a varied, nutritious diet that will support their growth and development, all while building healthy eating habits.

1. Keep up fruit and vegetable intake

Purchasing, storing and cooking fresh vegetables can be challenging in a lockdown, especially when parents are advised to limit trips outside of the home. But wherever possible, it’s important to ensure children are still getting plenty of fruit and vegetables in their diet. Whenever it is possible to get hold of fresh produce, do so. As well as being eaten fresh, fruits and vegetables can be frozen where possible and will retain most of their nutrients and flavor. Using fresh vegetables to cook large batches of soups, stews or other dishes will make them last longer and provide meal options for a few days. These can also be frozen where possible and then quickly reheated.

2. Swap in healthy dried or canned alternatives when fresh produce is not available

Fresh produce is almost always the best option, but when it is not available there are plenty of healthy alternatives that are easy to store and prepare. Canned beans and chickpeas, which provide an abundance of nutrients, can be stored for months or even years, and can be included in meals in many ways. Canned oily fish such as sardines, mackerel and salmon are rich in protein, omega 3 fatty acids and a range of vitamins and minerals. These can be used cold in sandwiches, salads or pasta dishes, or cooked as part of a warm meal. Canned vegetables, such as tomatoes, do tend to contain lower quantities of vitamins than fresh produce, but they are a great fallback option when fresh produce or frozen vegetables are hard to come by. Dried goods like dried beans,

pulses and grains such as lentils, split peas, rice, couscous or quinoa are also nutritious, long-lasting options that are tasty, affordable and filling. Rolled oats cooked with milk or water can serve as an excellent breakfast option, and can be spiced up with yogurt, chopped fruits or raisins.

3. Build up a stock of healthy snacks

Children often need to eat a snack or two during the day to keep them going. Rather than giving kids sweets or salty snacks, opt for healthier options like nuts, cheese, yogurt (preferably unsweetened), chopped or dried fruits, boiled eggs, or other locally available healthy options. These foods are nutritious, more filling, and help build healthy eating habits that last a lifetime.

4. Limit highly processed foods

While using fresh produce may not always be possible, try to limit the amount of highly processed foods in your shopping basket. Ready-to-eat meals, packaged snacks and desserts are often high in saturated fat, sugars and salt. If you do purchase processed foods, look at the label and try to choose healthier options containing less substances. Try to also avoid sugary drinks and instead drink lots of water. Adding fruits or vegetables like lemon, lime, cucumber slices or berries to water is a great way to add an extra twist of flavor.

5. Make cooking and eating a fun and meaningful part of your family routine

Cooking and eating together is a great way to create healthy routines, strengthen family bonds and have fun. Wherever you can, involve your children in food preparation – small children can help with washing or sorting food items while older children can take on more complex tasks and help to set the table.

Try as much as possible to stick to fixed mealtimes as a family. Such structures and routine can help reduce anxiety for children in these stressful situations.

Source: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/easy-affordable-and-healthy-eating-tips-during-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak>

Overview of our **In Home Support** program



The *In Home Support* program provides assistance and support to foster families and caregivers when assessed by the Ministry of Social Services. *In Home Support Workers* are hired by the SFFA to assist foster parents and caregivers with a variety of services that may include: 1:1 supervision, help with homework, assistance with bedtime routines, additional supervision during recreational activities or help in maintaining the overall operation of the home. This can include meal preparation, laundry, and light housekeeping. *In Home Support* workers may be asked to accompany foster families or caregivers on errands, appointments or provide transportation to children or youth to visits and appointments if identified..

When is support provided?

Support is provided to families when it is identified by the Ministry of Social Services that assistance is required to assist foster families in supporting their home. The purpose of the *In Home Support* is never to take away from the responsibilities of the foster parent or caregiver but to provide additional hands on help in the home.

How is the need for support assessed?

In situations where foster parents or caregivers care for high numbers of children or have children placed with high behaviours or cognitive challenges, a joint assessment is completed by the foster home's Out of Home Care Worker, the foster parent or caregiver, and in some situations may include the SFFA and/or Childcare Worker.

What are a few things I should know if a contract is approved for my home?

