

Advisor

**MINISTRY ANNOUNCES UPDATES
TO LEVELS OF PAY PHASE 2**

**SFFA'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE
TO FOSTER PARENTS**

**LEAVING CHILDREN HOME
ALONE**

**NAVIGATING THE
MAJOR EMOTIONS
OF FOSTER CARE**

**KIDS + SNOW:
STAYING WARM**

FOSTER CORNER

**HOW TO TEACH
GROWTH MINDSET
TO TEENS**

**SPENDING QUALITY
TIME WITH KIDS IN
THE KITCHEN**

**CELEBRATING
A FOSTER
CHILD'S
BIRTHDAY**

**DIY BIRD
FEEDERS**

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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January 13, 2022

Dear Foster Parent:

The Ministry of Social Services and the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association (SFFA) are pleased to announce that PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two is being implemented in January 2022 and includes four additional levels of pay. PRIDE Levels of Pay acknowledges the enhanced caregiver training needed to best support complex behavioural, developmental, or medical needs, and emergent trauma care.

The new payment structure supports the goal of keeping children in a family-based care setting that can support their needs. Training requirements address the unique needs in each level, with mandatory training as well as child-specific training available to support foster families.

PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two replaces existing Daily Living Support Assessment, Therapeutic Foster Care, Transitional Adolescent Parenting Supports, Parent Therapists Homes, and Exceptional Fee for Service payments.

The attached Question and Answer document provides additional information on these changes for foster families within the scope of Phase Two. Eligible foster families will be invited to attend information sessions in the future.

Please contact your Child and Caregiver Support Worker or the SFFA if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mitch Tremblay
Executive Director, Community Services
Child and Family Programs



Deb Davies
Executive Director
Saskatchewan Foster Family Association

PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two

Questions & Answers



Q: What are the new payment levels?

A: There are four new payment levels: Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6.

- Level 3 payment will replace Daily Living Support Assessment (DLSA), Therapeutic Foster Care, Transitional Adolescent Parenting Supports (TAPS) and Parent Therapist Homes.
- Level 4 payment will replace Exceptional Fee for Service for complex behavioural needs of children.
- Level 5 payment will replace Exceptional Fee for Service for complex medical needs of children.
- Level 6A will support emergent trauma care for children/sibling groups that would otherwise be placed in Short-term Community-based Homes;
- Level 6B will support an Enhanced Family Reunification process.

Q: What is the difference between Phase One and Phase Two of Levels of Pay?

A: PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase One (Level 1 and Level 2) was successfully implemented and has positively impacted participation in mandatory training, recruitment and retention of foster families. Level 2 replaced the Skill Fee, Fee for Service and DLSA ratings 2.5 and under, providing a payment of basic maintenance plus \$500 per child, per month.

PRIDE Levels of Pay - Phase Two (Level 3, Level 4, Level 5 and Level 6A and 6B) will replace the DLSA ratings 3.0 and higher, Therapeutic Foster Homes, Transitional Adolescent Parenting Support (TAPS), Parent Therapist Homes and Exceptional Fee for Service. Phase Two will have mandatory and child specific training attached to all levels. The proposed payment structure is:

- Level 3 basic maintenance and \$1,300 per child per month;
- Level 4 basic maintenance and \$2,100 per child per month;
- Level 5 basic maintenance and \$2,900 per child per month;
- Level 6A basic maintenance and \$1,300 per child per month;
- Level 6B basic maintenance and \$2,100 per child per month.

*Note - assessment tools and a panel of subject matter experts will determine where children/youth are placed within the PRIDE Levels of Pay.

Q: How do I know if the child(ren) in my care is in the scope of Phase Two?

A: All children currently placed with Therapeutic Foster Care, TAPS and Parent Therapist homes, as well as those assessed with a DLSA of 3.0 or greater, or foster parents in receipt of Exceptional Fee for Service payments are in the scope of Phase Two.

Q: How will it be decided which Level of Pay I will receive for a child in my home?

A: An assessment on each child within the scope of Phase Two has been completed by a panel using the new Care Needs Assessment tool. If your current payment is impacted, you will receive separate communication.

Q: What is the required training for each level?

A: All foster parents will be required to complete and maintain Level 2 training and subsequent trainings outlined for Levels 3, 4, 5, 6A and 6B. This includes a combination of pre-defined and child specific training requirements. A detailed training outline will be provided to all foster parents in Phase Two by their Child and Caregiver Support Worker (Resource).

All Level 3 training must be completed by June 30, 2022. Families assessed at Levels 4 and 5 will have additional training to follow.

Q: Can foster parents care for children who are assessed in different levels?

A: Yes, foster parents will be encouraged to care for sibling groups or multiple children who may be assessed at various levels, up to the foster parents' approved Level of Pay.

Q: Will alternate care providers qualify for higher level payments?

A: At this time, the PRIDE level payment structure is only available to approved foster families who have completed mandatory training as indicated above. However, alternate caregivers can apply to become fully approved foster parents and take the required training to become eligible to receive the PRIDE level payments.

Q: Are Person of Sufficient Interest (PSI) caregivers eligible?

A: PRIDE level payments are only available to approved foster families who have completed required training, as indicated above. Foster families who have been granted custody of children via Person of Sufficient orders will not receive the PRIDE level payment for those children.

Q: Will this change impact special needs payments or reimbursement of expenses, such as travel expenses or any other payments?

A: There will be no change to special needs or expense payments.

Q: Where does my foster home fit?

A: As we move forward in Phase Two, foster families will be given the opportunity to review their interest, training and skillset through a panel of subject matter experts. If you are interested in caring for children or youth with complex needs, you can reach out to your resource worker to discuss next steps.

