



FAMILY & CHILDREN
SERVICES A SOURCE OF HOPE

Fostering Footnotes

SPRING
2018



4/13/2018 to 4/14/2018 – Empowered to Connect Conference presented by Show Hope. At Calvary Bible Church, 855 S. Drake Rd., Kalamazoo. The event flier states, “Come experience practical teachings in a safe and supportive community as we work to equip families, churches and professionals to better serve children impacted by adoption and foster care. Featuring Trust-Based Relational intervention methods developed by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross from the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development at TCU to help bring attachment and connection in families.” For more info & to register visit <http://empoweredatcalvary.wixsite.com/conference>.

4/21/2018 – Safe Kids Coalition Car Seat Check Up Event at Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, 601 N. Park Street, Kalamazoo from **10:00 am to 2:00 pm**. For more info, call (269) 341-8830.

4/21/2018 – Earth Day Celebration at the Kalamazoo Nature Center, 7000 N. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo from **9:00 am to 5:00 pm**. Admission is free for this event and includes many special activities.

4/22/2018 – Safe Kids Day at Sherman Lake YMCA, 6225 North 39th Street, Augusta. From **1:00 pm to 4:00 pm**. Some activities include; Play the Water Safety Game: Spot the Hazards, Match the Sports to the Safety Equipment, Learn the Dangers of Liquid Laundry Packets, Be Safe – Be Seen as a Pedestrian and take part in the Interactive Family Health Fair. For more info, call (269) 341-8830.

5/8/2018 – Family & Children Services Licensing Specialists will be on hand at **Blaze Pizza**, 5015 West Main, Kalamazoo, to answer questions about fostering and becoming a foster parent. Please send people you know who would like to talk to us about becoming foster parents from **4:30 pm to 7:30 pm**. This is also a fundraiser so please share the flyer on Facebook and come support Family & Children Services’ Handle With Care fund.

5/12/2018 – Sibshop at ASK Family Services, 445 W. Michigan Ave. #102, Kalamazoo from **10:00 am to 1:00 pm**. According to www.askforkids.org, “Sibshops are designed for siblings, giving them a place to have a good time and share their experiences, while learning to better understand and work with their families.” These are for siblings of youth who have mood, behavior or emotional challenges and are between the ages of 7 and 13. For more info and/or to register, contact Pam at (269) 350-2634.

5/16/2018 to 9/9/2018 – Cats and Dogs Exhibit at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. The Kalamazoo Valley Museum describes it as “In the exhibit Cats & Dogs, we immerse ourselves in numerous entertaining and interactive elements and environments that help us to truly understand the animals that many of us lovingly share our homes with. Three different environments; in their skin, in their heads and in our society, are designed for visitors to move through and experience what it is like to be in a cat and dog’s world. With over 20 hands-on exhibits, visitors will have fun learning and experimenting.” The Museum offers **free admission** and is open most days from **9:00 am to 5:00 pm**.

6/15/2018 – Movies in the Park featuring The Lion King at Spring Valley Park, 2600 Mt. Olivet, **starting at 7:30 pm** and sponsored by the Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation. **This is a free activity** and the website suggests bringing a blanket. Family friendly **activities will begin at 7:30 pm and continue until the movie begins at sunset**. Food and snacks are available for purchase.

- Ongoing – Kingman Museum** in Battle Creek, offers **free admission** and has **planetarium shows for \$2.00** per person. Their address is 175 Limit St., Battle Creek, and their hours are **Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm**.
- Ongoing – Foster/Adoption play dates** occur the **third Friday of every month from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm** at Calvary Bible Church on Drake Road in Kalamazoo. The play dates are in the gym and children’s climbing area. No shoes are permitted in this area so please leave shoes in the entry room and make sure your children wear socks. **Please RSVP to Hannah Wainer at 269-420-9003 or hmb217@juno.com.**
- Ongoing – Brown Bag Lunch** Adoptive, Foster, Kinship Parent Connections. This group meets the **second Thursday of each month from 12 pm to 1 pm**. The next dates scheduled are 4/12/2018 and 5/10/2018. It is located at the Family Enrichment Center, 415 S. 28th St., Battle Creek.
- Ongoing – Parenting the High Needs Child Support Group.** This group meets the **third Monday of each month from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm** at the Family Enrichment Center, 415 S. 28th Street, Battle Creek. The next dates scheduled are 4/16/2018 and 5/21/2018. **Childcare is available and an RSVP to (269) 660-0448 is required.**



What Every New Foster Parent Needs to Know

Meghan Moravcik Walbert (www.offspring.lifehacker.com) 12/20/2017



Becoming a parent of any kind requires planning, preparation and a whole lot of flexibility along the way. But when that child comes to you with a past you have few details about, trauma you didn’t inflict, and zero socks or underwear, it turns your world on its side.

