

# Advisor

NEWSLETTER

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*Winter 2016/17*

## *Featuring*

**Creating traditions  
for foster and adoptive  
families**

**Two things I wish they  
knew**

**Stress & modern life**

## *Plus*

**Frequently asked  
questions**

**When children are  
home alone**

**Book corner**



**SASKATCHEWAN  
FOSTER FAMILIES**

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## What is to come...

*When I was small I was always jealous of the world and what it is was to become.*

*I spent those young years dreaming of a place I could go and disappear with the sun where the children are cared for happy and young.*

*But reality is where we are now we are the children that cannot be explained because we come from those bad places of change and those bad places of change is the only life we know.*

*We are the children with great laughter, song, and play.*

*But are filled with our own demons of hatred and pain.*

*But these demons have no understanding of what is to come.*

*With time we exchange our care givers and postal codes with not one to call our family or our forever home.*

*We cross paths with our demons from time to time to want to forgive and to let people in.*

*With these challenges of our past and our journeys to come we forget the power of what is to come.*

*We as the children know no love nor care till there is a family upon us that may not understand us but is willing to get to know us and show us that there is a light that shines with in.*

*They know no fear nor rejection just a welcoming world of more things to come.*

*Where their beautiful hearts that surround you and lots of care they become the love that you have been so desperately yearning for.*

*With open arms they help to guide us to forget what was once a reality to become as one.*

*With our past to carry a reminder of what is to come.*

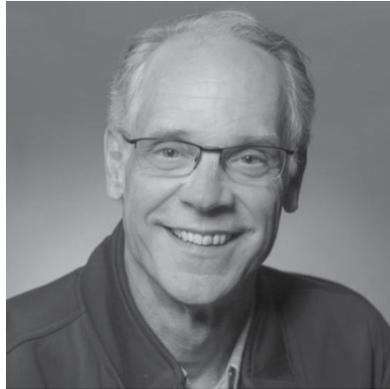
– A Youth in Care

# Message from our Chairman of the Board

**O**n behalf of the Board of Directors and my family, we want to wish you and your family prosperity in the new year ahead.

2016 has been a momentous year for the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association with the successful growth of our In Home Support Program, the number of recruitment campaigns, the announcement of online PRIDE Training, and with the capability now that members will have the opportunity to participate in training from the comfort of their own homes. Thank you to SaskTel Pioneers for making this possible by generously donating video conferencing equipment.

Late this fall the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association was pleased to be part of new partnership with Annie E Cassie Foundation and the Ministry of Social Services. Denise



Goodman from the Annie E Casey Foundation met with the SFFA and Ministry staff in identifying and developing a plan to work together on issues of retention. Retention is everyone's responsibility and we are elated that the Ministry is committed in working with our organization on this important area of concern.

I personally would like to acknowledge and thank members of the Provincial Board of Directors for their faithful service throughout the year, we can count on them not only to

“ Retention is everyone's responsibility and we are elated that the Ministry is committed in working with our organization on this important area of concern.”

ensure the good governance of our organization, but also to provide their expertise when needed. Thank you to Deb and the Provincial Office staff for their support and dedication to the organization.

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

Kevin Harris  
Chairman of the Board, SFFA

## Did you know?

In any cases where Foster Parents need clarification of a policy, there is an investigation into a Foster Parent's home, or you need help walking through a difficult situation, the SFFA has advocates readily available to help you through these circumstances. To contact one of our advocates, simply pick up the phone and dial our main office at **1 (888) 276-2880**.

### SFFA's Board of Directors:

**CHAIRPERSON**  
Kevin Harris

**DIRECTORS**  
Tara Switenky  
Herman Goertzen  
Konota Crane  
Tim Adams  
John Quong  
Justin Reves



## We need your e-mail

We are now sending e-mails to our foster parents on a monthly basis.

To be added to our list and receive the latest news, please send your e-mail address to [wayne@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:wayne@sffa.sk.ca)

THANK-YOU!

**As a foster parent** you have experienced first-hand the ups and the downs of fostering. Some children stay for a few days and others for months or years, but it's worth it to ensure a bright future and a positive start in life for children and youth in need.

**A lot can change in a day.** Some days are beautiful, while others can be full of tears. But what doesn't change is the love, protection, support and care that you provide for children in your home. You know better than anyone the kind of person it takes to provide that safe, loving place and a bright future.

# Tell Two Friends



**SASKATCHEWAN  
FOSTER FAMILIES**

Families helping families  
[www.saskfosterfamilies.ca](http://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca)

**The SFFA needs your help.** We need you to **Tell Two Friends** who are just like you that we need them. For every referral that you make to us which ends in success (an approved foster parent and home placement is required) the SFFA will gift you \$200.00.

**Tell Two Friends** to contact SFFA today to enroll and to start their training.

**Tell Two Friends** they will receive extensive training to become a foster parent.

**Tell Two Friends** SFFA will be with them every step of the way.

**Tell Two Friends** there are discounts for foster families and financial support.

**Tell Two Friends** being a foster parent is one of the most rewarding things they will do!

**INFO: Saskatchewan Foster Families Association**

**Toll Free: 1-800-667-7002 [www.sffa.sk.ca](http://www.sffa.sk.ca) | **





### **What kinds of people can be foster parents?**

Married, single, same-sex, or common-law, with or without children, are all welcome to apply to be foster parents. You must be able to pass a criminal record check (including all adults in the home), child protection screening, and be experienced with, or willing to learn about children with some special needs.