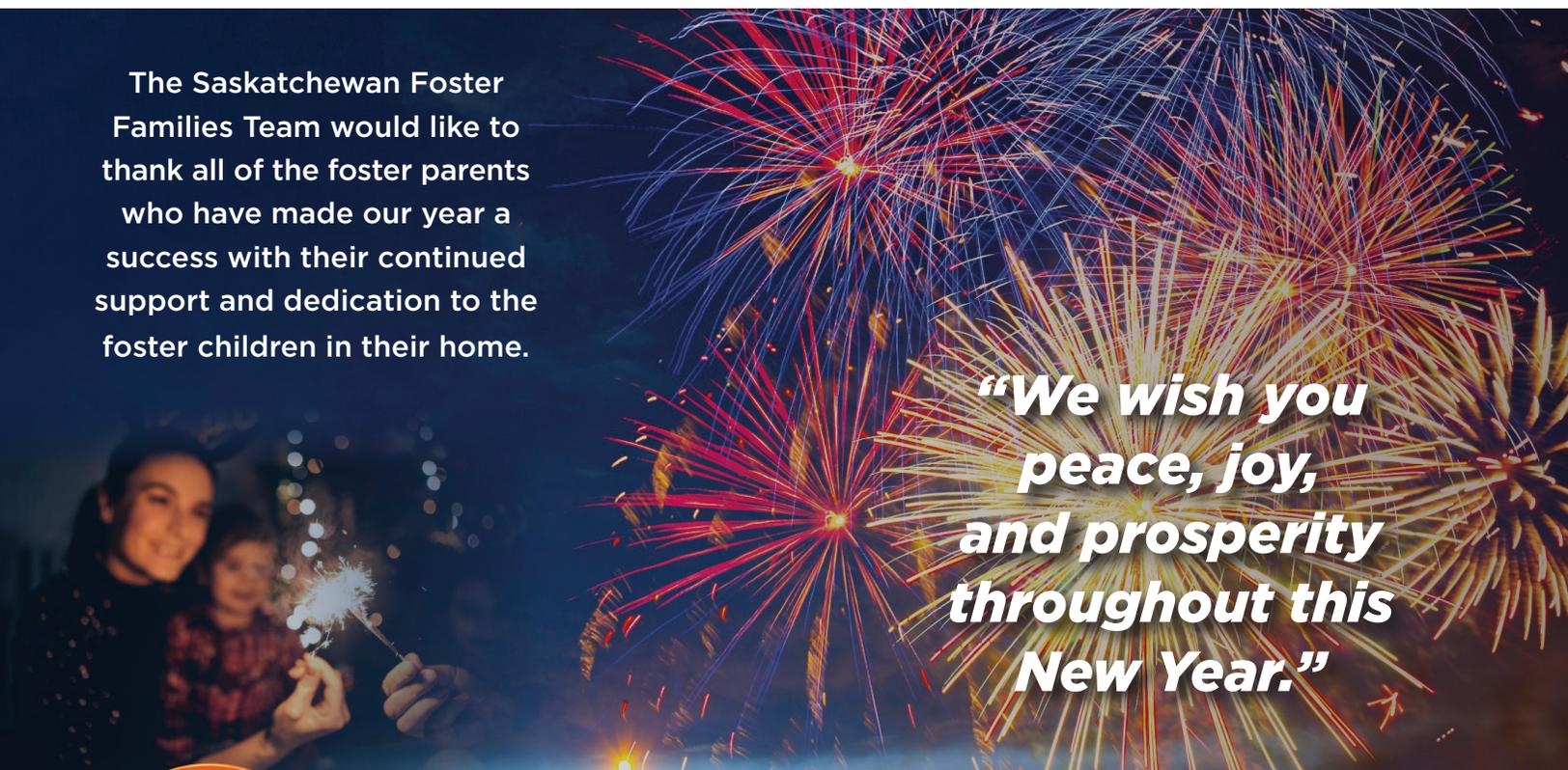
Q: How often is the Care Needs Assessment completed?

A: The Care Needs Assessment level remains in place for as long as the child remains in their foster home placement, or until a reassessment is requested due to increased needs.

Q: Who can request a Care Needs Assessment?

A: A Care Needs Assessment referral can be requested by the child/youth's caseworker (Service Delivery), the Child and Caregiver Support Worker (OOHC), or the foster family.

The Saskatchewan Foster Families Team would like to thank all of the foster parents who have made our year a success with their continued support and dedication to the foster children in their home.



***“We wish you
peace, joy,
and prosperity
throughout this
New Year.”***



Let's stay connected...

We are regularly sending out mail and email updates and reminders to our foster parents. To stay up to date with the latest news please be sure to update your contact information with Taylor@sffa.sk.ca

Leaving children home alone

One of the realities of today's society is the pressure for children to stay home alone for short periods of time such as after school until a parent returns from work. While young children need constant direct supervision, older children and teens may be ready for indirect supervision, where a responsible adult checks in on the child intermittently or at specified times while they are on their own.

“When leaving a child at home alone, ensure that they are in a safe and comfortable environment where they have information on how to contact an adult, the police or poison control.”

WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO LEAVE A CHILD HOME ALONE?

For children in care, there is no specific age at which they can be left home alone, but is determined on a case by case basis in communication with the childcare worker. Consideration is given to a child's temperament, if they feel prepared and to the level of preparation to which the guardian/parent has prepared the child.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS WITH CHILDCARE WORKER:

- Does the child feel comfortable about being home alone?
- Do you feel comfortable about the child being at home alone?
- Can you trust the child to follow directions and does he/she understand and remember instructions whether written or oral?
- 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?

IF YOU DECIDE TO LEAVE A CHILD HOME ALONE

- 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.



HOME ALONE PREPARATION PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Canada Safety Council

The Home Alone Program is designed to provide children 10 years of age and older with the necessary skills and knowledge to be safe and responsible when home alone for short periods of time. It will help them understand how to prevent problems, handle real-life situations, and keep them safe and constructively occupied.

<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/product/home-alone-program/>

St. Johns Society

The Home Alone course is for any young person (aged 10 and over) that will be spending short periods of time home alone. This course covers many issues that will help children and their parents feel more confident. Upon completion, all participants receive a completion certificate.

<https://www.sja.ca/en/first-aid-training/home-alone?>

YMCA Regina

This certificate program will help build your child's self-confidence, sense of responsibility, and decision-making abilities through a fun and interactive environment of role-playing and discussions.

This program is open to children ages 10 and older.
<https://regina.ymca.ca/home-alone-preparation-course/>

YMCA Saskatoon

The Home Alone course is designed to allow the program registrants to participate in class assignments actively. It provides a review of the program material and additional information that will be of value to the students. The course material covers such topics as: "Establishing a routine", "House key responsibility" and "Strangers".