- *In Home Support Workers* are to work in partnership with the Foster Parent and/or

caregiver to ensure the best outcomes for all involved. The SFFA administers the contract and is responsible for all recruitment, onboarding and support employees placed in your home.

- Although childcare can be done while the foster parent or caregiver is absent from the home, it can not exceed 3 hours in duration. Childcare cannot be used as babysitting and approval must be obtained for situations that occur frequently. Consideration for approval will be based on the number and needs of the children that require childcare to ensure safety.
- *In Home Support* are not able to provide childcare while foster parents and/or caregivers work outside the home.
- Overnight supervision may be assessed to ensure the safety of a child or youth, to assist with the Fire Safety Plan in relation to the safe exit of all children in case of emergency or where extreme medical needs require consistent monitoring throughout the night.
- Support Workers must complete all hours within the foster/caregiver's home and are not permitted to provide *In Home Support* for children in their own homes under any circumstance.



Who can fill this role?

The SFFA seeks qualified individuals to fill the role as *In Home Support* workers. The qualifications and abilities that we are seeking are that you must be able to take initiative, are reliable, creative, and have the ability to work as part of a professional team.

Identified and relevant training may be provided to *In Home Support* workers, which may include First Aid and CPR or Food Safety. The SFFA offers a competitive wage and benefits package.

For more information on the *In Home Support* program visit our website at <http://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/> or give us a call at 1-888-276-2880.

For a child, domestic violence lasts a **LIFETIME**

Many children exposed to violence in the home are also victims of physical abuse. Children who witness domestic violence or are victims of abuse themselves are at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems. Children who witness violence between parents may also be at greater risk of being violent in their future relationships.

What are the short-term effects of domestic violence or abuse on children?

Children in homes where one parent is abused may feel fearful and anxious. They may always be on guard, wondering when the next violent event will happen. This can cause them to react in different ways, depending on their age:

- **Children in preschool.** Young children who witness intimate partner violence may start doing things they used to do when they were younger, such as bed-wetting, thumb-sucking, increased crying, and whining. They may also develop difficulty falling or staying asleep; show signs of terror, such as stuttering or hiding; and show signs of severe separation anxiety.
- **School-aged children.** Children in this age range may feel guilty about the abuse and blame themselves for it. Domestic violence and abuse hurts children's self-esteem. They may not participate in school activities or get good grades, have fewer friends than others, and get into trouble more often. They also may have a lot of headaches and stomachaches.
- **Teens.** Teens who witness abuse may act out in negative ways, such as fighting with family members or skipping



“Children who live in homes in which domestic violence has happened at least once are at greater risk for repeating the cycle as adults.”

school. They may also engage in risky behaviors, such as having unprotected sex and using alcohol or drugs. They may have low self-esteem and have trouble making friends. They may start fights or bully others and are more likely to get in trouble with the law. This type of behavior is more common in teen boys who are abused in childhood than in teen girls. Girls are more likely than boys to be withdrawn and to experience depression.

What are the long-term effects of domestic violence or abuse on children?

Children who live in homes in which domestic violence has happened at least once are at greater risk for repeating the cycle as adults by entering into abusive relationships or becoming abusers themselves. For example, a boy

who sees his mother being abused is 10 times more likely to abuse his female partner as an adult. A girl who grows up in a home where her father abuses her mother is more than six times as likely to be sexually abused as a girl who grows up in a non-abusive home. Children who witness or are victims of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse are at higher risk for health problems as adults. These can include mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. They may also include diabetes, obesity, heart disease, poor self-esteem, and other problems.

Can children recover from witnessing or experiencing domestic violence or abuse?

Each child responds differently to abuse and trauma. Some children are more resilient, and some are more sensitive. How successful a child is at recovering from abuse or

trauma depends on several things, including having:

- A good support system or good relationships with trusted adults
- High self-esteem
- Healthy friendships

Although children will probably never forget what they saw or experienced during the abuse, they can learn healthy ways to deal with their emotions and memories as they mature. The sooner a child gets help, the better his or her chances for becoming a mentally and physically healthy adult.

How can I help my children recover after witnessing or experiencing domestic violence?