### **What are the required physical aspects of a foster home?**

Foster homes can be owned or rented, but they must be clean, adequately furnished, in good repair, and free from health and fire hazards. The home must be equipped with a smoke detector on each floor. Medications, alcohol, hazardous chemicals, firearms and ammunition must be kept in a secure location. Children in foster care may have a bedroom of their own or they can also share a room with a child of the same gender and compatible age. A home safety check is completed as part of the approval process and at each subsequent annual review of the foster home.

### **Who are the children in need of homes?**

Children in foster care come from a diversity of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Many have experienced unimaginable trauma, or survived neglect or abuse. As a result, these children may struggle with emotional or behavioural issues. It is not uncommon for children in foster care to require special guidance and care. For the most part, these children need safety, security, attention and support.

### **Is there training to become foster parents?**

Yes, as part of the family assessment home study process, prospective foster parents participate in PRIDE (Parenting Resources for Information Development and Education) Pre-service Training. Topics focus on understanding the foster care system, including the role that foster families play in supporting the families of the children in care, the role of the caseworker, and the impact on the foster family and the children in care. Prospective foster families participate in exercises and activities, in order to prepare them to work with children and families before a child is placed in their home. All-in-all this training takes about 30 hours to complete.

### **Do foster parents choose the children who come into their home?**

Yes, foster parents choose their “range of acceptance” which is the number, age, gender, and level of needs for the kids they would be willing to take into their home. This can be changed at any time and the Ministry of Social Services will work with you to try and match suitable children to your home based on their individual needs.

### **Is there a limit on the number of children that can be in one foster home?**

The Ministry of Social Services policy states that there can be no more than four foster children in a foster home, but allows for exceptions in the following circumstances: emergency placements, placement of large sibling groups, or placement of children who have previously lived in the same foster home.

### **How long does a child stay in care?**

A child may remain in foster care for one day, a few weeks, several months or even years. Many complex factors determine the length of the child’s stay, and each child has a caseworker who works with foster parents, regarding case planning and the individual needs of the child.

<http://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/becoming-a-foster-parent/frequently-asked-questions>

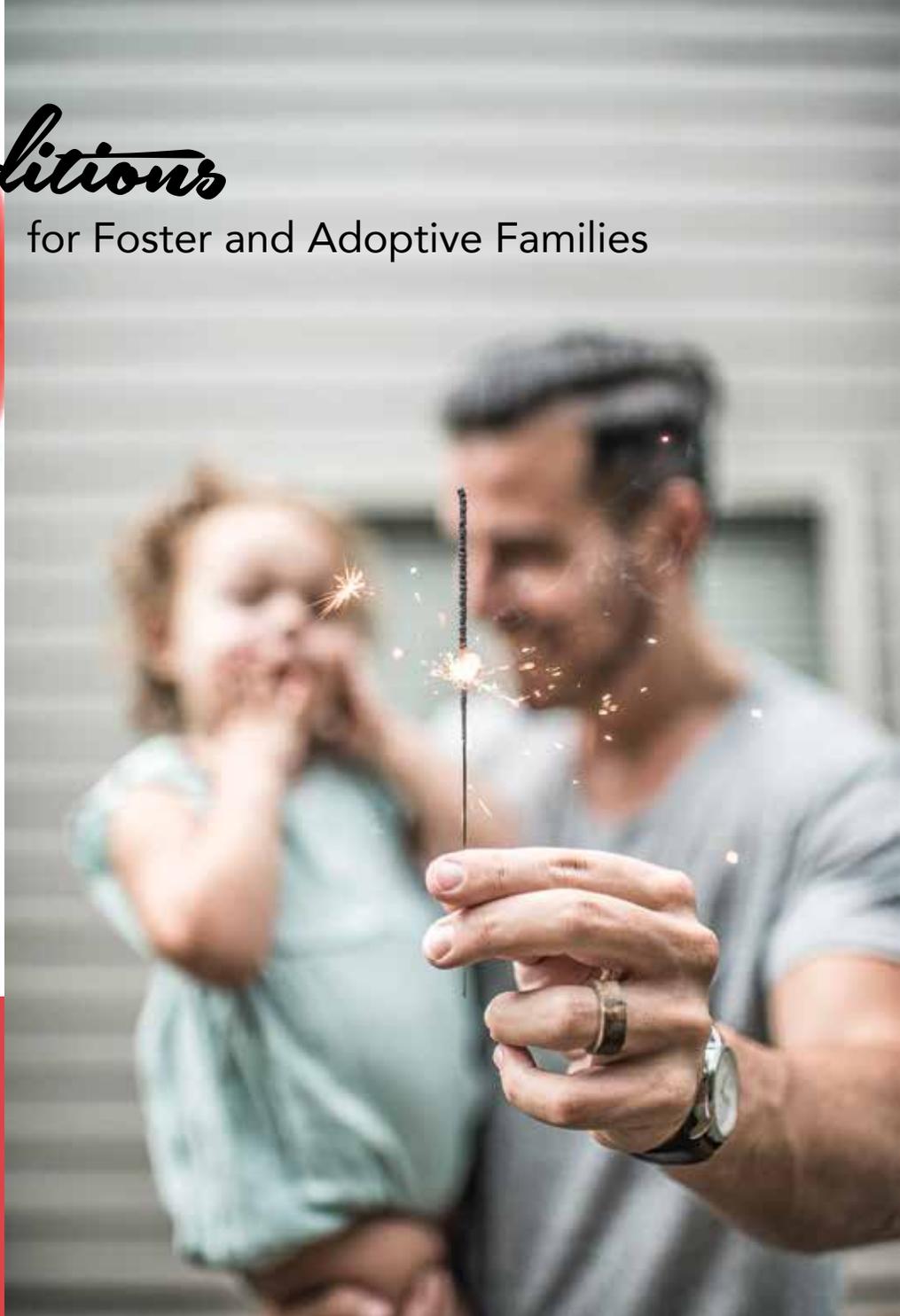
# Creating *Traditions*

## for Foster and Adoptive Families

The Chamber of Secrets begins with a chapter entitled "Worst Birthday."

