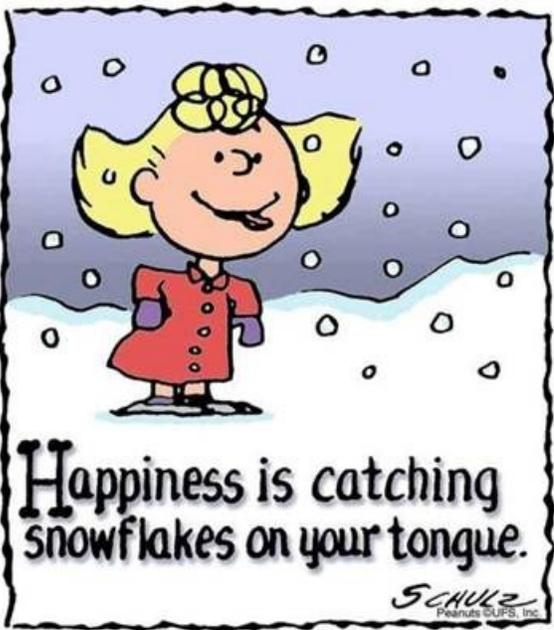


BluesNews

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“What Foster Parents Wish Other People Knew” is an essay by Sharon Astyk. We have reprinted a couple of essays from her in the past months (100 Kinds of Foster Parents, Variability in Parenting Ability). This essay appeared on the Windsor-Essex Children’s Aid Society Facebook page. I think that may have been where I was first introduced to Ms Astyk’s essays. I especially value the comments that conclude this essay: other ways the community of non-foster parents can help. It can be VERY challenging to be a foster parent; the truth is, it takes a village...! [Read more...](#)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DATES

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HOLIDAYS

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Hope you enjoy and be sure to share BluesNews with everyone who asks...

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What Foster Parents Wish Other People Knew

By Sharon Astyk*

This essay is a little different than most of my stuff. It is the result of a collaborative discussion on a foster parenting list I'm a part of by a group of foster parents. I've paraphrased and borrowed and added some things of my own, but this is truly collaborative piece, and meant to be shared. I do NOT have to get credit for it. So if you'd like to circulate it, use it in a training, distribute it at foster-awareness day, hang it on the wall, run it somewhere else, give it out to prospective foster parents, whatever, go right ahead. This is a freebie to all! I care much more than people know this than that I get credit – and most of the credit goes to a lot of other wonderful people who want to remain anonymous, most of them wiser and more experienced than I.

1. We're not Freakin' Saints. We are doing this because it needs doing, we love kids, this is our thing. Some of us hope to expand our families this way, some of us do it for the pleasure of having laughing young voices around, some of us are pushed into it by the children of family or friends needing care, some of us grew up around formal or informal fostering – but all of us are doing it for our own reasons BECAUSE WE LOVE IT and/or LOVE THE KIDS and WE ARE THE LUCKY ONES – we get to have these great kids in our lives.

We hate being told we must be saints or angels, because we're doing something really ordinary and normal – that is, taking care of kids in need. If some children showed up dirty and hungry and needing a safe place on your doorstep, you'd care for them too – we just signed up to be the doorstep they arrive at. The idea of sainthood makes it impossible for ordinary people to do this – and the truth is the world needs more ordinary, human foster parents. This also stinks because if we're saints and angels, we can't ever be jerks or human or need help, and that's bad, because sometimes this is hard.

2. WATCH WHAT YOU SAY AROUND THE KIDS!!!!!! I can't emphasize this enough, and everyone is continually stunned by the things people will ask in the hearing of children, from "Oh, is their Mom an addict?" or "Well, they aren't your REAL kids are they" or "Are you going to adopt them?" or whatever. Not only is that stuff private, but it is HORRIBLE for the kids to hear people speculating about their families whom they love, or their future. Didn't anyone ever explain to you that you never say anything bad about anyone's mother (or father) EVER? Don't assume you know what's going on, and don't ask personal questions – we can't tell you anyway.

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3. Don't act surprised that they are nice, smart, loving, well-behaved kids. One of the corollaries of #1 is that there tends to be an implied assumption that foster kids are flawed – we must be saints because NO ONE ELSE would take these damaged, horrible kids. Well, kids in foster care have endured a lot of trauma, and sometimes that does come with behavioral challenges, but many of the brightest, nicest, best behaved, kindest and most loving children I've ever met are foster kids. They aren't second best kids, they aren't homicidal maniacs, and because while they are here they are MINE, they are the BEST KIDS IN THE WORLD, and yes, it does tick me off when you act surprised they are smart, sweet and loving.

4. Don't hate on their parents. Especially don't do it in front of the kids, but you aren't on my side when you are talking trash either.

Nobody chooses to be born mentally ill. No one gets addicted to drugs on purpose. Nobody chooses to be born developmentally delayed, to never have lived in a stable family so you don't know how to replicate it. Abusive and neglectful parents often love their kids and do the best they can, and a lot of them CAN do better if they get help and support, which is what part of this is about. Even if they can't, it doesn't make things better for you to rush to judgement.

It is much easier to think of birth parents as monsters, because then YOU could never be like THEM, but truly, birth parents are just people with big problems. Birth and Foster parents often work really hard to have positive relationships with each other, so it doesn't help me to have you speculating about them.