After our son, Ryan, was born, my husband and I knew we would eventually become foster parents. We wanted to give another child—or children—the safety and security of the sort of stable family we’d been lucky enough to be born into. We knew that being the first among our family and friends to take the leap into fostering meant we had a pretty steep learning curve to overcome. We just didn’t know how steep until we were already climbing.

There are a handful of things in particular that I wish I’d known ahead of time.

You Need a Support System in Place Before Your First Placement Arrives

The key to surviving those initial hours/days/weeks of your first placement is having a supportive network of fellow foster parents around you who can answer questions, offer advice and provide reassurance that “No, you’re not crazy for thinking you could do this,” and “Yes, it will get easier.”

See, I did this backward. After my first placement—a lively 3-year-old boy—arrived, it clicked that this kind of parenting was vastly different from typical parenting. As much as our friends and family were cheering us on, they couldn’t fully understand what it felt like to jump in and parent a child who was completely unknown to us and so terrified that he wasn’t able to process hardly anything we said.

I scrambled then to connect with foster parents in my area and join foster parenting groups on social media, but those early days would have felt much less isolating if we’d had a few foster friends already waiting in the wings.

It's Okay to Say "No"

Now that you've decided to become a foster parent, every single story will tug at your heart. Even though you will carefully and thoughtfully outline the parameters of what you can—and are willing—to take on, there will be a moment when a social worker will ask you to drift outside those parameters. That's the nature of a system that is always short on people, beds and time.

As brand new foster parents, we had decided to take only one child at a time in the 2-to-6-year-old age range. Just a few weeks after our foster son arrived, we got a call about another boy. He was 8 years old and needed a LOT of one-on-one attention. I would have laughed if I hadn't been fighting back tears. Putting aside the logistical issues (like, we didn't have a bed for him), I was already physically and mentally drained. I didn't have any more to give.

The guilt of that "no" weighed heavily on me for months. If not me, then who? Were we his last option? Did my "no" effectively send him to a group home? It took time for me to accept that stretching myself beyond my limits would have been detrimental both to him and to the two kids already in my home. I had to accept my own limitations for the good of all of us.

Don't Sweat the Revolving Door

There will be regular social worker visits, therapy appointments and meetings with the child's advocates. Your dining room will feel more like a conference room at times, as you work to accommodate all the necessary meetings. And they'll happen at the worst possible times—right after school when crankiness is at its highest or just before dinner, when you're trying to discuss a recent behavioral issue at the same time that pots and pans really need to be hitting the stove. Sometimes all the adults who come with the child will feel more stressful than the child himself. Remember that you're not there to impress anyone. You can't possibly do a deep clean before each visit. If they arrive to a living room covered in toys; well, you have kids and kids play with toys. If you're in the middle of chopping vegetables while they dump their files on your kitchen table; then pat yourself on the back for 1) feeding the kids vegetables and 2) having an empty space on the table.

The Only Thing Certain in Foster Care Is the Uncertainty of it All

This is hard for those of us (ahem, me) who are Type A. Part of what makes me suited to foster parenthood is my organized and thorough nature. But "organized and thorough" also comes with a side of "needs to plan ahead." Well, planning ahead is a bit of a pipe dream in foster care.

Our first foster child was with us for almost a year, but he could have left at virtually any time. We lived and planned by scheduled court dates, never knowing what the outcome would be or if we'd have to drop everything to pack him up. I planned his 4th birthday party at the last minute, because I didn't want to get him excited about a party I might have to cancel. Foster parenthood forces you to be content with—or at least tolerant of—living in the moment.