Harry Potter is to spend his birthday not receiving any cards or presents and in fact is told he will be spending the night in his room pretending that he does not exist as his aunt and uncle entertain guests. Harry felt a loneliness worse than any he'd ever experienced before. While his friends were off with their families, and his family dines on a delectable dinner with a beautiful dessert awaiting them, Harry sits alone with a measly couple pieces of bread digesting in his mostly empty belly.

*"Like Harry, foster children may see their peer's extravagant birthday celebrations and long for just a small bit of recognition."*



Once while perusing online I stumbled upon a counter that was ticking away missed birthdays of children in foster care for the year. The number was staggering, and while I've not been able to find it recently during searches, it left a lasting impact on my heart. Just like Harry, children in foster care or institutions are not experiencing a normal childhood, and many have NEVER experienced a

birthday cake or party, playing in a little league sport, having sleepovers, or other activities that we deem a 'normal' part of growing up in a first world country. They may have to move homes right before their birthday and not have friends in their new neighborhood/school yet. Their caregivers may not have the money to provide a party or other special birthday activities, especially if they just moved into

the home in the last month or two. Like Harry, foster children may see their peer's extravagant birthday celebrations and long for just a small bit of recognition. We highly recommend if you are a person who would like to help kids from hard places but who cannot provide a home for them, volunteer or donate time or money to help make a foster child's birthday special.

*“For children who are in foster care or adoptive homes, birthdays are often painful and filled with memories of the families they are separated from.”*

For children who are in foster care or adoptive homes, birthdays are often painful and filled with memories of the families they are separated from. Kids may act out, sabotage, or withdraw on their special days. They may or may not have birth family contact on their birthdays, which may or may not result in different behaviors.

For foster children, upcoming birthdays are part of their future, something scary and unknown. Our daughter used to always ask questions about future holidays and birthdays and make requests for them. For years, we were unable to make promises and were stuck saying things like, “Well, if you’re still living in our house on your next birthday...”

## *Five* considerations for Your Foster or Adoptive Child’s Birthday

 1 Find out what traditions or events typically took place in the child’s birth family on birthdays. You may be able to incorporate some or all of them into the celebration in your home to make the child feel more comfortable. For example, if the child normally got to select a favorite dish to be prepared for dinner, and it’s a dish you can make or get a recipe for, this is something within your control to make happen.

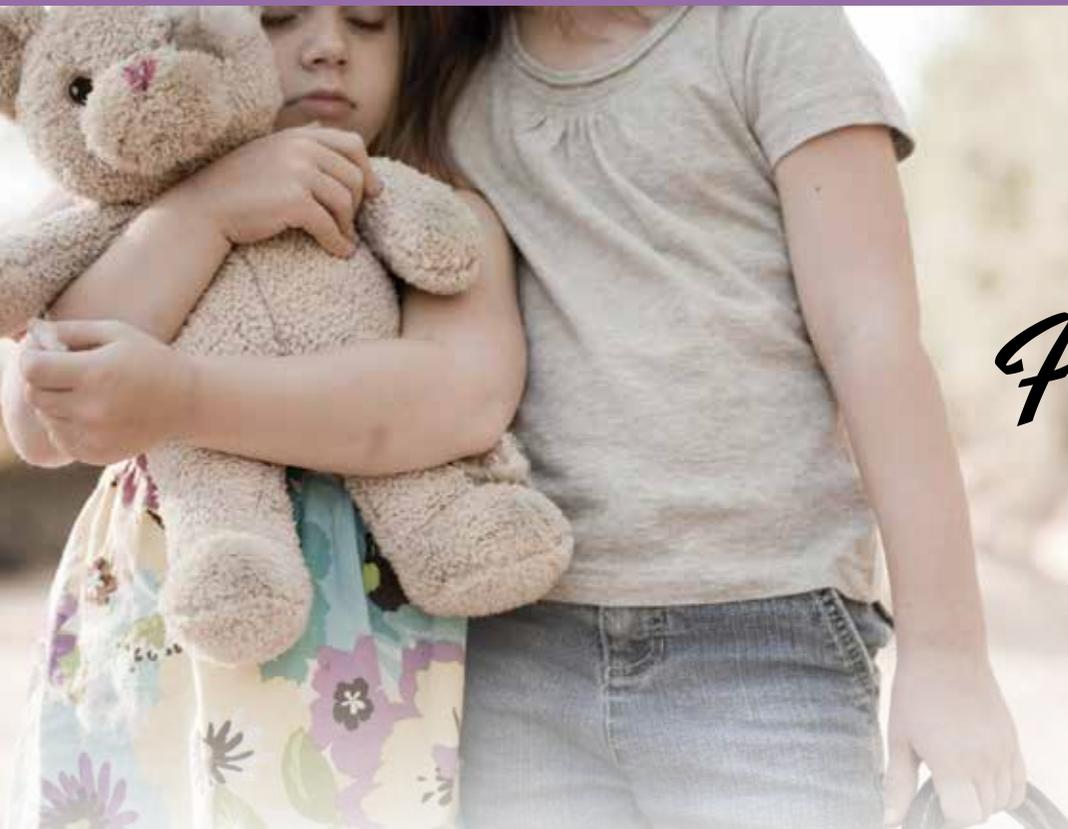
 2 Create traditions special to your home and family. It may be as simple as singing “happy birthday” and eating cake. Or it may be a new tradition that you introduce to your family home.