5. The kids aren't grateful to us, and it is nuts to expect them to be, or to feel lucky that they are with us. They were taken from everything they knew and had to give up parents, siblings, pets, extended family, neighborhood, toys, everything that was normal to them. No one asked them whether they wanted to come into care.

YOU have complex feelings and ambivalence about a lot of things, even if it seems like those things are good for you or for the best. Don't assume our kids don't have those feelings, or that moving into our home is happily-ever-after for them. Don't tell them how lucky they are or how they should feel.

Expressions of gratitude don't often come readily from kids in foster care. Not because they aren't grateful, but more often because they are in survival mode, especially during the holidays.



By the way, there is no point comparing my home to the one they grew up in. Both homes most likely have things the children like and dislike about them. The truth is if every kid only got the best home, Angelina and Brad would have all the children, and the rest of us would have none.

6. No, we're not making any money on it. We don't get paid – we get a portion of the child's expenses reimbursed, and that money is only for the child and does NOT cover everything. I get about 56 cents an hour reimbursed, and I get annoyed when you imply I'm too stupid to realize I'd make tons more money flipping burgers.

Saying this in front of the kids also REALLY hurts them – all of a sudden, kids who are being loved and learning to trust worry that you are only doing this because of their pittance. So just shut up about the money already, and about the friend of a friend you know

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who kept the kids in cages and did it just for the money and made millions.

7. When you say “I could never do that” as if we’re heartless or insensitive, because we can/have to give the kids back to their parents or to extended family, it stings.

Letting kids go IS really hard, but someone has to do it. Not all kids in care come from irredeemable families. Not everyone in a birth family is bad – in fact, many kin and parents are heroic, making unimaginable sacrifices to get their families back together through impossible odds. Yes, it is hard to let kids we love go, and yes, we love them, and yes, it hurts like hell, but the reality is that because something is hard doesn’t make it bad, and you aren’t heartless if you can endure pain for the greater good of your children. You are just a regular old parent when you put your children’s interests ahead of your own.



8. No, they aren’t ours yet. And they won’t be on Thursday either, or next Friday, or the week after. Foster care adoption TAKES A LONG TIME. For the first year MINIMUM the goal is always for kids to return to their parents. It can take even longer than that. Even if we hope to adopt, things could change, and it is just like any long journey – it isn’t helpful to ask “Are we there yet” every five minutes.

9. Most kids will go home or to family, rather than being adopted. Most foster cases don’t go to adoption. Not every foster parent wants to adopt. And not every foster family that wants to adopt will be adopting/wants to adopt every kid.

It is NOT appropriate for you to raise the possibility of adoption just because you know they are a foster family. It is ESPECIALLY not appropriate for you to raise this issue in front of the kids. The kids may be going to home or to kin. It may not be an adoptive match. The family may not be able to adopt now. They may be foster-only. Not all older children want or choose to be adopted, and after a certain age, they are allowed to decide. Family building is private and none of everyone’s business. They’ll let you know when you need to know something.

10. If we’re struggling – and all of us struggle sometimes – it isn’t helpful to say we should just “give them back” or remind us we brought it on ourselves. ALL parents pretty much brought their situation on themselves whether they give birth or foster, but once you are a parent, you deal with what you’ve got no matter what. “I told you so” is never helpful. This is especially true when the kids have disabilities or when they go home. Yes, we knew that could happen. That doesn’t make it any easier.

11. Foster kids are not “fake kids,” and we’re not babysitters – they are all my “REAL kids.” Some of them may stay forever. Some of them may go and come back. Some of them may leave and we’ll never see them again. But that’s life, isn’t it? Sometimes people in YOUR life go away, too, and they don’t stop being an important part of your life or being loved and missed. How they come into my family or for how long is not the point. While they are here they are my children’s REAL brothers and sisters, my REAL sons and daughters. We love them entirely, treat them the way we do all our kids, and never, ever forget them when they leave. Don’t pretend the kids were never here. Let foster parents talk about the kids they miss. Don’t assume that kids are interchangeable – one baby is not the same as the next, and just because there will be more kids later doesn’t make it any easier now.

12. Fostering is HARD. Take how hard you think it will be and multiply it by 10, and you are beginning to get the idea. Exhausting, gutwrenching and stressful as heck. That said, it is also GREAT, and mostly utterly worth it. It is like Tom

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 2015 - 2016

PARKHILL		September 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015
		Sept 23	Oct 14 Oct 28	Nov 11 Nov25	Dec 9
January 2016	February 2016	March 2016	April 2016	May 2016	June 2016
Jan 13 Jan27	Feb 10 Feb 24	March 9 March 24	April 13 April 27	May 11 May 25	June 8
LEAMINGTON		September 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015
		Sept 30	Oct 7 Oct 21	Nov 4 Nov 18	Dec 2
January 2016	February 2016	March 2016	April 2016	May 2016	June 2016
Jan 20	Feb 3 Feb 17	March 2 March 16	April 6 April 20	May 4 May 18	June 1

Hanks' character in "League of Their Own" says about baseball: "It is supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great."