<https://ymcasaskatoon.org/programs/downtown-programs>

navigating

THE MAJOR EMOTIONS OF FOSTER CARE

by Mike Berry, author, podcaster, parent trainer, husband and father

It's something you might expect will happen when you begin the foster care journey, but still find yourself unprepared for. Strong emotions. How do you navigate the ups and downs, twists and turns, and unending roller coaster ride that foster parenting can often become?

Our first-born daughter was a private adoption and a fairly normal baby. She even began sleeping through the night before she was 3 months old. It wasn't long before our weariness as new parents began to drift away and we were back to normal, as normal as being a new parent can be.

Then, 2 years later our first foster placement arrived. A little girl and boy, biological siblings, both cute as can be. Our hearts were full. We were excited. The little girl was quiet, and spent most of the time studying us, trying to figure out what was happening. She was a good sleeper which was a relief to us. Her brother, however, not so much! Not only did he wake up all night long, every night at a year old, he was also the human equivalent of a run-away train. His first move on his first day in our care was to run, not walk, toward the top of our staircase. I quickly reached out and grabbed him before he stepped off the top step. It wasn't long before we found ourselves in shock. After a month or two, our shock mixed with the endless frustration of being told one thing by our case manager, and then having something different happen. By month 4 we were overwhelmed, tired, and defeated beyond imagine.

Have you been there? Perhaps you started the foster care journey, excited, ready for a new adventure, only to wind up frustrated, overwhelmed, or in a state of shock just a month or two after beginning? Maybe you've started to regret your decision to foster in the first place?

If so, you're not alone. Honestly, the emotions you're going through are normal and to be expected. That may catch you by surprise. We know, because we've been there. Truth is, there are many emotions on the foster parenting journey, and undoubtedly you will face many, some you never thought possible. But for the sake of time and length I've narrowed it down to

the major five. They are:

- Excitement
- Fear
- Shock
- Frustration
- Regret

As you ponder these 5 major emotions, here's a deeper explanation of how they play out in our life and our decision to become foster parents...

EXCITEMENT

You may find it odd that excitement would be included in a post about combating emotion but it's here for a reason. First, this is a key emotion when you first begin because choosing to become a foster parent is exciting. So, be excited. That's very important. Celebrate the decision to love and care for children from difficult places. You're choosing to do something unique and world-changing. But, keep your excitement in balance. The road is about to become difficult and you won't always feel excited to be doing this.

FEAR

Over the past several months, we've received many emails from folks who are just starting the journey. Their excitement quickly turned to fear. They were afraid they would suddenly end up with a difficult child and wouldn't know what to do. One person was petrified of the home study process. For some reason she feared the state would tell her no to becoming a foster parent. I totally get fear. I was there once. Not that long ago, I was consumed by fear every single day. I feared the system, I feared birth parents, I feared the unknown. This emotion not only had a hold on me, it dug its claws deep into my soul.

SHOCK

When, not if, you run into a brick wall with your placement you may find yourself in shock. The first time that teenager, who started off quiet and shy, cusses you out, or becomes aggressive, it's traumatic.

For and your other family members. When the newborn baby, who was so sweet and precious, and sleeping in their carrier when you picked them up, is now screaming in the middle of the night, every night, for a month straight, you'll be in shock. After all, you may have been used to sleeping all night long without interruption. Maybe.

FRUSTRATION

As you deal with the shock that will arrive at some point, you'll go through moments of intense frustration. You will be frustrated with the children in your care, frustrated with the system, frustrated with case managers and judges, and frustrated with birth parents who continually put addiction above their children. Frankly, we have never met a foster parent, former or current (including ourselves) who haven't experienced frustration to some degree. It's also not a matter of if, but a matter of when.