 3 Also, consider whether or not there will be birth family contact on your child’s birthday and prepare for it. This will look different in all households. If a child is still in foster care, they may have a visit on their birthday or near the date. If possible, it’s a good idea to find out what gifts the birth family is giving and what activities they may have planned. This way you won’t get the same gifts and you can consider being careful not to upstage what the birth parent has planned. If a child’s parents no longer have visitation rights, contact is likely up to your discretion. You determine whether it is safe for a bio parent to come along to a party or have a birthday phone call. A birth parent may also be relaying Facebook messages to the child or

sharing photos. This will affect kids (some not so much and some a lot), so plan accordingly what you need to do to be prepared.

 4 Sit down beforehand with your child to see what the child’s expectations are. Some of the worst situations evolve from unmet expectations. You and your child should have a heart-to-heart and come up with realistic expectations for the special day. See what they would like to happen to determine if you can make it happen, and let them know what will likely go down on their birthday. This would also be a good time (while everyone is calm and bonding) to discuss and role play appropriate responses for when we are disappointed, things don’t go as planned, or our expectations are not met.

 5 Help them make their birthday history. It is very important to help foster children collect photographic and written history of their lives. If you like scrapbooking, you could make a little scrapbook of pictures from their birthday. You could keep cards in a keepsake box and maybe jot down some notes of who the people are to them right now, so they’ll have a frame of reference for the future. You may consider writing down some stats: likes and dislikes, height, weight, etc. You could easily create video montage using software on your smartphone and put it on a thumb drive for your child.



*From a  
Former Foster  
Kid...*

## Two Things I Wish They Knew

*By Hilary Holland Lorenzo  
Writer, Human Resources Professional, Adoptee*

**W**hen I was 13, I was placed in foster care again after a failed adoption that occurred a decade earlier. I'd later pass through several more, including a girls' group home, moving around until I came of age. I became very adept at stuffing my belongings into two red milk crates and a battered suitcase with a missing zipper.

Children in foster programs are often escaping perilous situations, left at the mercy of whomever receives them next. Some of those people have good intentions, others don't. Many don't understand that these kids more than just the basics. There are many sentiments I didn't know how to express in those days, because it wasn't in my scope to expect, hope or ask. Here are two on my list:

### **1 We don't want to be made to be grateful, though we are**

In a new foster home, I was shown into a room carefully decorated with white wicker furniture, including a desk and bed set, and a big Chinese rice-paper parasol mounted to a ceiling corner. My new foster mother introduced my room to me as though she were seeing it for the first time herself, running her hand over the craggy surface of the desk chair, marveling at her choices of drapery and bedding. "Isn't this wonderful?" she breathed, as she pointed out each. "Look

at the stitching in this, the detail...". After each declaration of wonder she looked at me seemingly for an expected response, but was notably disappointed when I couldn't match her animation. I offered only a weak smile and a faint "Yes, it's very nice. It's beautiful. Thank you." I was certainly overwhelmed, but nothing close to rude nor disinterested. I had just come from a girls' group home where I'd been for the past 1 ½ years, sent away again to live near the sea air because of health issues. Packing up my things and being sent somewhere unfamiliar was scary by practice. I knew how to count on me. I did not know how

to count on others. My foster caregiver's face fell a bit, and she said sharply, "This is a pretty nice room, I'd say. I hope you're grateful."

I was grateful, and I told her so. But that's just it, right there. Every time I lived somewhere, someone wanted profound exclamations of gratitude, because "please" and "thank you" were not enough. I knew full well sacrifices were being made to have a strange teenager live in a home where she didn't belong. I always did my best to convey my gratitude.

However, hidden resentment began to build up in me like layered sediment. I didn't want to be made to express gratitude to have a safe place to be every time I was sent somewhere, for food on the table, for a warm bed to sleep. I didn't want someone to expect cartwheels out of me because of white wicker furniture that would never really be mine and didn't really matter to me. A place where I could stay for a period of time away from imminent danger and with a meal or two I could count on were all I hoped for. Meaningful extras were voices that spoke unprompted on my behalf, arms that encircled and weren't trying to work their way into my pants, any moment I was made to feel like a normal kid.

In the end, I was forced out of that home because of my foster mother's mental instability and her husband's wandering hands. Still, I was grateful to have a place to live, and that should have been enough.

I hate wicker furniture. And Chinese umbrellas belong in restaurants.



## Sometimes being there is enough

Kids with families usually have parents or family to explain how things work. Foster kids have usually been left with a conglomeration of expectations and practices usually shared by people who don't have a lot of skin in the game. They may have been taught badly, or not at all.

When I enrolled in a new high school, I was sent along to handle the deed myself. I found my way

in an unfamiliar part of town and stood stock-still in front of the building. My heart dropped into my shoes. I'd never seen a school so big except maybe in the media.

“Packing up my things and being sent somewhere unfamiliar was scary by practice. I knew how to count on me. I did not know how to count on others.”

I was a tough cookie accustomed to the streets of the city, often left to fend for myself. I had slept at night hidden away in the shadows of the park, had scrounged around for something to eat and rifled the pockets of women who'd left their wallets behind in open lockers at the Y. I knew how to get along, but some of my hardest moments were the ones in which others seemed to know what to do and I didn't (like the day at the high school.) Then, I wished only for an arm to press against, a person beside me who would walk confidently up to that enormous building and get things squared away, without my inexperience and solitude showing. I did well enough, anyway, albeit awkwardly, and got myself into school.