13. You don't have to be a foster parent to HELP support kids and families in crisis. If you want to foster, GREAT – the world needs more foster families. But we also need OTHER kinds of help.

You can:

Treat foster parents with a new placement the way you would a family that had a baby – it is JUST as exhausting and stressful. If you can offer to cook dinner, help out with the other kids, or lend a hand in some way, it would be most welcome.

Offer up your children's outgrown stuff to pass on – foster parents who do short-term fostering send a lot of stuff home with the kids, and often could use more. Alternatively, many communities have a foster care closet or donation center that would be grateful for your pass-downs in good condition.

Be an honorary grandparent, aunt or uncle. Kids need as many people in their lives as possible, and relationships that say "you are special."

Become a respite provider, taking foster children for a week or a weekend so their parents can go away or take a break.

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Offer to babysit. Foster parents have lives, plus they have to go to meetings and trainings, and could definitely use the help.

Be a big brother, sister or mentor to older foster kids. Preteens and Teens need help imagining a future for themselves – be that help.

Be an extra pair of hands when foster families go somewhere challenging – offer to come along to the amusement park, to church, to the playground. A big family or one with special needs may really appreciate just an extra adult or a mother's helper along.

Support local anti-poverty programs with your time and money. These are the resources that will hopefully keep my kids fed and safe in their communities when they go home.

If you've got extra, someone else can probably use it. Lots of foster families don't have a lot of spare money for activities – offering your old hockey equipment or the use of your swim membership is a wonderful gift.

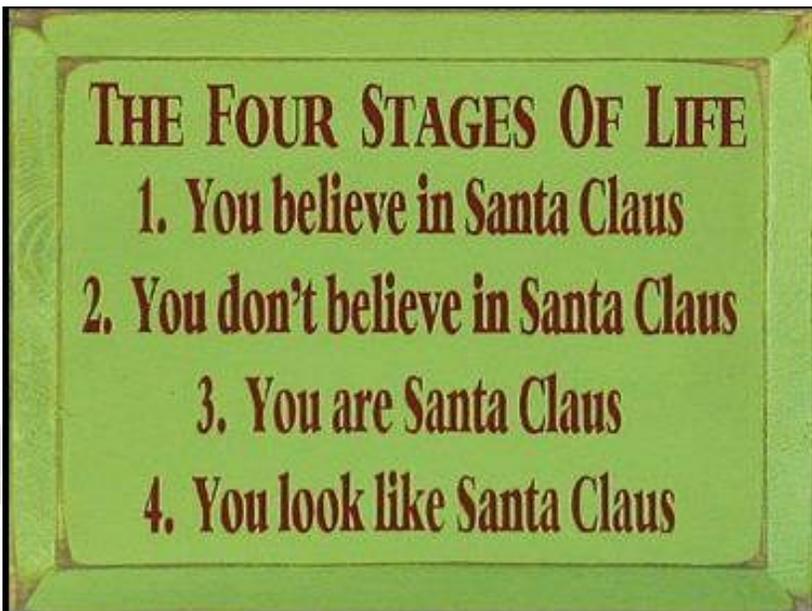
Make programs for kids friendly to kids with disabilities and challenges. You may not have thought about how hard it is to bring a disabled or behaviorally challenged kid to Sunday school, the pool, the local kids movie night – but think about it now, and encourage inclusion.

Teach your children from the beginning to be welcoming, inclusive, kind and non-judgmental, Teach them the value of having friends from different neighborhoods, communities, cultures, races and levels of ability. Make it clear that bullying, unkindness and exclusion are NEVER EVER ok.

Welcome foster parents and their family into your community warmly, and ASK them what they need, and what you can do.

13. Reach out to families in your community that are struggling – maybe you can help so that the children don't ever have to come into foster care, or to make it easier if they do. Some families really need a ride, a sitter, some emotional support, some connection to local resources. Lack of community ties is a HUGE risk factor for children coming into care, so make the attempt.

*The original article is found here: <http://scienceblogs.com/casaubonsbook/2013/03/12/what-foster-parents-wish-other-people-knew/>



SEASONS GREETINGS!



As we finalize 2015, I want to thank you for your educational e-mails over the past year. I am totally screwed up now and have little chance of recovery.

I can no longer open a bathroom door without using a paper towel, nor let the waitress put lemon slices in my ice water without worrying about the bacteria on the lemon peel.

I can't sit down on a hotel bedspread because I can only imagine what has happened on it since it was last washed.

Eating a little snack sends me on a guilt trip because I can only imagine how many gallons of trans fats I have consumed over the years.

I can't touch any woman's handbag for fear she has placed it on the floor of a public toilet.

I must send my special thanks for the email about rat poo in the glue on envelopes because I now have to use a wet sponge with every envelope that needs sealing.

ALSO, now I have to scrub the top of every can I open for the same reason.

I can't use cancer-causing deodorants even though I smell like a water buffalo on a hot day.

Thanks to you I have learned that my prayers only get answered if I forward an e-mail to seven of my friends and make a wish within five minutes.

Because of your concern, I no longer drink Coca Cola because it can remove toilet stains.

I no longer buy fuel without taking someone along to watch the car, so a serial killer doesn't crawl in my back seat when I'm filling up.

I no longer use Cling Wrap in the microwave because it causes seven different types of cancer.