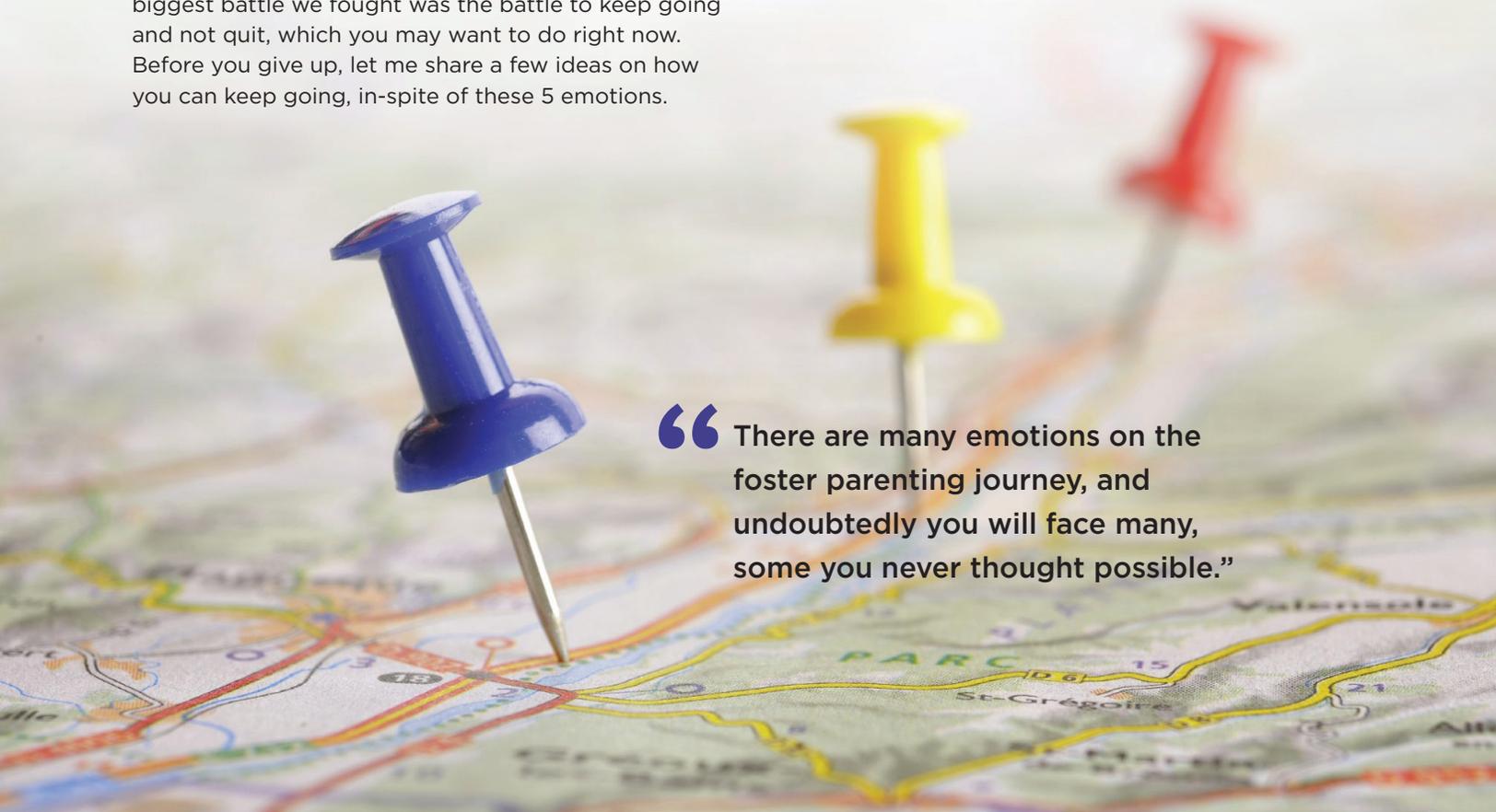
REGRET

It's easy, in the midst of shock, frustration, anger, weariness, and defeat to begin to regret your decision to foster. I cannot tell you how many conversations we've had, over the last decade, with foster parents who admit, through tears, "I regret doing this. I regret taking this child into our care. It's too hard. We don't want to go through this anymore." You may also feel regret because you've been tossed back and forth by case managers, judges, or attorneys and you are done with this entire journey!

Again, let me say...we get it! We've been there. The biggest battle we fought was the battle to keep going and not quit, which you may want to do right now. Before you give up, let me share a few ideas on how you can keep going, in-spite of these 5 emotions.

- **Community.** First and foremost (and something I believe in big time), you need to find community. Someone, or several people, who get you and get this. You don't need judgmental people so make sure they're not judgmental. You need them to be authentic and loving.
- **Honesty.** With this newfound community, be honest and open. If you need to cuss, scream, break something, or sit in a bar or coffee shop and have a drink just to unwind, do it. Speak about your frustration, your regret, and the defeat you feel!
- **Belief.** You have to believe you are called to do this. It's a game-changer, especially when it comes to fear. Why? Because fear only has the amount of power you allow it to have. Believing you were meant to do this washes fear away. Believe in your heart that foster parenting is part of your purpose here on earth. When you do, and you live by it, you'll overcome most of the emotions you'll face.
- **Perspective.** After you've taken time to lean on others who get it, and dump your truck of emotions (so-to-speak), work to gain a new perspective. Let your community of supporters speak truth to you. Listen to voices who matter and are healthy. Then, get up, and get back to loving the children in your care.

This whole process will be difficult. After all, anything worth doing will be. And foster care **IS** worth doing! You were meant to do this. Heck, you were called to do this! And you are changing the lives of the children in your care.



“ There are many emotions on the foster parenting journey, and undoubtedly you will face many, some you never thought possible.”

Child & Family Program Dates

Monthly Maintenance Payment Released from Linkin

****IMPORTANT NOTE: If using direct deposit, it may take up to 3 additional days before the funds are deposited in your bank account depending on your Financial Institution.**

December 2021	January 5, 2022	November 25, 2021
January 2022	February 2, 2022	December 20, 2021
February 2022	March 2, 2022	January 26, 2022
March 2022	April 4, 2022	February 23, 2022
April 2022	May 3, 2022	March 28, 2022
May 2022	June 2, 2022	April 26, 2022
June 2022	July 5, 2022	May 26, 2022
July 2022	August 3, 2022	June 27, 2022
August 2022	September 2, 2022	July 26, 2022
September 2022	October 4, 2022	August 26, 2022
October 2022	November 2, 2022	September 26, 2022
November 2022	December 2, 2022	October 26, 2022
December 2022	January 4, 2023	November 25, 2022
January 2023	February 2, 2023	December 19, 2022

Monthly Maintenance Schedule **applies to Regular Foster Care, Extended Family Care (Person of Sufficient Interest, Place of Safety & Alternative Care) and Assisted Adoption monthly maintenance.**

Did you know?

The Ministry of Social Services issues requisitions (vouchers) to citizens to help with the purchase of goods and services. Foster families may receive requisition forms for immediate purchases children or youth need when coming into or while in their care. Required items may include clothing, diapers, formula, car seats or other special needs requests that are approved by the child's Caseworker. For a list of community retailers accepting vouchers and a list of things to remember when using a voucher, visit the following online link: <https://www.saskfosterfamilies.ca/resources-for-foster-parents/goods-and-services-vouchers>

KIDS + SNOW

Wintertime tips for staying warm

We all need to get outside in the winter... there's so many fun things to do in the snow. But, how do you stay warm and make sure your kids are staying warm in all that winter play?



It can be hard enough sometimes to motivate ourselves and our kids out the door. But add freezing temperatures and the time it takes to don snow gear into that mix and sometimes that's enough to make even the most outdoorsy of us second guess our plans.

Whether you and your kids are heading to the ski hill, the toboggan hill, or just the backyard, all these tips apply:

- Dress in layers
- Use a good quality snow suit (water proof and wind proof outer layer)
- Don't wear jeans
- Use thick warm socks or layer socks
- Accessorize with gloves, mittens, toques, buffs, even goggles
- Try a balaclava
- Consider hot hands or hand warmers
- Splurge on heated socks, boots, or gloves
- Plan your outing to be short or have warm up breaks
- Fuel up with snacks
- Have fun!

Here's a great demonstration of getting dressed to go outside on a cold weather day!

Layers and Long Underwear

Dress in layers! To do it right, you should wear a wicking or quick-dry layer closest to your skin, then put your cozy fleecy layer over that. Kids don't need performance materials just to play in the backyard...tight fitting pajamas, tights, or leggings all work as well.