In that same high school, near graduation, my geometry teacher figured out I didn't know what an S.A.T. test was nor how to apply to college. At first, she was speechless and stared at me with her mouth agape which embarrassed me greatly, but she composed herself quickly and helped me with both. I sat for the very last S.A.T. of the season in my senior year, and was enrolled in college (her Alma mater) for that following fall.

Every guardian should know that foster children need advocates and solid direction. They'd be hard-pressed to find a kid who wouldn't be grateful for a slight nod.

It would be near impossible to find one who wouldn't be grateful to have an advocate with a strong voice until that foster kid is old enough and brave enough to be on her own.



## Helping children maintain a **healthy weight**

As a parent, there are several ways to encourage your child to eat healthy foods and be physically active.

### **Tips for eating healthy**

By following Canada's Food Guide, your family will be able to meet their energy and nutrient needs. Keep your fridge stocked with foods from all four food groups.

Set a good example for your children by being a role model for healthy eating. What you buy is what you and your family will eat. Start by making wise food choices when you shop. Eat meals together as a family as often as possible. Involve children in choosing foods at the grocery store by teaching them how to use the Nutrition Facts table.



## **physically active**

### **Tips for being**

Physical activity plays an important role in the health, well-being and quality of life of all Canadians, and it is particularly important for children and youth. Habits formed early can last a lifetime.



Eating well begins at the grocery store.

What you buy is what you and your family will actually eat! Start by making wise food choices when you shop.

Write out your grocery list based on the foods you plan to eat during the week.

You can eat well and save on your grocery bill:

- Buy vegetables and fruit fresh when they are in season and freeze extras for later.
- Choose canned or frozen vegetables and fruit – they are affordable and nutritious options.
- Use beans, lentils and other legumes in place of meat several times a week.
- Stock up on canned goods and staples when they are on sale. Store them safely and use them up by their "best-before" date.
- Skip the cookies and baked goods, chips and other salty snack foods, soft drinks and other high calorie beverages. They can often cost a lot and are low in nutrients. Stick to the four food groups and buy the basics.
- Bake or prepare your own soups or muffins.

Children and teenagers should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. This can include walking to and from school, playing sports, or riding a bike. Set a good example. Try to add

physical activity to your daily routine and encourage your children to join you.

Limit the amount of time your children spend on sedentary

activities like watching television, playing video games, and surfing the web.

Be aware of the opportunities your community offers to help your family stay healthy. Are there bike paths nearby? What community programs are available throughout the year?



## health benefits

- Opportunities for socializing
- Improve fitness
- Increased concentration
- Better academic scores
- Stronger heart, bones and healthier muscles
- Healthy growth and development
- Improved self-esteem
- Better posture and balance
- Lower stress

“

More physical activity provides health benefits. Encourage children to move more as part of a healthy lifestyle.”





# STRESS & Modern Life

**S**ometimes when we think we're moving forwards, we're actually moving backwards. What is meant by that? Just take a look at the way that the Western lifestyle has evolved over the last 50 years.

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was relatively easy to get a job without needing higher education. One income would support a household of two adults and a couple of kids, and it would even pay the mortgage payment too. When the income provider (usually the husband in those days) got home from work, he could switch off and not worry about his job until the next day. Life was relatively simple, uncluttered and unhurried.

Fast forward 50 years and you see a totally different story. The cost of housing often means

that both parents have to work, and they are toiling away for much longer hours than their parents and grandparents did. The pressures of global competition mean being constantly available, perhaps responding to emails at 10pm or jumping on a conference call in the early morning. Financial pressures are growing everywhere, not only thanks to housing but also due to the development of a more consumerist society (everyone else has got an iPhone, so I want one too!).

The pressure also affects our kids. Constantly pushed to learn and achieve more, and monitored by regular testing, their experience of school is very different from that of their parents or grandparents. And they get to spend less quality time with their busy parents than ever.

# When is Stress a Problem?

**T**he first thing that needs to be understood is that people do not respond to stress in the same way. Stress is simply what we feel as the result of how the human body reacts to certain internal or external demands. Each person will respond differently, even if the demands they face are identical. This means that it would be wrong for any someone to simply dismiss the stress caused to a certain person, just because others are not experiencing the same level of stress.

At the same time, stress is not always a bad thing. Oftentimes, just the right amount of stress will encourage a person to do more or to try harder. Even positive stress comes with noticeable effects that can be both mental (anxiety, fear) and physical (headaches, nausea). However, these effects go away once the challenge is overcome. People who are experiencing positive stress are usually able to return to a relaxed state, one where the effects of that stress go away.

## How boys & girls react differently to stress

This could change the way we look after them in tough times.



In the study, they found that the insula – the part of the brain that deals with emotions and empathy – was particularly small in girls who had been through trauma, whereas boys had a larger one than usual.

They think these findings could provide a clue as to why girls are more likely to develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than boys. PTSD can develop after anything from a car accident to being bullied.

This study found that girls usually dealt with stress by using active coping strategies, such as asking for help and taking action to reduce the stress.

In contrast, boys tended to feel most stressed about conflicts with authority figures, such as teachers and handled stress by avoiding the issue entirely or seeking distractions.



**N**ew research suggests that boys and girls should be treated differently due to the ways they deal with stress and trauma. Researchers at Stanford University have found that boys and girls have very different ways of dealing with traumatic experiences, and said this should be taken into account in the way they are treated.

Scientists scanned the brains of 59 children between the ages of 9 and 17, who has all been through traumatic experiences.