And thanks for letting me know I can't boil a cup of water in the microwave anymore because it will blow up in my face, disfiguring me for life.

I no longer go to the cinema because I could be pricked with a needle infected with AIDS when I sit down.

I no longer go to shopping centers because someone will drug me with a perfume sample and rob me.

(Continued on page 9)

A new teacher was trying to make use of her psychology courses.

She started her class by saying, 'Everyone who thinks they're stupid, stand up!'

After a few seconds, Little Larry stood up.

The teacher said, 'Do you think you're stupid, Larry?'

'No, ma'am, but I didn't like to see you standing there all by yourself!'

Larry watched, fascinated, as his mother smoothed cold cream on her face. 'Why do you do that, mum?' he asked.

'To make myself beautiful,' said his mother, who then began removing the cream with a tissue.

'What's the matter, asked Larry 'are you giving up?'

Larry's class were on a field trip to their local police station where they saw pictures tacked to a bulletin board of the 10 most wanted criminals.

One of the youngsters pointed to a picture and asked if it really was the photo of a wanted person.

'Yes,' said the policeman. 'The detectives want very badly to capture him.'

Larry asked, "Why didn't you keep him when you took his picture ?"

Be the kind of person that when your feet hit the floor each morning, the devil says "Oh crap, they're up!"

WHAT WAS MY MOTHER THINKING . . . ?

My Mom used to cut chicken, chop eggs and spread mayo on the same cutting board with the same knife and no bleach, but we didn't seem to get food poisoning.

My Mom used to defrost hamburger on the counter AND I used to eat it raw sometimes too, but I can't remember getting e coli.

Almost all of us would have rather gone swimming in the lake instead of a pristine pool (talk about boring).

The term cell phone would have conjured up a phone in a jail cell, and a pager was the school PA system.

We all took gym, not PE... and risked permanent injury with a pair of high top Ked's (only worn in gym) instead of having cross-training athletic shoes with air cushion soles and built in light reflectors. I can't recall any injuries but they must have happened because they tell us how much safer we are now.

Flunking gym was not an option... even for stupid kids! I guess PE must be much harder than gym.

Every year, someone taught the whole school a lesson [and provided comic relief] by running in the halls with leather soles on linoleum tile and hitting the wet spot.

How much better off would we be today if we only knew we could have sued the school system.

Speaking of school, we all said prayers and sang the national anthem and staying in detention after school caught all sorts of negative attention. We must have had horribly damaged psyches.

I can't understand it. Schools didn't offer 14 year olds an abortion or condoms (we wouldn't have known what either was anyway) but they did give us a couple of baby aspirin and cough syrup if we started getting the sniffles.

What an archaic health system we had then. Remember school nurses? Ours wore a hat and everything.

I thought that I was supposed to accomplish something before I was allowed to be proud of myself.

I just can't recall how bored we were without computers, Play Station, Nintendo, X-box or 270 digital TV cable stations.

I must be repressing that memory as I try to rationalize through the denial of the dangers could have befallen us as we trekked off each day about a mile down the road to some guy's vacant lot, built forts out of branches and pieces of plywood, made trails, and fought over who got to be the Lone Ranger.

What was that property owner thinking, letting us play on that lot? He should have been locked up for not putting up a fence around the property, complete with a self-losing gate and an infrared intruder alarm.

Oh yeah... and where was the Benadryl and sterilization kit when I got that bee sting? I could have been killed!

We played king of the hill on piles of gravel left on vacant construction sites and when we got hurt, Mom pulled out the 48 cent bottle of Mercurochrome and then we got our butt spanked. Now it's a trip to the emergency room, followed by a 10-day dose of a \$49 bottle of antibiotics and then Mom calls the attorney to sue the contractor for leaving a horribly vicious pile of gravel where it was such a threat.

I made myself a snowball,
As perfect as could be,
I thought I'd keep it as a pet,
And let it sleep with me.
I made it some pajamas,
And a pillow for its head,
Then last night it ran away,
But first-- it wet the bed.



(Continued on page 9)

We didn't act up at the neighbor's house either because if we did, we got our butt spanked (physical abuse) here too ... and then we got butt spanked again when we got home.

Mom invited the door to door salesman inside for coffee, kids choked down the dust from the gravel driveway while playing with Tonka trucks (Remember why Tonka trucks were made tough...it wasn't so that they could take the rough Berber in the family room), and Dad drove a car with leaded gas.

Our music had to be left inside when we went out to play and I am sure that I nearly exhausted my imagination a couple of times when we went on two week vacations. I should probably sue the folks now for the danger they put us in when we all slept in campgrounds in the family tent.



Summers were spent behind the push lawn mower and I didn't even know that mowers came with motors until I was 13 and we got one without an automatic blade-stop or an auto-drive.

How sick were my parents? Of course my parents weren't the only psychos. I recall Donny Reynolds from next door coming over and doing his tricks on the front stoop just before he fell off. Little did his Mom know that she could have owned our house. Instead she picked him up and swatted him for being such a goof. It was a neighborhood run amuck.

To top it off, not a single person I knew had ever been told that they were from a dysfunctional family. How could we possibly have known that? We needed to get into group therapy and anger management classes?