The Snow Suit

Choose coats that have a cold weather rating for your climate. Aside from being insulating, you'll want coats and pants that block the wind and be windproof. For little kids and toddlers, a one-piece snowsuit is quick and easy. They won't get snow up their back when they roll around in the snow and getting undressed for emergency bathroom breaks will be much easier. For older kids I prefer snow pants with bibs for the same reason. Bibs keep their body warmth in and snow out. Another tip for snow pants is to tuck the inside cuff into the boot and pull

the outer shell down over the boot. Or, if the bottom of the snow pants can be tightened, make sure these are tight around the ankle to keep snow out.

Don't choose jeans

When it is cold, jeans can seem even colder. Long johns under jeans or snow pants over jeans is much warmer.

Lots of Socks

While thick socks are good for retaining heat, they shouldn't be so thick as to bunch up which can cause discomfort in a tight fitting boot. Taking boots off during an inside break can help dry out boots and socks and will be helpful if heading back out shortly. Pack extra socks when out for an extended winter adventure. Just changing into a new pair of socks can help the feet warm up quicker.

Toques, mitts, and scarves

These extras are essential in the extreme cold. And, they're a big help in staying warm in the cooler above-freezing temperatures too.

Continued...

A toque that fits low over the ears is best. For toddlers and young children look for one with ear flaps. A thick fleece lined hat is great to help kids stay warm and one that ties under the chin will prevent it from falling (or getting pulled) off.

For hands, try fitting a thin pair of mini gloves under mittens in the extreme cold. This way hands are extra toasty, and still allow for finger dexterity (like doing up zippers, blowing noses, or putting on boots). Mittens are often warmer than gloves because the fingers are all together. If your snow tends to be a wet soggy snow, then find mittens that have a waterproof shell or bring along a second pair. If your little ones are prone to pulling off their mittens, you can look for a pair with super long cuffs and put the mittens on under the coat so the snugness makes it very hard for them to be pulled off.

In the extreme cold

Remember that any exposed skin is at risk of frostbite in extreme cold, so wearing a neck warmer or scarf is a must. These help cover

the gap around the neck where the jacket stops and the hat or helmet begins. A trick for toddlers is to use an ear (head) band around their neck. It's not as wide as a buff so is less bulky for them but still helps cover that gap around the neck. A balaclava offers full coverage in one piece. Balaclavas also fit nicely under helmets, hoods, and toques for extra warmth.

Pocket hot pads

If you plan to be outdoors for a few hours, you may want to consider having a few "Hothands" on hand. They do not heat up until opened and exposed to air, but once they are activated, the pads will give off heat for a good 4-5 hours.

If you're crafty you might be able to whip up some homemade mini rice packs to heat in the microwave and tuck in pockets before heading outdoors.

A few other tips for helping kids stay warm

Plan lots of warm-up breaks

When it's really cold out, plan

on shorter outdoor adventures. Perhaps choose activities close to indoor locations for warming up.

Fuel for warmth

Snacks and food will keep bellies full and bodies warmer. For longer outdoor adventures make sure to bring along some yummy and healthy snacks. And, if heading out into the snowy backyard, going out after breakfast or lunch will ensure they've got fuel to keep them going.

Have fun

It's amazing how kids will be warmer if they're having fun! It could be the exact same conditions and temperature but if the kids are enjoying themselves they'll handle the cold better.

And, if all else fails, and no one is staying warm, then call it a day, sometimes it is just too cold to be outside. So share some hot cocoa, and cuddle with a great family snowy movie instead!

<https://www.takethemoutside.com/stay-warm-on-the-slopes/>

3 Easy tips | for making effective New Year resolutions

by Gretchen Rubin

Many people use the New Year as a clean slate—an opportunity to start fresh with the habits we want to build. But while it's easy to get swept up in the enthusiasm that comes with January 1, we want to ensure that we're setting ourselves up to stick with our resolutions throughout the year. To make resolutions that are more likely to stick:

- 1. Identify specific actions that will support your aims.** Resolutions work better when they're concrete, not abstract. So instead of "Be more present with other people," try "Put my phone away during every conversation." Along the same lines...
- 2. Identify resolutions that are measurable.** How will you know if you've accomplished your resolution? How will you keep yourself accountable? The resolution to "Read to my kids for 20 minutes each night" is easier to measure than "Be a more loving parent." If you can't answer "yes" or "no" to whether you accomplished your resolution that day, aim to make it more specific.
- 3. Keep your resolutions manageable,** with actions that you can repeat consistently, starting now. What can you do that doesn't require much time, money, or energy? You'll be surprised at how much progress you can make with even the smallest steps if you take them consistently every day.



Dear 8 year old me

Dear 8 year old me.

Before you get home, you're restless and excited to play.

It's a sunny Friday.

As you get off the bus, the sun reflects off your long black hair.

Like the warm sun on the ocean.

You skip along to your house and open the door. Hello? Nothing.

You begin to feel tingles down your spine. The house is dark and quiet.

All you can hear is the blood rushing through your ears. Now you're scared. Don't be.

Your thoughts are getting out of hand. Control them. It will cause you nothing.

You start to cry. Come on Mavis, keep yourself together.

It's been one hour and you're still scared.

All you want is your mom. Is that too much to ask?

A car pulls in your driveway. You get up and check. Be careful.

Someone you don't recognize gets out and tells you to go. Do it.

You left everything behind, but you don't know that yet.

It's only for three nights, but we all know it's not.

Dear 8 year old me. You're in good hands.

Written by Mavis, age 12



In our "Foster Corner" we would like to highlight anything from foster inspired stories to artwork submitted by foster parents on behalf of children in their homes. If you have a foster story, poem, artwork or some other foster related experience or information to share with our readers, please send it in! All communication or submissions for "Foster Corner" can be sent by email to taylor@sffa.sk.ca

How to Teach **GROWTH MINDSET** to Teens

by Nicole Schwarz

How do you encourage a teen to take ownership of their life? To put forth effort and work toward their goals, even when life gets challenging? It starts by realizing your teen's brain is flexible and adaptable. And, with the right type of support and encouragement from you, he can learn new ways of thinking, adapt his study skills, and even plan for the future.

Understanding the Teenage Brain

During the teen years, your child's brain goes through "remodeling." A process that helps build a stronger more effective brain, which will serve them as they become independent adults.