The Goodbyes Will Break Your Heart, But That's Okay

There's a good chance the child will leave your home—after all, the main goal of foster care is to reunify the biological family. This is the part that scares many people off from becoming foster parents; the idea of having to let them go. But here's the thing: If that's the part that scares you, it probably means you'd be an excellent foster parent.

What these kids need most is not someone who will simply go through the motions. They need someone who will embrace them during the scariest and most traumatic time of their little lives and provide them with a safe, nurturing, loving home. When they leave, it should break your heart. And when it does, you'll know it was worth it because you would do it all over again.



Parenting a Child Who Has Experienced Trauma

Children who have experienced traumatic events need to feel safe and loved. All parents want to provide this kind of nurturing home for their children. However, when parents do not have an understanding of the effects of trauma, they may misinterpret their child's behavior and end up feeling frustrated or resentful. Their attempts to address troubling behavior may be ineffective or, in some cases, even harmful.

What Is Trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response to an intense event that threatens or causes harm. The harm can be physical or emotional, real or perceived, and it can threaten the child or someone close to him or her. Trauma can be the result of a single event, or it can result from exposure to multiple events over time. Potentially traumatic events may include:

- Abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional)
- Neglect
- Effects of poverty (such as homelessness or not having enough to eat)
- Being separated from loved ones
- Bullying
- Witnessing harm to a loved one or pet (e.g., domestic or community violence)
- Natural disasters or accidents
- Unpredictable parental behavior due to addiction or mental illness



The Impact of Untreated Trauma

Children are resilient. Some stress in their lives (e.g., leaving caregivers for a day at school, riding a bike for the first time, feeling nervous before a game or performance) helps their brains to grow and new skills to develop. However, by definition, trauma occurs when a stressful experience (such as being abused, neglected, or bullied) overwhelms the child's natural ability to cope. These events cause a “fight, flight, or freeze” response, resulting in changes in the body—such as faster heart rate and higher blood pressure—as well as changes in how the brain perceives and responds to the world.

In many cases, a child's body and brain recover quickly from a potentially traumatic experience with no lasting harm. However, for some children, trauma interferes with normal development and can have long-lasting effects.

The effects of trauma vary depending on the child and type of traumatic events experienced.

Understanding Your Child's Behavior

When children have experienced trauma, particularly multiple traumatic events over an extended period of time, their bodies, brains, and nervous systems adapt in an effort to protect them. This might result in behaviors such as increased aggression, distrusting or disobeying adults, or even dissociation (feeling disconnected from reality). When children are in danger, these behaviors may be important for their survival. However, once children are moved to a safer environment, their brains and bodies may not recognize that the danger has passed. These protective behaviors, or habits, have grown strong from frequent use (just as a muscle that is used regularly grows bigger and stronger). It takes time and retraining to help those “survival muscles” learn that they are not needed in their new situation (your home), and that they can relax. It might be helpful to remember that your child's troublesome behavior may be a learned response to stress—it may even be what kept your child alive in a very unsafe situation. It will take time and patience for your child's body and brain to learn to respond in ways that are more appropriate for his or her current, safe environment.

Parenting a traumatized child may require a shift from seeing a “bad kid” to seeing a kid who has had bad things happen to them.

Conclusion

Trauma can affect children's behavior in ways that may be confusing or distressing for caregivers. It can impact the long-term health and well-being of the child and his or her family members. However, with understanding, care, and proper treatment (when necessary), all members of the family can heal and thrive after a traumatic event.

Helping Your Child Who Has Experienced Trauma

Although childhood trauma can have serious, lasting effects, **there is hope**. With the help of supportive, caring adults, children can and do recover. Consider the following tips:

Identify trauma triggers. Something you are doing or saying, or something harmless in your home, may be triggering your child without either of you realizing it. It is important to watch for patterns of behavior and reactions that do not seem to "fit" the situation. What distracts your child, makes him or her anxious, or results in a tantrum or outburst? Help your child avoid situations that trigger traumatic memories, at least until more healing has occurred.

Be emotionally and physically available. Some traumatized children act in ways that keep adults at a distance (whether they mean to or not). Provide attention, comfort, and encouragement in ways your child will accept. Younger children may want extra hugs or cuddling; for older youth, this might just mean spending time together as a family. Follow their lead and be patient if children seem needy.