We were obviously so duped by so many societal ills, that we didn't even notice that the entire country wasn't taking Prozac! How did we survive?

(Maxine Continued from page 7)

And I no longer answer the phone because someone will ask me to dial a number for which I will get a huge phone bill with calls to Jamaica, Uganda, Singapore and Uzbekistan.

And thanks to your great advice I can't ever pick up a dime coin dropped in the car park because it was probably placed there by a sex molester waiting to grab me as I bend over.

I can't do gardening because I'm afraid I'll get bitten by the Violin Spider and my hand will fall off.

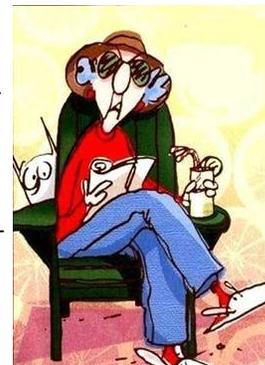
If you don't send this e-mail to at least 144,000 people in the next 7 minutes, a large dove with diarrhea will land on your head at 5:00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon, and the fleas from 120 camels will infest your back, causing you to grow a hairy hump. I know this will occur because it actually happened to a friend of my next door neighbor's ex mother-in-law's second husband's cousin's best friend's beautician!

Oh, and by the way...

A German scientist from Argentina, after a lengthy study, has discovered that people with insufficient brain activity read their e-mails with their hand on the mouse.

(Don't bother taking it off now, it's too late.)

P. S. I now keep my toothbrush in the living room, because I was told by e-mail that water splashes over 6 ft. out of the toilet.



NOW, YOU HAVE YOURSELF A VERY GOOD DAY, OK?

Parenting Kiddos who Sabotage Big Days

by Jen Hatmaker *

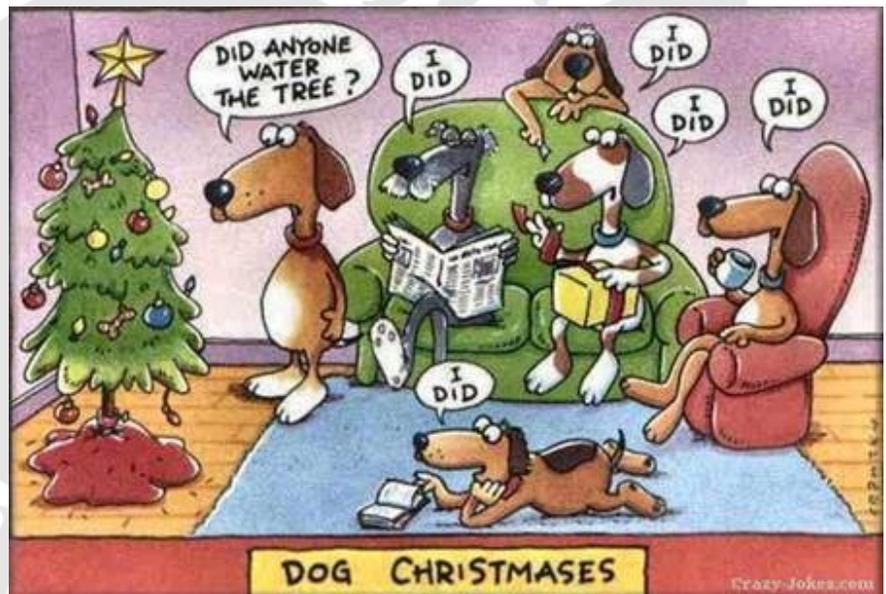
It could be said accurately of me that I am a slow-learner.

This is our 4th Christmas with Ben and Remy home, and last year I finally tracked our history and noticed that Christmas produced an inevitable cocktail of unintentional sabotage, overreactions, and meltdowns (or total withdrawal). The best of days ended in their tears, yelling, and devastation. Until last year, I kept thinking, "Dang! I am just not getting this Christmas thing right!" I thought I failed once again to provide the perfect mix of togetherness, meaning, Advent, and memories.

I'm onto it now.

Example: For four weeks until Christmas, Remy talks about gifts/dates/plans/expectations CONSTANTLY. I mean constantly. What starts as ordinary preparation turns tense and anxious. A week or two out, it gets darker: lots of entitlement, demands, the outer edges of fit-pitching. Nothing is enough. Every Christmas activity lacks; she displays a constant state of disappointment or anger. (She had her first meltdown this year when we decorated the tree and drank hot chocolate while watching Elf. It was a total disaster for her, start to finish, no matter how we all rallied. Sydney said, "Mom? What is really going on?" EXACTLY.)

On Christmas morning, behaviour turns insufferable over the smallest thing, over nothing. The "who got more" tally is in full effect (Ben particularly struggles with scarcity). The six thoughtful, loving presents are discarded for the one unreasonable, outrageous thing she didn't get. We will absolutely hear: "This is the worst day OF MY LIFE!!" (We hear this regularly on Big Days.) She will end up crying in her bedroom, devolving into shame: "I am the worst girl! I am on the naughty list! I ruined Christmas! I'm giving all my presents away!" I feel so frustrated that I sometimes snap, making it all worse. Ultimately, I dread Big Days altogether and while she is thinking she is the worst kid (bless her), I am thinking I am definitely the worst mom.