You can help your children by:

- Helping them feel safe. Children who witness or experience domestic violence need to feel safe. Consider whether leaving the abusive relationship might help your child feel safer. Talk to your child about the importance of healthy relationships.
- Talking to them about their fears. Let them know that it's not their fault or your fault. Learn more about how to listen and talk to your child about domestic violence.
- Talking to them about healthy relationships. Help them learn from the abusive experience by talking about what healthy relationships are and are not. This will help them know what is healthy when they start romantic relationships of their own.
- Talking to them about boundaries. Let your child know that no one has the right to touch them or make them feel uncomfortable, including family members, teachers, coaches, or other authority figures. Also, explain to your child that he or she doesn't have the right to touch another person's body, and if

someone tells them to stop, they should do so right away.

- Helping them find a reliable support system. In addition to a parent, this can be a school counselor, a therapist, or another trusted adult who can provide ongoing support. Know that school counselors are required to report domestic violence or abuse if they suspect it.



- Getting them professional help. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of talk therapy or counseling that may work best for children who have experienced violence or abuse. CBT is especially helpful for children who have anxiety or other mental health problems as a result of the trauma. During CBT, a therapist will work with your child to turn negative thoughts into more positive ones. The therapist can also help your child learn healthy ways to cope with stress.

Your doctor can recommend a mental health professional who works with children who have been exposed to violence or abuse. Many shelters and domestic violence organizations also have support groups for kids. These groups can help children by letting them know they are not alone and helping them process their experiences in a nonjudgmental place.

Source: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/domestic-violence/effects-domestic-violence-children>

Take a child under your wing

Become a
Foster Parent

Check out our "Family Stories" video series online at:
sffa.sk.ca/family-stories

KEEP CALM AND FOSTER ON

Reconnecting with Family: Sometimes Sweet, Sometimes Leaves Me Wanting

When I was a child, I loved candy and whenever I got my allowance, or made some money from collecting bottles, going to the local store for candy was always a magnet for me. A force that pulled me there consciously and sub-consciously to my favorite kinds of comfort candy. It was a treat and unless a friend of mine shared some of his at school or when visiting his house, it wasn't a regular occurrence for me to have all the time. That's why it was such a treat.

One day in school one of my teachers told me a story of his grandchildren and their love for candy. Like any child they always want candy, and when they have too much, it either makes them sick or spoils their appetite for lunch or supper. This was the story he was telling that day. He said that one day his grandchildren were asking for candy with great enthusiasms and said they would love to eat candy all the time. So, he said to them, 'today I will buy you lots of candy, but throughout the day that's all you can eat. You can't eat

regular food. If this is what you want this is what you will get. So off they went, and they ate candy until they literally got sick. Then they began to crave for real food, but they were quickly reminded of



the deal that was made. So, that day they quickly learned that in everything you need moderation. They also learned that once you get what you want it's not always what you thought it would be.

As a man who was adopted in the foster care system, I grew up always knowing I was adopted. In fact, I don't think I was officially adopted. I believe I had a name change, and I always had a child



welfare worker who came to visit or stayed in touch with my family. Thinking back on it now, it doesn't bother me whether I was officially adopted or not. Yet, I always knew I was from another family and that they were Indigenous.

Later in life when I turned 18 my child welfare worker gave me the phone number of a relative of mine. At this time in my life I was living an unstable life and dropped out of high school for the second time, because I was a binge alcoholic since I was 16 and was in a rebellious stage of my life. I slowly had become disconnected with my adopted/foster family. They were concerned about me, but at



that time I was only concerned for myself. So off I went to find this new lease on life.

Up until then it never consciously crossed my mind of seeking out my biological family, but as soon as I got that phone number, I made that first phone call. In a short amount of time I had met a



handful of family members from my late mothers' side of the family. To this day I still see some of these family members. On my biological father's side of the family I spent a weekend with my grandparents, and met my biological father, on a short 30-minute visit, that was initiated by my grandparents that weekend. We said we should go for a drink sometime, but that never happened, and I have never seen him since. That was 34 years ago

A few years later I was visiting my biological mother and my biological father had phoned her drunk, while I was visiting her. She was annoyed because apparently, he still did this when he was drinking. I talked with him on the phone for a couple of minutes, but the conversation wasn't meaningful, or really made any sense, because he was drunk.