Unfortunately, this remodeling includes periods of extreme emotional responses, risk-taking behavior, boundary-pushing, and a lack of consistent impulse control.

When they were younger, they soaked up facts and thought in concrete ways. Now, teens are able to see things in a more abstract way. They are able to be more creative with their problem solving and think critically about themselves and others.

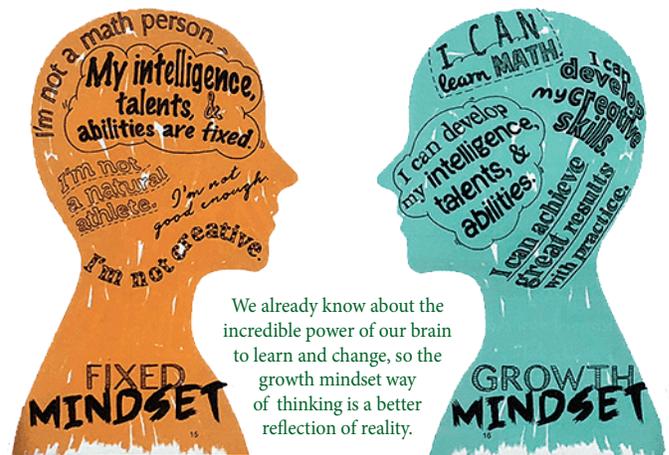
This also means your teen may be idealistic and opinionated, and they may challenge the "old ways" of doing things.

It's normal for parents to feel threatened, concerned and confused when faced with the emotional roller coaster of the teen years.

But teens often feel overwhelmed by these dramatic brain changes, too. The rush of new experiences can be exhilarating. However, changes in relationships, managing mature social situations, and feeling torn between pulling away from parents and wanting to stay "little" forever, can be an overwhelming situation for some teenagers.

As parents and teens learn to navigate this "remodeling" stage, helpful comments are interpreted as criticism, suggestions turn into lengthy lectures, and differences of opinions quickly become power struggles.

It's often hard to know how to motivate your teen.



Embracing a Growth Mindset

Though the conversations sound different now, you can still play an important role in helping them build strong, healthy, "growth mindset" brains.

A growth mindset is about believing people can develop and improve their abilities, while a "fixed mindset" is about believing intelligence and abilities are inborn and cannot change dramatically.

Many teens are stuck in a fixed mindset. They believe they are "not good at math" or "will never be on the tennis team."

Incorporating a "growth mindset" into your conversations sends the message that, with effort and support, your teen can...

- improve their results ("Meeting with my algebra tutor helped me understand the last unit").
- develop talents ("I enjoy signing and I can get better with practice").
- grow their skills ("Practicing daily will improve my serve").

The benefits of a growth mindset don't stop at grades and athletics (in fact, your teenager may tune you out if that's all you focus on). It can be applied to anything your teen is passionate about: strengthening their friendships, improving their relationships, being seen as an important member of a team, speaking out about something they believe in, or overcoming a fear.

From a calm, confident position, you can encourage their growing brains to be flexible. You can give your teen space to think, process and even question status quo.

Find outlets for their creativity, provide them with appropriate alternatives to risky behavior, and encourage goal-setting. This role is not easy, though.

The focus is on keeping healthy connections, rather than finding the “perfect” consequences. When your teen knows you’re on their side, they may be more open to your point of view, and may even come to you for guidance as they set and reach goals in the future.

8 HELPFUL TIPS for Teaching Teens a Growth Mindset

1. Share facts about the brain

- Encourage them to learn about the parts of the brain, how feelings are expressed, and new information is processed.
- Let them explore words like “neuroplasticity”.
- Reinforce that their brain has the ability to learn new skills – and improve old ones – throughout their entire lifetime.

2. This is an ongoing conversation

- Encourage teens to look for examples of growth mindset in everyday experiences (someone on TV, in the news, or at school.)
- Share ways you are growing and learning even as an adult.
- Share stories the “famous failures” (people who failed before they succeeded).

3. Goals are good, pressure isn’t

- Focus on the process of goal-setting rather than the goals themselves.
- Use creative options such as bucket lists or vision boards – either as a family or individually.
- In the Big Life Journal – Teen Edition, there are a lot of fun goal-setting exercises your teen can do on their own.

4. Make space for failure

- Rather than trying to make the path smooth for your teens or keeping them perpetually happy, focus on your role as support, or staying close at hand.
- Address the setback head-on and talk to your children about the next steps for learning.

5. When things don’t go as planned brainstorm solutions together

- Rather than telling your child to “ask the teacher for extra credit”, when they do poorly on a test, walk through what happened and explore problem-solving options with your teen.
- See what they’re comfortable with rather than dictating their next move.



6. Addressing lacking skills

- Problem-solving together may highlight areas where your teen needs additional help.
- Some teens are impacted by mental health concerns, such as anxiety or depression. Seek outside support for your teenager as needed.

7. Listen more than you talk

- Ask your teen for suggestions, solutions, advice, and thoughts.
- Empathize with their perspective rather than jumping to a solution, criticizing or judging.
- Reiterate you are willing and available when they need a listening ear.

8. Watch your reactions

- Encouraging your kids to adopt a flexible growth mindset might require you to work on your own mindset too.
- If you overreact to small infractions or mistakes, your child may be cautious about pursuing goals or may shy away from sharing challenges with you.
- It’s OK to struggle with growth mindset. Let your teen know you will be working on it together!

Spending Quality Time

...with Kids in the Kitchen

by nutritionist, Frances Largeman-Roth

As the New Year unfolds, you (as a parent, or a person with young children) might be thinking about how to bond with the children in your life, and help them develop both a healthy attitude toward food and healthy eating habits. But between work, extracurricular activities, and just trying to get a moment to yourself, you may have trouble finding the time and energy to have those quality moments. So much can get in the way of spending much-needed quality time with your family, so here is some advice on how to spend more time with some of the younger members of your family in the kitchen.



Getting kids interested in food and cooking will vary—some kids might find inspiration by eating out a restaurant with the family, or watching reality television cooking competitions. There is one almost sure-fire way to peak their interest, though, and it's also the simplest method. "Invite them into the kitchen." Lots of parents shoo kids out of the kitchen when they're prepping a meal. I get it—little ones underfoot can be annoying and hazardous at times—but let them smell those amazing aromas and lift little ones up so that they can see what's happening in the pots and pans.