### Signs of PTSD in children include:

- Disorganized or agitated behaviour
- Nightmares
- Reliving the trauma through repetitive play or artwork
- Changes of behaviour towards other children, bullying, hitting etc.
- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Bedwetting

# Dealing with Stress

## Think positively, and keep things in perspective

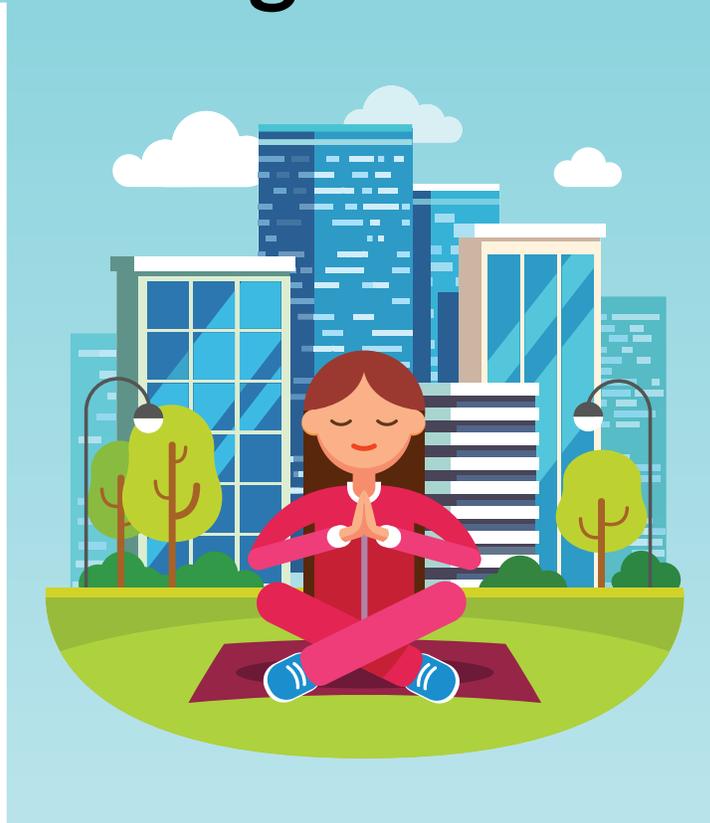
Having a positive attitude can be a very effective tool against stress. Even when dealing with very stressful situations, approaching things from a positive perspective can be a good way to minimize the effect this has on the body. This is a technique commonly known as 'reframing', whereby finding a more positive angle enables us to deal with a situation much more effectively. For example, the stress of learning a life-skill like cooking can easily be reframed into a positive, learning experience.

## Lean on a support group

Both adults and young folk should not be afraid to discuss their problems with those in their network. This network extends far beyond their group of acquaintances at school. Keeping problems hidden away inside only makes stress worse.

## Exercise regularly

A healthy diet should be paired with regular exercise, which has been shown to increase energy levels, improve concentration, improve relaxation and help you to get a better night's sleep. Moreover, regular exercise also has a positive effect on our susceptibility to stress, as it enhances confidence and self-esteem. Common excuses to avoid exercise include a lack of motivation or time, but the truth is that the vast majority of us are able to find opportunities to exercise.



## Stick to a healthy diet

Maintaining a healthy body is probably the best way to minimize the damage that stress can cause. However, in cases where there is stress due to lack of money or free time, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is a lot easier said than done. Even so, many symptoms of stress are neutralized with a healthy diet. All of the core macronutrients, such as proteins, minerals, vitamins, fat and

carbohydrates, are important for maintaining the body's wellbeing, as well as emotional stability and optimal energy levels. Your diet during a stressful period should be balanced and nutritional. A stressful period is not the time to try a new fad weight loss diet or the time to gorge on fast food and binge-drink coffee and energy drinks. Both caffeine and sugar will exacerbate the symptoms of stress. Excess caffeine can lead to poor sleeping habits, while excess sugar causes a depletion of energy levels and increased fatigue.

## Get enough sleep

A day filled with healthy meals and plenty of exercise should end with a long, relaxing sleep at night. Unfortunately, many of us get far less sleep than we should. Going to bed early might involve a lot of effort, but 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night will result in a person feeling less anxious, more relaxed, more energetic and more focused the next day.

Source: <https://adrenalfatiguesolution.com/adrenal-fatigue-stress-and-modern-life/>

# Preparation & communication are the key for children home alone

One of the realities of today's society is the pressure for children to stay home alone for a short time after school until a parent returns from work. But according to Canada Safety Council, parents who let their children stay home on their own or with a sibling must supervise them remotely. "Whether they are 6 or 16, school age children need to be supervised by a responsible adult," he advises. "If you can't be there in person when your child gets home from school, find a way to give him or her the feeling of being supervised."

The Canada Safety Council's advice includes:

- Set firm rules, with clear do's and don'ts.
- Prepare your child to deal with situations that may arise.
- Specify how his or her times is to be spent
- Keep in touch – if you're hard to reach, get a mobile phone or pager.
- Make sure your home is safe and secure
- Limit the time you leave your child at home alone.

The age at which children can legally be left at home alone for short periods of time varies from province to province, from 10 to 12 years. However, a 1999 report commissioned by Health Canada found, that parents request "home alone" courses for children as young as grade three.

Parents are urged not to consider letting a child stay at home alone before age 10 – and then only if the child is mature enough, only for an hour or two at most, and only if there's a responsible adult nearby to help out if needed. He says age alone does not determining whether or not a child is capable of looking after himself or herself properly.