Family members would tell me of times when they would run into him in Edmonton, AB, but I never did see him myself. For whatever reason, there never was a strong pull to connect with him or even seek him out. I'm not even sure if he is still alive or not. I have no ill feelings towards him, it's just an empty feeling of no connection. This is how it was with a lot of the family members I met.

For about two years I lived with my late mothers' side of the family. On the one hand I was glad to connect with them, but on the other hand if I hadn't connected with them, I may have been homeless, because I didn't have any place to call home. I lived with two uncles and



two aunts and even attempted to live with my late biological mother, but after a week or so she asked me to leave. I'm not sure if I offended her in some

way, or did something wrong, but our attempt to live together never developed. Yet, we did stay in touch and I did visit on several occasions and we did have some good conversations about our lives before she passed away about 15 years ago.

After that initial two years of seeing all these family members, on my late mother's side, all the time living with them, I eventually went back to Edmonton after living on two First Nations communities for these two years. My connection with them was never the same after I returned to Edmonton. I would see them from time to time, but although they were in fact my

family of origin there was always a disconnect. I was intrigued by learning about their lives, but the relationship I had with them always felt distant. I think it is safe to say I felt a stronger connection with the family that raised me. My Christian upbringing may have had an influence on that, because I was raised a Protestant Christian and never felt a strong pull to Indigenous Spirituality, which is what my biological family members adhered to. I now have an appreciation for Indigenous Spirituality, and I understand it, but still favor Christianity, while embracing my Indigenous identity.



The bottom line is that there were many differences between my biological family and myself because of not being raised with them. I'm sure if I was raised with them, there would have been certain things that would have seemed familiar. On the one hand I was curious and did seek them out, even though, as I mentioned, I wasn't seeking them out until I got that first phone number. Then I sought them out. I also know this disappearing from the family that raised me caused hurtful feelings, because they didn't know how I was doing. Was I in jail? Was I dead? Was I on the street as a homeless young man? Yet, at the same time this new reconnection with my biological family felt secure at the time, then that changed over time. Now that I look back on it all this was a very confusing time.

Continued on next page...

Another perspective on the whole issue of foster children or adopted children seeking out their biological family members comes from when I lost my own children to child welfare. This was before

With our son, my wife received a phone call in the morning, and by supper time he was on our doorstep with part of his belongings, and the rest of his belongings came a day or two later. No transition time or preparation time. Just one day gone for good and the next back for good. Then with our girls they were staying with my biological uncle and aunt's place and so the

My advice to people who foster children is that you should expect that these children will most likely seek out their biological family members. Then they will have to figure out for themselves how to feel about that. This can bring uncertainty, fear and the unknown. They will know for themselves if they are truly accepted or not. They will also know if it will be something they can endure for the long haul and in what way for the long haul.

It's like at the beginning of my story when I mentioned my old school teacher and his lesson on eating candy. Most kids love candy and want it more than they need it. Candy won't feel your stomach with nutrients and vitamins. Sometimes it tasted good for a while but can often leave us wanting for real food. Nutritious food. The same is true for adopted, foster, or biological family members. We will know sooner or later through trial and error which relationships are worth sustaining and which are worth just sitting on shelf. This doesn't mean any of these family members are evil or bad, it's just the way life has handed them to us on the goodies and food tray of life. We either accept this fact, or we struggle with it our entire lives. What has happened in your story, or your foster child's story, and the level of self awareness with everyone will depend on how everything will work out. Sometimes you have to let someone figure it out for a while, as they determine if they want to eat candy or real food.

Parry Stelter is originally from, Alexander First Nation near Edmonton, AB and is former child from the Alberta Child Welfare System from what is called the Sixties Scoop generation. He is a doctoral candidate with Providence University in Contextual Leadership. He runs Word of Hope Ministries. To find out more about Parry visit his website at wordofhopeministries.ca

transition happened as a result of documented visits, that went well, and then they had time to pack over the span of a week.

“ We will know sooner or later through trial and error which relationships are worth sustaining and which are worth just sitting on shelf.”

So, between my own story of being a child in the system and seeking family, and then comparing it to losing my own children, and the getting them back, there are so many emotions involved. It was very overwhelming at all points in these two stories. There were many tears cried, there were many laughs had, and there were many conversations with close friends and family members trying to find people who could help us find hope. That hope ultimately came from God, because of our Christian upbringing, but the Creator uses people all around us to point us to the ultimate form of hope in Jesus that my wife and I experienced in our personal lives.