If you're struggling to find a free moment to introduce your child to the kitchen, you can treat the activity like any other appointment you have to keep. It's smart to schedule kitchen time with your kids. For most parents, this will

“One of the most crucial elements of cooking with children is to taste what they've prepared.”

be on the weekend or maybe over a school break. Once you've carved out the time, don't let other distractions like cleaning or television get in the way.

Once you've actually wrangled your schedule, hustled yourselves into the kitchen, and tied on your apron, you'll be faced with another, perhaps even harder conundrum. What should you cook together? It's best to keep it simple by picking quick recipes with few ingredients. Try making "healthy soups or overnight oats," for instance. Kids can and should pick the recipe if they want to, either from a favorite cookbook or online. A personalized apron or their own set of measuring cups will also make your child feel

"that you value their participation, [and] should help get them into the cooking spirit." Young kids (around 3) can help with even the simplest tasks, like setting the table or washing produce, and some 8-year-olds can already be put in charge of cutting vegetables like cucumbers (with a safety knife of course). However, once you pick your recipe and give everyone a task to do, you should be aware that cooking with kids with almost always take longer than usual and make a mess.

This is where your patience comes in, if a recipe usually takes you 30 minutes to make, figure on more like 40-45 minutes when you're making it with a kid. You have to be in a relaxed mindset and allow

for a little creativity. Maybe you hadn't planned to add chocolate chips to the muffins or shredded cheese to the soup, but if your kid has a reason for adding it, go with it. The mess especially might be a deterrent for parents to let their kids into the kitchen. Clearing off the counters so no bottles are knocked over and liquids spilled, putting towels down on the floor, and moving your laptop or other electronics away from the cooking area.

Once the dish is finished, your job is not done. One of the most crucial elements of cooking with children is to taste what they've prepared. Everyone should at least try it. First off, a kid is more likely to try something they've had a hand in making, so it's great for getting them to eat more vegetables and whole grains. Second, by eating what they've made, you're validating their culinary contribution and that means they'll be more likely to get back in the kitchen with you (and over time, encouraged to prepare food on their own).

After you're done cleaning flour off of the floor, washing the dishes, and wiping butter off everyone's hands and faces, it might seem like the entire venture was just an exhausting exercise in frustration and mess-making, but there are real benefits to spending this type of quality time with your family.

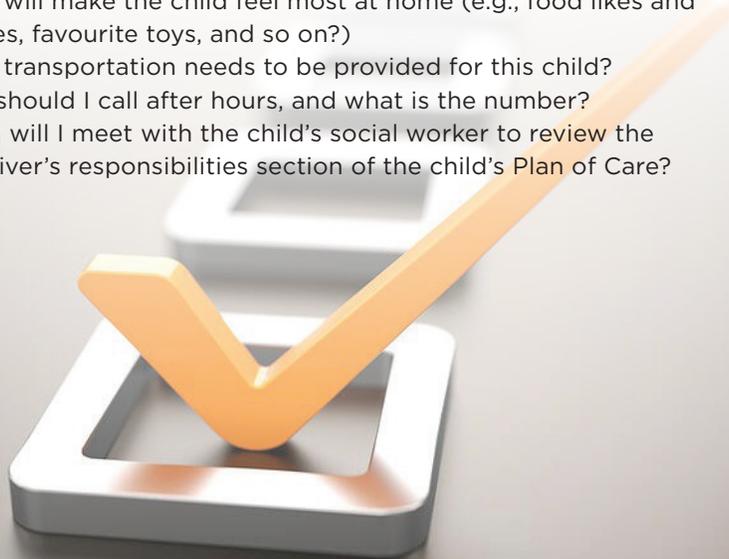
Kids learn so much when you cook together—everything from addition and subtraction to history and geography. And it's a wonderful bonding experience too. As long as you make it fun and not rushed, your kids will really enjoy the process and will have great memories of your time together in the kitchen. Introducing your kids to healthy ingredients when you're cooking absolutely works to get them excited to eat those foods more often.

Don't forget to ask!

FOSTER PARENT'S PRE-PLACEMENT CHECKLIST

Foster parents often wish they had asked more questions before accepting a child into their home. This checklist should help you in your discussion with the ministry. Some questions might not apply to particular or emergency placements.

- Why is the child being placed?
- What are previous placement experiences of the child?
- What is the child's legal status?
- What is the family situation? Parents' names?
- What is the plan for the child? Expected length of placement?
- Will there be preplacement visits by the child?
- Does the child understand why he or she has moved or been separated from the parents?
- Where are the parents?
- Will the parents or extended family visit? Where? How often? Are there people who are not permitted to visit or have contact with the child?
- Are there brothers or sisters? Where are they? Birthdates?
- When will the social worker visit or call?
- When will I receive the referral form from the social worker, giving important personal information about the child?
- When will I receive the child's Health Care Passport?
- When was the last physical examination?
- Is the child in good health? What about allergies, immunizations, medications, dental care, last dental checkup?
- Are there significant religious, cultural or ethnic considerations for this child?
- What grade is the child in at school? What school?
- Are there school problems?
- Has the child any special behavioural problems or unusual habits?
- Could any of their behaviours pose a risk to other children?
- Will the child have adequate clothing?
- What will make the child feel most at home (e.g., food likes and dislikes, favourite toys, and so on?)
- What transportation needs to be provided for this child?
- Who should I call after hours, and what is the number?
- When will I meet with the child's social worker to review the caregiver's responsibilities section of the child's Plan of Care?



Celebrating a Foster Child's Birthday

For most children, birthdays are happy occasions shared with family and friends. But for children in foster care, birthdays can be a painful reminder of the family they're no longer with.

Foster children may experience their birthday as just another loss. They may feel angry and resentful that they can't be with their families like other children. They may "act out," or become overwhelmed with grief and sadness. And some foster children may be confused about birthday celebrations because they've never had one before.

But birthdays can be a special and positive experience for your foster child, as long as you acknowledge the child's feelings and reassure him that those feelings are normal. And birthdays can also be an opportunity to help a child feel special and loved.