For example, unsupervised teens and pre-teens can sometimes get into more trouble than younger children. Short test runs may help you assess whether your child is ready to stay home alone. Go out for just a few minutes. When you return, talk to your child about the experience. Increase the amount of time you are out, leaving specific instructions to follow. After a few trials answer these questions:

- Does the child feel comfortable about being on his or her own?
- Do you feel comfortable about the child being at home alone?
- Can the child follow rules responsibly?
- Does the he/she understand and remember instructions, whether written or oral?
- Does the child find constructive things to do without getting into mischief?
- Can the child handle normal and unexpected situations?"
- Are you able to communicate readily with him or her when you are not at home?
- Can the child always reach someone to help in case of emergency?



*Reprinted with permission from Child Find Saskatchewan Newsmagazine Spring 2006*



## “Like” us on Facebook!

**The SFFA now has a Facebook page! “Like” Us on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) to find out about special events, to connect with other foster parents and for daily inspiration to support you in your journey as a foster parent!**

# Formal Documentation as a Foster Parent

## Documentation – what does that mean?

Dictionary definition:

*“The paper that furnishes information, proof, or support of something else.”*

When you document, you are establishing a method of proving/documenting any events/incidents that take place in or outside of our homes. Documentation is a record.

## Why is it important?

- Recording what happens on a daily basis
- You may see a pattern forming
- A record helps with getting support and services for both the foster child and the foster family as a whole

## Is it really necessary?

Studies show that writing helps you remember more. It works to store information into long-term memory.

And don't put it off—DO IT NOW!

If you keep telling yourself that you'll do it later, you'll either :

- not get to it
- forget pertinent facts or details which could make a huge difference
- Always keep it safe and out-of-sight from others!

## Documentation is your BEST line of defense!

- Documentation offers you protection in the case of allegations.
- It may not make the allegation disappear, but it can help the investigation.
- It can offer you peace of mind and self-protection.

## How should I document?

Having these tools will help you:

- a notebook or 3-ring binder
- a calendar
- forms provided to you from the SFFA
- reward charts
- e-mails (by printing out correspondence, you have an instant record of the date and time and can slip it into your binder)

## Use the “who, what, where, how” when a child arrives...

- Name/Age
- Date/Time of Arrival
- Condition of the child
- Who brought the child
- Possessions
- Note any marks on the child's body
- How the child settled in

## Use the “who, what, where, when, how” for incident reports...

- Who: Who was involved or present when the incident occurred?
- What: What happened? Who said what? What led up to the event?
- When: When did it occur?
- Where: Where did it occur?
- How: How was the situation handled? What did you say or do and how was that received?

## Remember:

- Stick to the facts

*\*By keeping records of what is happening in your home, we are better able to help you when you call for support and this can help to secure additional services, supports and resources you may need!*

## Did you know?

The department shall pay actual fees for the following legal documents:

- birth, marriage and death certificates when required for court purposes or to complete the children's services file
- required certificates for adoption applicants who are receiving financial assistance;
- passports for children in care
- court transcripts

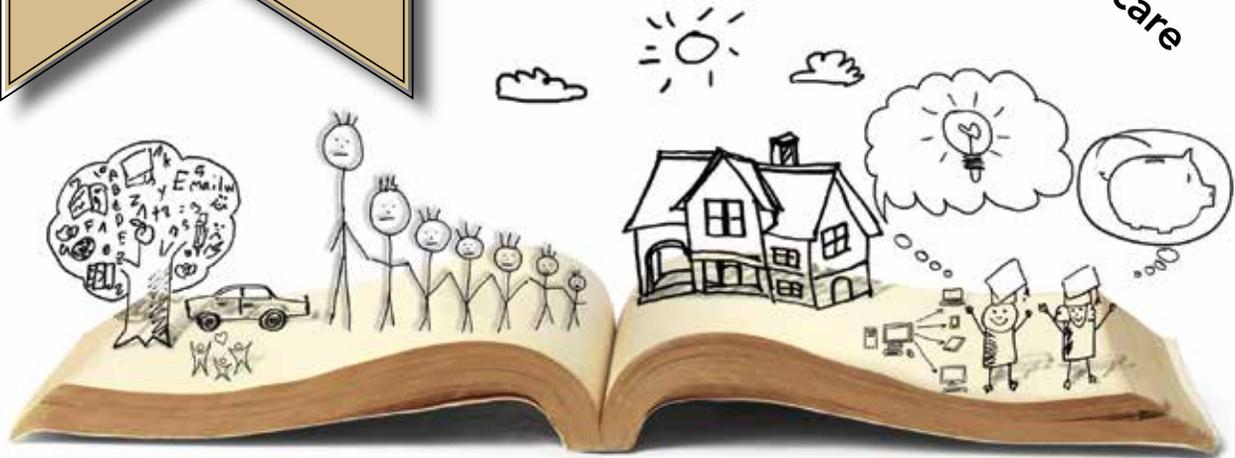
# Life Books

Knowing about your cultural and spiritual identity and your community

Having all of your personal things kept safe — like photographs, school reports and special belongings

Understanding where your family is

Understanding why you are in care



Children who live with their birth families have the opportunity to grow up surrounded by the history of events in their lives. Children who come into care are often denied this opportunity. Changes in placements can mean living with different families in different neighbourhoods. Long periods of time spent in care can mean that the past may be confusing or forgotten. Children have a right to know who they are and where they have come from. Life Books can help children understand and accept their past and help to make sense of what is happening to them. Life Books may also provide an opportunity for the child to discuss his or her feelings about the recorded information.

A Life Book must be started for every child who remains in out-of-home care for more than six months. (Children's Services Manual 2.5) The Life book's intent is to provide a permanent history for a child by recording as many significant events in the child's life as possible. It can enhance the child's identity by providing an informal record about the child's birth, development, placement, and a history of other significant events. This visual history is a wonderful way for the child to remember their time with you. (Film developing, binder and associated costs may be billed back to Ministry as determined by joint case planning between the caseworker and the foster parents.)