I sobered up and really turned my life around. A friend of mine who was a pastor and a social worker at different times in his life said, 'during my time working with children in these types of situations I have found that no matter how a child's biological parents treated them or didn't look after them, when they were young, these children will always seek their biological parents out. Then he said, "So Parry, you better get ready to take your children back, possibly even before they turn 18.' When he said this I was partly relived, but partly offended, because I felt like he was saying that even though you Parry were a terrible parent they will want to come home. Now I know he was simply stating a fact.

Then as time went by this is exactly what happened. One of our children was sent back to us because he was 16 and the foster family didn't want him anymore, because of behavioral issues. Then that opened the door for the other child welfare office to give back our girls. The office manager at the first office stood up for us and saw the progress we were making, and the shortly after that our girls were returned to us. But the transition for both was totally different.



Finding ways to **SPEND LESS** on entertainment while you're stuck at home

Since most of us are still spending a lot of time at home and money may be growing tight, the less our entertainment costs, the better. Thankfully, there's a plethora of free content available online. Below are some suggestions on where to access free online games, movies, ebooks, music and more! If you're wondering what "the catch" is, well, there are a few. Firstly, many of these services are ad-supported – just like good old-fashioned commercial TV. Secondly, like everything else online, they're undoubtedly harvesting data from you. So before you sign up and dive in, just keep those two things in mind. And thirdly, some of these are limited-time deals. If it's a subscription service that's giving you a taste for free and you decide you don't want to stay with it, remember to cancel before the regular billing kicks in.



Free **EBOOKS AND MAGAZINES**

Why spend cold, hard cash buying books and magazines – especially if you only read them once and then don't need to see them ever again – when there's a really good chance you could borrow them from the library instead, without actually having to go to the library? It might sound weird to check out digital media from the library, but many local libraries have modernized a lot since the days of card catalogs and microfiche readers. Some libraries offer TV shows and movies as well as books, magazines and comics in digital formats. It all depends on what your local library offers, so check it out.

And once you've explored what your library has to offer, there's no need to stop there: You can find a wealth of free ebooks online. Here are some links you can try.

- Authorama - <http://authorama.com>
- Project Gutenberg - <http://www.gutenberg.org>
- LibriVox - <https://librivox.org>
- ManyBooks - <https://manybooks.net>
- Smashwords - <https://www.smashwords.com>
- DigiLibraries.com - <https://digilibraries.com>
- BookLending.com - <https://www.booklending.com>

Free **MUSIC AND AUDIO**

One of the first signs that businesses were starting to take the coronavirus seriously was when public events started getting postponed and canceled. Here are some options to help fill the void.

- Tidal - <https://www.cnet.com/news/get-4-months-of-free-tidal-and-a-discounted-subscription-afterwards-with-a-purchase-at-walmart/>
- Spotify - <https://www.spotify.com>
- Podcasts for iPhone - <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/apple-podcasts/id525463029>
- Google Podcasts for Android - https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.podcasts&hl=en_US
- Amazon Music HD - <https://www.amazon.com/music/unlimited/hd?tag=cheapskate08-20&ascsubtag=01370410-2067-4f73-b202-bf5ee97e2dfa%7C51214d50-585a-11eb-a6cf-abc3e12f56ed%7Cdtp%7Cus>

Free **VIDEO**

There's nothing like streaming video to help you weather a lockdown. Just bring a working broadband plan and a tolerance for commercials – and you should be set.

- Crackle - <https://www.crackle.com/movies>
- Hoopla - <https://www.hoopladigital.com>
- Internet Archive - <https://archive.org>
- Kanopy - <https://www.kanopy.com>
- Plex - <https://www.plex.tv/watch-free/>
- Pluto TV - <https://www.pluto.tv/live-tv/mst3k>
- Tubi TV - <https://tubitv.com>

Free **GAMES**

Now that many of us are spending a lot more time at home, some of us have a lot more time to play video games. One big problem? Games can be expensive. Rather than empty your wallet on new video games at retail prices, you might want to grab some free games – there are always a few around.