Big Day Sabotage is no joke, man.

For all my adoption friends (as well as grownups who also sabotage Big Days unwittingly or have other kids who do), we've learned much about our kids' unintentional behaviour and how to help them. Maybe you find yourself wrecking Big Days like Christmas, feeling frustrated year after year at your own self. Perhaps this will be helpful for you too, dear one. So many factors contribute to this grief and self-preserving behaviour; being abandoned/adopted is one contributor, but other heartbreaks result in the same reaction.

First, the WHY. This is multifaceted and certainly varies from person to person. I'll discuss what we see in our adopted kids, and I'd love to hear your personal experiences in the comments.

WHY: For adopted kids, abandonment is a deep shame so entrenched, our kids don't even know they are operating out of it. Whether with full memories in hand like ours or kids given up at birth, it doesn't matter. The narrative is: I wasn't good enough to keep. This sense of unworthiness is so deep, it takes a lifetime of intentional work to overcome. What that shame tells them is this: I am not worthy of love, happiness, or goodness. It seems ridiculous to parents who love them madly, who go to every game and concert, who sing to them and tuck them in, but those affections can't erase

the beginning of their story. They don't feel worthy of happiness on Big Days, so they sabotage to hasten the disappointment before it gets to them first. Double bonus if their behaviour triggers our anger, because then their shame is validated just like they suspected.

WHY: Big Days trigger Big Feelings. No matter the extreme (good or bad), it is all INTENSE and triggering. It conjures their most tender emotions, their most volatile responses, kind of like laughing hysterically at a funeral. Of course the reaction is outrageous, but Big is Big and when a traumatized kid opens the door to Big, everything is free to spill out. They spend so much energy keeping a lid on their pain and fear and trying to just "act normal," so when permission is granted to feel all their feels, both ends of the spectrum dump their restrained contents and it is a cluster of hysteria.

WHY: They exit the safe space of ordinary, regulated, predictable routine and enter the scary space of extraordinary, disregulated, unpredictable practice. There is a reason adoption counsellors urge parents to establish regular routines with no deviation for awhile. When their insides are out of control, it is incredibly calming to have a schedule they can count on; no big surprises to derail them, no left field scenarios to navigate, no uncertain activities to worry about. With Big Days, not only do they possess exceptional emotions (not normal), but everyone else places heightened expectations on the impending (not normal) celebration, and the stress is unmanageable.



Or the opposite. Remy places her own unreasonable expectations on Big Days. She imagines a narrative so impossible, so idealistic, so over-the-top, every normal detour is devastating. Her desire to craft the Most Perfect Day Ever reaches a fever pitch, and with the slightest wobble to the plan, she comes unravelled. She wants to control the outcome all the way to perfection, but that doesn't exist and her inner shame trumps it anyway. She falls from an exceptional height of Expectations + "I am unworthy of happiness."

WHY: Regret and sadness. We learned this the first year we decorated the tree. My bios received an ornament every year of their lives, and for Ben and Remy's first Christmas, I backlogged ornaments to their birth year too. But when my big kids started hanging ornaments and declaring memories, "Remember this one!" and "This was my favourite when I was five!" and so on, Ben fell off the ledge so hard, it took two days to get him back. (Ditto: old family videos of the big kids' childhood...) You know what? It is just sad to realize your birth family couldn't or wouldn't give you a happy childhood. Big Days are a reminder of what should have been but wasn't, all that was lost, all that will never be. While their siblings happily skip through every charmed childhood Christmas memory, my littles are remembering lost birth parents, crushing poverty, and Christmases in orphanages.

Bless their precious little broken hearts.

So here is what we do to love them and help them through Big Days.

If we can, we shrink the runway to Big Days. The longer the season (THANKS FOR NOTHING CHRISTMAS SEASON THAT NOW STARTS IN OCTOBER), the greater their stress. It's just too much to worry about for too long. So if possible, we don't say a word until the day before or day of. On seasons like Christmas, the next suggestion is helpful...

Which is this: lower stimulation all around. I initially thought MORE Christmas was called for. Let's make up for lost time! Let's make so many new beautiful memories! I'll give you all the magic you missed! But it had the opposite effect. Too much stimulus, too many feelings, too much activity, too many opportunities to sabotage. We have to keep Big Days (and seasons) simple. We cannot overschedule or overhype. The calmer an activity is, the less noise and people, the better they do. And we don't talk about those activities until they are practically happening. Less is more.

We try to manage expectations. I am constantly bringing things low for my littles, especially with Remy who elevates all Big Days. We cast simple, manageable vision for Big Days: this is what we'll do, this is who will be there, this is what we

won't be doing, this is about how long it will last. If possible, I address unrealistic expectations early; better now than they obsess for weeks then face disappointment times one million. (I had a hard conversation with Remy yesterday because she kept asking for an iPhone for Christmas. I finally sat her down and said, "Honey, you are not getting an iPhone. No 3rd grader in this family has ever had an iPhone. Let's let that go right now so you don't expect one on Christmas morning." She had a meltdown, but now she knows. That stressor is gone. She will not worry about it for the next 10 days then despair on Christmas morning.) When they tip their hand toward unrealistic expectations, manage them then and there. Giving them everything they ask for is not healing; we have to work hard to not "make up parent" their early deficits with excess and liberties. That creates short-term happiness with long-term detriments.