## The Life Book may be used to:

- Help a child resolve questions about his past and separation issues.
- Provide an opportunity for the child to discuss his feelings about the recorded information.
- Provide the child with something that is his own.
- Prepare the child for a move to a foster or adoption home.
- Where an infant is in a foster home prior to adoption placement, the foster parent records information such as: birth and medical information, pictures, milestones, and daily routine in a "baby book". Written history information provided to the adoptive parents will be used to interpret the past to their child; therefore, identifying information should not be included.

The Life Book is the property of the child and should accompany the child whenever he/she moves. The child should decide whether he/she will share his/her book, with whom he/she will share his/her book, and when he/she will share his/her book.

Source: <http://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/resources-for-foster-parents/resources-and-forms>

# 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.

## Did you know?

Automobile safety seats for the foster parent's use are charged to a child care file and paid as a purchase order through the FYAP system.

Need to know:

- Transportation for children in care must be provided in accordance with Highway Traffic Board regulations.
- At the time of placement, foster parents and adopting parents are expected to have an appropriate automobile safety seat with them.
- Infant carriers should comply with the Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards established by Transport Canada

For more information see: Section 7.12 of the Children's Services Policies and Procedures Manual.



# SHARE YOUR STORY

*If you have a fostering story to share with our readers, please send it in!*

We accept stories/articles about:

- Fostering tips and tricks
- Personal stories and reflections about being a foster parent
- Long term connection with past foster children
- Challenges you've experienced and creative solutions
- How your extended family or children have responded to your fostering lifestyle
- Great resources for foster parents that you'd like to share
- Foster-related book reviews
- Foster-related movie reviews
- Foster placements resulting in a family growing through adoption
- ... other notable foster related experiences

**Please submit your articles by email to: [wayne@sffa.sk.ca](mailto:wayne@sffa.sk.ca).**



# Recipes from *Petty's Kitchen*

*I've begun to write some EASY (and somewhat healthy) recipes in each Advisor edition. I'm a big fan of healthy recipes with simple ingredients you would find in your own cupboards.*

*- Hayley Petrow*



## *Cheddar-Bacon-Chive Biscuits*

- 2 cup flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 cup chives
- 1/4 cup bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup milk

*\*You can also add other ingredients to suit your taste, the website suggests dry mustard, cayenne pepper, ham, etc.*

Yields ~20 biscuits

- Preheat oven to 450°
- In a medium-large bowl combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. Stir to mix.
- Cut in small pieces of butter, so it resembles coarse meal/crums.
- Add cheese to mixture, and mix.
- Now add chives and bacon, and mix.
- Stir in milk.
- Mix quickly with a fork until dough comes together.
- Using your hands gently pat ingredients together. It's important not to over-handle the dough and break up the butter-crumbs, because it will cause the biscuits to cook flatter.
- Now pat out dough to about 1/2 - 3/4 thick. (If dough is too sticky roll out on a lightly floured surface).
- Cut out biscuits, and place on parchment paper lined baking sheet.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes.

## *Slow Cooker Lasagna Soup*

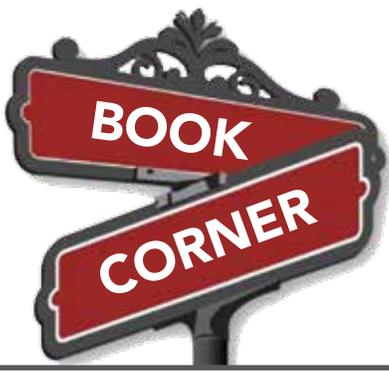
- 1 lb ground beef, cooked
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 443 ml diced tomatoes with juice
- 3 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1 tsp basil
- pinch red pepper flakes
- black pepper to taste
- 6 cups chicken broth with LOW SODIUM  
*(I find this soup to be a bit too salty with added salts)*
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 cup rotini noodles (or break up parboil lasagna noodles)

*\*Optional: 2 cups of ricotta cheese for topping*



- Brown ground beef in a frying pan so it's cooked thoroughly, and add to slow cooker.
- Add ingredients from the yellow onion to chicken broth to slow cooker.
- Cover and cook on high for 4 hours, or low for 8 hours.
- Stir in parmesan cheese and rotini noodles into slow cooker, and cook for an additional 30 minutes on high or until noodles have been cooked.
- Serve with ricotta cheese if desired.

*Recipes found at [myfridgefood.com](http://myfridgefood.com)*



## If This is Home

by Kristine Scarrow

When her mom is diagnosed with terminal cancer, Jayce searches for her estranged father, hoping he can fix everything.

Jayce Loewen has had to take on a lot of responsibility over the years. Her single mom works two jobs and long hours, leaving Jayce in charge of her four-year-old sister most of the time. When her mom is diagnosed with cancer, Jayce decides to track down her long-absent father in the hope that he will be able to make everything okay again.

Looking for her dad was one thing, but when she actually finds him, Jayce is in for a real shock. When everything in her life seems to be going wrong, Jayce has to figure out who her family really is, and how to live with the possibility of losing the person she loves most.

*"A great read that tackles head-on the difficult and sensitive topics of cancer, family, teenage pregnancy, poverty, adolescence, friendship, and forgiveness."*

Canadian Materials

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You can pre-order *If This is Home* on  
[amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca) or [indigo.ca](http://indigo.ca) or [http://www.  
mcnallyrobinson.com/](http://www.mcnallyrobinson.com/)

Please join me at my book launch on  
Monday, February 6, 2017 at 7 pm at  
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[www.kristinescarrow.com](http://www.kristinescarrow.com)

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