Respond, don't react. Your reactions may trigger a child or youth who is already feeling overwhelmed. (Some children are even uncomfortable being looked at directly for too long.) When your child is upset, do what you can to keep calm: Lower your voice, acknowledge your child's feelings, and be reassuring and honest.

Avoid physical punishment. This may make an abused child's stress or feeling of panic even worse. Parents need to set reasonable and consistent limits and expectations and use praise for desirable behaviors.

Don't take behavior personally. Allow the child to feel his or her feelings without judgment. Help him or her find words and other acceptable ways of expressing feelings, and offer praise when these are used.

Listen. Don't avoid difficult topics or uncomfortable conversations. (But don't force children to talk before they are ready.) Let children know that it's normal to have many feelings after a traumatic experience. Take their reactions seriously, correct any misinformation about the traumatic event, and reassure them that what happened was not their fault.

Help your child learn to relax. Encourage your child to practice slow breathing, listen to calming music, or say positive things ("I am safe now.").

Be consistent and predictable. Develop a regular routine for meals, play time, and bedtime. Prepare your child in advance for changes or new experiences.

Be patient. Everyone heals differently from trauma, and trust does not develop overnight. Respecting each child's own course of recovery is important.

Allow some control. Reasonable, age-appropriate choices encourage a child or youth's sense of having control of his or her own life.

Encourage self-esteem. Positive experiences can help children recover from trauma and increase resilience.

Examples include mastering a new skill; feeling a sense of belonging to a community, group, or cause; setting and achieving goals; and being of service to others.

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2014). Parenting a child who has experienced trauma. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

Safety Check – Bikes

Safe Kids Worldwide (www.safekids.org)

There are so many great reasons to ride your bike: it offers fun, freedom and exercise, and it's good for the environment. We want kids and families to ride their bikes as much as possible. Here are a few tips so that you'll be safe while you do so.



The Hard Facts

Properly-fitted helmets can reduce the risk of head injuries by at least 45% - yet less than half of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet.

Top Tips

1. Wear a properly-fitted helmet. It is the best way to prevent head injuries and death.
2. Ride on the sidewalk when you can. If not, ride in the same direction as traffic as far on the right-hand side as possible.
3. Use hand signals and follow the rules of the road. Be predictable by making sure you ride in a straight line and don't swerve between cars.
4. Wear bright colors and use lights, especially when riding at night and in the morning. Reflectors on your clothes and bike will help you be seen.
5. Ride with your children. Stick together until you are comfortable that your kids are ready to ride on their own.



Visit the link to review appropriate hand signals to use while riding a bike:

https://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/wheeled_sports_rules_of_the_road.pdf



A **Bicycle Helmet Blitz** is happening on **May 5, 2018**, at Bronson Methodist Hospital in the Gilmore Center for Health Education. This event is organized by Safe Kids of Kalamazoo County. The event runs from **10:00 am to 2:00 pm** and the cost is **\$10.00 (cash only)**. **Each child or adult participating will receive a helmet that is fitted to his or her head.** Many sizes and colors are available. Parking is in the Jasper St. parking ramp or Advanced Cardiac Care lot.

Online Training Opportunities

Please keep in mind all Foster Parents must complete six hours of training every year. One way to achieve this goal is to go on the internet and learn through various ways about parenting topics that will hopefully help you on your foster parenting journey.

When you visit www.boystown.org; you can find a number of helpful articles and trainings related to parenting topics. Some of the topics include:

- Tween Discipline
- Toddler Tantrums
- Success in School
- Parenting Principles
- Teen Discipline
- Today's Teen
- Sleep Issues
- Kids and Technology
- Anti-Bullying
- Behavioral Disorders
- Parenting Through Crisis
- Self-Harm
- Teen Dating



Seeking Research Participants

Kyrai Antares is a doctoral student at Western Michigan University and explains that this study serves as the subject of her doctoral dissertation. According to Kyrai, "The research study will explore experiences and understandings related to race for Black young adults, age 18-25, who were adopted and raised by White parents." **If you meet the following criteria and would like to share your story**, please contact Kyrai by telephone at **(859) 200-8013** or email at kyrai.e.antares@wmich.edu.

The criteria:

- Identify as Black, African American, or Biracial with Black/African American Parentage
- Adopted and raised by White parents (placed prior to age 5)
- Current age 18-25
- Raised in the Detroit, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo or Lansing area
- Born in the USA



We Need Your Help!