Lots of touching and pauses for affection. This has a calming effect on my littles. When I see them spiralling, it helps to pull them on my lap, rub their backs, and redirect their attention for a few minutes. It is a physical solution to an emotional problem. It often works like a reset button.

Finally, we talk in advance about how Big Feelings might show up. We recall other Big Days and identify emotions. We validate, validate, validate, making sure they hear that they are NOT bad kids wrecking a perfectly good day. We talk about their fear and sadness and feelings of scarcity and how that makes them behave, and we give them full permission to feel it all. Sometimes when I consider all my kids have endured, I wonder how they even get out of bed in the morning, much less manage a Big Feelings Day with grace and restraint. We assure them that whether they get a handle on it or not, they could not possibly make us love them less, and if the worst thing that happens is they have a bad day, then no big deal. Everyone in a family gets to have bad days. It's not a deal breaker.

Just taking that pressure off is so helpful. They feel less alone in their anxiety, confusion, and shame. They are not these hurt kids off to the side working so damn hard to keep it together while the rest of their happy, charmed-from-birth family sings carols, oblivious. We are in this together, and just knowing that makes them less afraid.

Oh, we are so grateful for these beautiful children in our family. They are treasures, overcomers, survivors. God is doing a mighty work in their hearts. We are watching Him heal them, asking for so much wisdom and patience. (It helps to take our own expectations out of the rafters, and if a Big Day goes beautifully, then HUZDAH!! If it doesn't, it is just a day and we are looking at the long road with our littles. We'll have beautiful Christmases when they are 34 and bringing me grandbabies.)

To all parents doing this hard work and to grown-ups with sabotaging behaviours and worries about these Big Days ahead, I just love you. We'll just keep working, keep trying, keep loving, and keep forgiving ourselves when it all goes sideways. You are not alone, know that. So many of us are right there with you, doing the stuff, having victories and flat-out disasters. But we are trying and we care and we Love Big and that counts.

The merriest of Christmases to you, friends. And if the whole Big Day goes in the gutter, there is always the egg nog.

*Reprinted from <http://jenhatmaker.com/blog/2014/12/15/parenting-kiddos-who-sabotage-big-days>





United Foster Parents of Canada Corporation

1 Bridge St E Suite 410

Belleville ON K8N 5N9

Office: 613-771-9002

855-273-0944

Fax: 855-261-0511

Email: office@ufpcc.com

Blue Water Family Support Services
2130 Parkhill Drive
Parkhill, Ontario N0M 2K0

November 19, 2015

Foster Parent Legal Expense Insurance

The UFPCC was formed and incorporated in 2001, to provide Children's Aid Society foster parents with funds to assist them with legal expenses relating to allegations made against them by foster children and the biological family of foster parents that were not covered by the agency insurance. Over the years we have been approached by a number of private foster homes requesting membership in the UFPCC and to receive assistance with legal expenses. Unfortunately we were unable to offer membership to these parents at that time.

The UFPCC has been in talks with DAS Canada, a provider of Legal Expense Insurance in Canada, since January 2015 to build an insurance policy to offer legal expense insurance to all foster parents and their family members in Canada.

As a result of these talks the UFPCC is pleased to announce that it is now able to offer Annual Memberships to private foster homes in Ontario, and hopes to expand this membership to **ALL** foster parents in Canada in the very near future.

Membership: includes the insurance policy, access to our affinity program and educational bursaries.

Cost: \$180.00 per year plus HST, totalling \$203.40, payable in advance, per foster home. Membership renews each year on November 01. The first year cost will be prorated to reflect the fixed anniversary date, see enclosed.

Who it covers: the Insured foster parent, their spouse/partner and extended family members living in the home. Extended family members are defined as children, grandchildren, parents and grandparents normally living in the home, including those studying at college or university. It does not cover visiting relatives.

Limits: \$100,000 per incident with a \$500,000 aggregate per family per year, if family members are jointly charged then the \$100,000 coverage is shared.

Insured incidents:

- Police Investigations or charges
- Provincial investigations (Community Care Giver Investigations) or charges
- Appeals (if funds remain in the claim)
- Investigations or charges **must** be in relation to the foster family's interaction with the foster child in their care.
- Unlimited free telephone Legal Advice, on any subject

Membership is not available to Group Home Operators.

The insurance is not Liability Insurance and does not fund lawyers for a civil law suit.

A sample certificate, policy summary and application forms can be found on our website www.ufpcc.com , under the "downloads" tab.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Turrell', with a horizontal line underneath.

Executive Director
UFPCC
289 928 4560
G.Turrell@ufpcc.com



Pro-rated Annual Membership Fees.