What You Can Do to Help

Find out how the child's birth family celebrated birthdays and include the best ideas in your celebration. If the child recalls negative memories — or no birthday celebrations at all — create new, better memories.

- Base the celebration around something your foster child likes. Pick a theme for the cake, decorations, and hats.
- Make a crown the child can wear to celebrate his special day.
- Take photographs of the child as he blows out the candles and opens his gifts.
- Let the child sit at the head of the table for the day.
- Tell the child he can pick whatever he wants for dinner. Let the child plan the special birthday dinner with you well in advance of the big day.
- Let your foster child choose a special activity for the day — like going to the zoo, the park, or a favorite restaurant.
- Make the child's birthday a "no chores" day.
- Give the child a gift that represents his birth heritage, like something that symbolizes the country, state, or city he was born in.
- Help your foster child write or draw something in a journal about his birth family and past birthday celebrations.
- If appropriate, try to arrange for the child to talk by telephone with his birth parents and siblings on his birthday.
- Make sure you celebrate your foster child's birthday in the same way you'd celebrate your own child's birthday. Try not to reserve more expensive gifts or parties for your biological children.

Recognize that you can't make up for everything your foster child isn't experiencing because he isn't with his birth family. Don't put pressure on yourself to give the child his "best birthday ever." Even with the best effort, most foster children will experience some sadness during birthdays. It's not because you're doing anything wrong. It's just because they miss their family.

Source: <https://www.umassmed.edu/faces/about-foster-care2/dealing-with-bumps-in-road/celebrating-birthdays/>



EASY DIY BIRD FEEDERS

KIDS CAN MAKE



Fruit & Cereal Bird Feeder

When winter is long and cold and snowy, it's often a struggle for birds to find food. To help them out, whenever you have stale cereal in the cupboard or fruit that's gone a bit soft in the fruit bowl, your kids can turn them into homemade bird feeders. It's a great craft for strengthening fine-motor skills, and a lovely way to help out your backyard birds when food sources are scarce. The crafting itself is fun of course, and the kidswill feel good doing this small act of kindness.



SUPPLIES AND INGREDIENTS:

- Wooden skewer
- Raffia (or yarn or twine)
- Cheerios (you could also use stale bread/buns)
- Fresh fruit i.e. apple, grapes, orange, berries
- Dried fruit i.e. grapes, dates, raisins, raisins

MAKING YOUR FEEDER:

Chop any large fruit (apples, oranges etc.) into 1 inch chunks. Grapes and berries can be left whole. Set the fruit and Cheerios on a plate or in a sectioned tray, and give your child a wooden skewer to thread them on. (You may want to snip the very tip of the skewer so it's not quite so pointy if your children are very young). Have your children thread the food onto the skewer, alternating the cereal and fruit. They could even practice counting and patterning here, making repeating patterns on their skewer. Leave some space at each end of the skewer, and tie a long length of raffia, string or twine to each end. Now, take your bird feeder out into the yard and hang it from a branch of a tree or shrub.



Orange Cup Bird Feeders

These feeders can even be made with the help of toddlers and preschoolers! Orange cup bird feeders are made using leftover orange halves and simple pantry ingredients. Fill empty orange rinds with a whatever you happen to have in your cupboard, just as long as a bird or squirrel can make a meal of it). They'll add a pop of colour to the landscape, while providing a meal for the wildlife in your yard.

SUPPLIES AND INGREDIENTS:

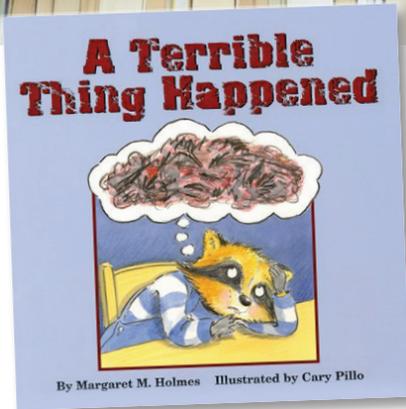
- Empty orange halves
- Corn kernels, sunflower seeds, peanuts, dried fruit, sesame sticks
- Butter and peanut butter

MAKING YOUR FEEDER:

Pour all of the ingredients into a shallow pan and gave them a good stir. Mixing the bird food with your bare hands is great fun too! The sound, the smell and the feel of the mix as you run your fingers through it makes for a wonderful sensory experience. Melt about 1/4 cup of butter and 1/2 cup peanut butter together over low heat. Pour a tablespoon or two of the peanut butter/butter mixture into each cup. This will firm up as it cools and provide a base for your bird-food to bind to, and keep it from falling out of the cup. Now sprinkle a handful of your nut and fruit mix into the cup and pat it into the base. Head outside with the bird feeders, and scatter them throughout the yard. To keep them in place, and to prevent the high winds from blowing them away, spear the bottom of each orange with a sturdy twig or branch, then keep watch and see who finds them!



goodreads



A TERRIBLE THING HAPPENED

by Margaret M. Holmes

- Paperback, hardcover & Kindle
- Reading age 4 - 8 years
- Print length 32 pages
- Language English
- ISBN-101557987017
- ISBN-13978-1557987013

Sherman Smith saw the most terrible thing happen. At first he tried to forget about it, but soon something inside him started to bother him. He felt nervous for no reason. Sometimes his stomach hurt. He had bad dreams. And he started to feel angry and do mean things, which got him in trouble. Then he met Ms. Maple, who helped him talk about the terrible thing that he had tried to forget. Now Sherman is feeling much better.

Children who have witnessed violence or other traumatic incidents are at surprisingly greater risk for committing violence in the future than are children who have actually been involved in such events. The event might be a car accident, domestic or school violence, suicide, or a natural disaster such as a tornado, flood, or fire. Regardless of the type of incident, child witnesses often react by trying to forget or ignore the experience. When their feelings are pushed underground in this manner, these children may begin to feel bad in ways they don't understand, and become angry as a result of feeling bad. It is this anger that can give way to violence.

Caring adults can make all the difference by helping children talk about and understand the experience. This gently told and tenderly illustrated story is for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode, including physical abuse, school or gang violence, accidents, homicide, suicide, and natural disasters such as floods or fire. An afterword by Sasha J. Mudlaff written for parents and other caregivers offers extensive suggestions for helping traumatized children, including a list of other sources that focus on specific events.

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