To spread the word about becoming a Foster Parent, I would like to hear from you. What ideas or events do you think would be a great opportunity to get the word out? For example, attending your church to speak about becoming a Foster Parent or any event you think would be beneficial.

With your superb ideas, please contact

Jamila Washington, Recruitment Specialist, at **269-501-0834** or by email at jamila.washington@fcsource.org.



Foster Care ON-CALL Telephone Number **(269) 569-8294**

This phone number is an important resource for you and for foster children. This number should be utilized when the agency is closed and your worker is not available. Typically this would be between the hours of 5 pm and 9 am and on weekends. If something happens that requires a trip to the emergency room, behaviors escalate etc., please be sure you are calling this number. During normal office hours, contact your foster care worker directly.

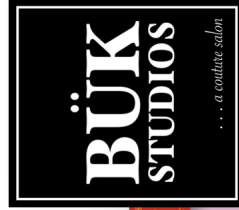


Controlling the Curl

May 7th

5:30pm-7:30pm

Child Care and Light Snacks Provided



Please **RSVP**

by **May 1st**

269-569-1378 or

Stephani.Smith@fcsourse.org

4423 W. KL

Kalamazoo



Foster Parent Training



Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

*A Workshop for Resource Parents
(foster, kinship, relative placement)*

Developed by the National Child
Traumatic Stress Network

Trauma is an important topic for those who serve as resource parents because many children in foster care have lived through traumatic experiences. Children bring these traumas with them when they come into your home.

Traumatic stress reactions can cause children to behave in ways that may baffle you. Their relationship with you, with other adults, and even with their peers may feel shaky or unpredictable, and all your usual approaches to parenting—the tricks that might have worked with your own children—may not work with them.

Children's trauma can directly affect you as well. Dealing with trauma without the proper tools and understanding can lead to compassion fatigue—feeling numb, burned out, and unable to handle one more child's sad history.

A child's trauma-related behavior can also bring back memories of your own. We'll learn about how a child's trauma can affect resource parents and what to do to take care of yourself. This workshop will be led by Suzanne Coleman.

Due to the nature of this workshop, with each session building upon the lessons that came before, we are asking that participants commit to attending all eight sessions if at all possible.

Attendance counts towards your 6 required training hours.



April 17

May 1, 15, 29

June 12, 26

July 10, 24

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Family & Children Services

1608 Lake Street, Kalamazoo

A light snack will be provided



RSVP: Suzanne Coleman 269-344-0202 or SuzanneC@fcsourse.org

To request childcare – contact by prior Thursday at 5pm.



fcsourse.org



Frozen Yogurt Pops



Take cups of fruit flavored yogurt, remove the foil topping. Stick a popsicle stick in the yogurt, cover with foil and freeze overnight. Carefully pull the frozen pop from the plastic container and decorate as desired to create funny faces with marshmallows, chocolate chips, etc.

Nutter Butter-Fly



Slice apple slices, spread Nutella or peanut butter, and make little apple "sandwiches". Make several of these. Grab a couple carrots as well. Put a carrot in the middle of the plate, and arrange the apple "sandwiches" in the shape of wings to form a butterfly. Great finger food!

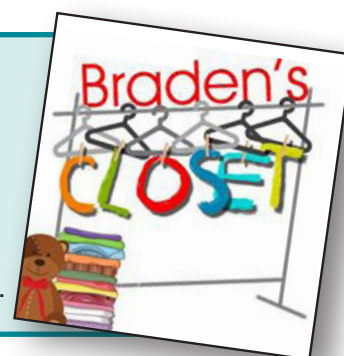


Resources

Braden's Closet is a resource for any foster parent who is in need of clothing, shoes, sheets, blankets, or comforters for the children in their care. Braden's Closet is a part of Fostering Hope and all items are tax deductible. They also accept donations of new and gently used clothing.

Braden's Closet is located at 930 Foxwood Lane, Otsego, MI.

You can visit their page on Facebook or call them at 269-567-0603 for more information.



Thank you for taking the time to read Fostering Footnotes.

Please contact Krista Ploski at 269-344-0202 ext. 4609 or kristap@fcsource.org if you have comments, ideas or suggestions.