- Grand Theft Auto - <https://www.epicgames.com/store/en-US/free-games>
- Fortnite: Battle Royale - <https://www.epicgames.com/fortnite/en-US/home>
- Apex Legends - <https://www.cnet.com/news/apex-legends-a-beginners-guide-to-the-latest-battle-royale-game/>
- League of Legends - https://play.euw.leagueoflegends.com/en_GB
- Star Wars: The Old Republic - <http://www.starwarstheoldrepublic.com>
- GOG - https://www.gog.com/partner/stay_at_home

Source: <https://www.cnet.com/news/the-best-free-stuff-while-youre-stuck-at-home/>

NOTE: Offers and links may have changed since the time of printing.

Helping kids to plan their own day

When school's not in session, our regular routines go out the window. It's luxurious to be able to switch off morning alarms, let family board game sessions continue well past bedtime, and turn a blind eye to little readers devouring novels by flashlight under the covers late at night. For a while, anyway. When it goes on too long, the days and weeks begin to blur. When household chores aren't getting done, the kids are complaining they're bored all the time, the day is becoming unbalanced with too much screen or sedentary time, or the kids aren't making time to practice sports, music, or academic skills, it often helps families to establish a routine to lend some structure to our day. This doesn't have to be a rigid hourly schedule (it's easier to stick to if it's not!). Think of it as a roadmap to outline your day, to make sure the must-dos get done, and make sure kids have something to turn to when they run out of ideas for ways to play.

When school is cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging kids to plan their own days (with help from a parent) helped to reduce boredom, and got them excited about the opportunity to take on new projects and learn about the things they cared about. This might benefit your family as well.

If your children are old enough to write, you can sit down with them in the morning or the night before and have them write down their own plans for the day or

week, including what skills they'll work on, what chores they'll do, what they'd like to learn, or what kinds of games they want to play. If you have a toddler or preschooler, try asking them to draw pictures to illustrate what they would like to do during the day. For very young children, you can try making little pictures representing their answers for them to colour in.

Here are some questions you can use to help guide your kids ideas on planning their days:

- **What will you do for your body today?** Encourage kids to identify ideas for active or outdoor play and healthy foods they want to eat. This is a good opportunity to remind kids when to expect bedtime or naptime, or tell them about any plans to be active as a family.
 - **What will you do for your brain?** If there is schoolwork to be done, this is the time to talk about it. But also ask what your kids would like to learn. Would they like to catch bugs to observe in the garden? Read books about the solar system? Practice saying names of dinosaurs? Maybe they want to see what lives in the creek by your home, or measure how much rain will fall that day?
 - **What will you do for your family?** See what ideas your kids have on how they can be helpful, and how to care for family members. Organizing a messy cupboard? Helping Dad make a batch of muffins? FaceTiming a relative? Or maybe teaching a younger sibling how to play a new game?
- **What will you do for your home?** What chores does your child need or want to do? Even toddlers can help dust baseboards, wipe fingerprints from kitchen cabinets, push a Swiffer or broom around, or match socks. You may be surprised what your kids are willing to take on—mine have volunteered to clean toilets, help siblings tidy rooms, and pull weeds!
 - **What will you do for fun?** Last but definitely not least, what are some fun activities your child would like to do today? Many children who have access to a TV or tablet will want to watch videos or play games. With a little nudge, you can also help them identify other fun things to do too, like build a fort or obstacle course in the backyard, play an active video game, collect pinecones or rocks to paint, or blow up balloons to bop around the living room.

The following page contains a usable outline of one way you could help kids plan their days. Use it not only to let your kids know what must be done, but also as a tool to empower your kids to decide how they want to be active, curious, helpful, and playful every day.

Source: <https://activeforlife.com/printable-help-kids-plan-their-own-day/>

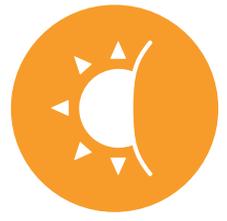


What will my day look like today?

★ MUST DO ★

♥ WANT TO DO ♥

? COULD DO ?



Morning



Afternoon



Evening

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

What will i do for...

 my body

 my brain

 my family

 my home

 fun



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