Do NOT submit payment for part months. i.e. if you apply for membership on November 10th or 20th you would submit payment only for the whole months remaining in the period – 11 months

Dates	# of Months	Multiplied by \$15.00	HST	Total
Nov 01 to Oct 31	12	\$180.00	\$23.40	\$203.40
Dec 01 to Oct 31	11	\$165.00	\$21.45	\$186.45
Jan 01 to Oct 31	10	\$150.00	\$19.50	\$169.50
Feb 01 to Oct 31	9	\$135.00	\$17.55	\$152.55
Mar 01 to Oct 31	8	\$120.00	\$15.60	\$135.60
Apr 01 to Oct 31	7	\$105.00	\$13.65	\$118.65
May 01 to Oct 31	6	\$90.00	\$11.70	\$101.70
Jun 01 to Oct 31	5	\$75.00	\$9.75	\$84.75
Jul 01 to Oct 31	4	\$60.00	\$7.80	\$67.80

On August 01 you will submit a membership fee for 15 months, then 15 months later you would submit payment for a 12 month period.

Dates	# of Months	Multiplied by \$15.00	HST	Total
Aug 01 to Oct 31	15	\$225.00	\$29.25	\$254.25
Sept 01 to Oct 31	14	\$210.00	\$27.30	\$237.30
Oct 01 to Oct 31	13	\$195.00	\$25.35	\$220.35

We do not charge for part months in the first year.

Examples

Oct 01st would be 13 months

Oct 15th would be 12 months

Dec 30th would be 10 months

Renewal payments must be received prior to November 01 each year for membership to continue.



UNITED FOSTER PARENTS OF CANADA CORPORATION
(UFPCC)

APPLICATION FOR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP
PRIVATE FOSTER PARENTS

Agency: _____
(Please complete all shaded areas)

1. I understand that, as an Annual Member, I do not have the right to receive notice of, attend, or vote at any meetings of the Members of UFPCC.
2. I understand that UFPCC purchases Legal Expense Insurance on behalf of Insured Persons (see definition on Page 2) to retain and pay the ongoing fees of legal counsel in connection with investigations or charges that arise as a result of the Insured Person's involvement with fostered children, up to the allowable maximum.
3. I agree:
 - a. That my Annual Membership will start on the day that I pay the Annual Membership Fee of \$180.00 plus HST (or such other fee amount set by UFPCC's board of directors) and my Application is accepted by UFPCC's board of directors.
 - b. That I must pay the Annual Membership Fee of \$180.00 plus HST (or such other fee amount set by the UFPCC board of directors), and provide a membership confirmation form, **each year by October 31st** in order to remain an Annual Member. I understand that if I do not take these steps, my Membership **and** my Insurance Coverage will **expire** on November 1st. I understand that UFPCC **will not** remind me to pay the Fee and provide the Form. I will not hold UFPCC responsible if an Insurance renewal notice is not received by me for any reason.
 - c. That a condition of Annual Membership is being an active foster parent in Canada. I understand that it is my obligation to inform UFPCC immediately if I cease to be an active foster parent in Canada.
 - d. To ensure that my correct membership status, address, and contact information is on file with UFPCC at all times.
 - e. To comply with the by-laws, policies, and procedures of UFPCC and any legislation applicable to UFPCC and/or me, as a foster parent.
 - f. That the UFPCC board of directors has the authority to terminate my membership, or to reduce or cancel my Insurance coverage, if I do not meet my obligations in (a) – (e).
 - g. That the Legal Expense Insurance provides coverage **only** for charges or investigations resulting from my interaction with **my foster children**, and that it is **NOT** liability insurance or coverage for legal expenses in relation to a Civil Suit.

4. I declare that, as of the date of this Application, I have no knowledge of any actual or potential allegations or charges, **involving my foster children**, against me or any other Insured Persons that may result in criminal charges or proceedings being laid or brought against me or any of them.
5. I agree to maintain the highest standards of foster parenting so long as I am a member of UFPCC. I confirm that my Agency has a criminal reference check on file regarding me.
6. I authorize my Agency to provide UFPCC with my contact information for the purpose of maintaining my membership records. I authorize UFPCC to use and disclose my contact information for any purpose related to my membership. I understand that I can withdraw this consent at any time by contacting my Agency or UFPCC, as appropriate.
7. I understand and acknowledge and agree that the Legal Expense Insurance is the only form of legal assistance available to me through UFPCC and I will not hold UFPCC liable for any matter relating to the Insurance, including the administration or sufficiency of the Insurance. Once a certificate is issued to me for the Insurance, the Insurance will be the **only** source of financial assistance available to me through UFPCC.

I have read and I understand this Application, and I agree to provide my Agency and UFPCC with written notice if any of the above statements change.

Dated at _____, Ontario this ____ day of _____, 201__

FOSTER PARENT SURNAME FIRST NAME MIDDLE NAME DOB

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN/CITY: _____ **POSTAL CODE:** _____

Province: ON **PHONE #:** _____ **EMAIL ADDRESS:** _____

Signature of Foster Parent _____

Witness: _____

Instructions: Mail to UFPCC, 1 Bridge Street East, Suite 410, Belleville, ON K8N 5N9
Or Email: office@ufpcc.com

HST#: 863843538 RT0001.

Definition of Insured Persons: A Member of UFPCC who is in good standing when investigations or charges are raised; and the following individuals living in the home of the Member: the Member's spouse/partner; the Member's children and grandchildren (including adopted children/grandchildren and children/grandchildren studying at college or university); and the Member's parents and grandparents.

Bluewater Family Support Services

P.O. Box 460,
2130 Parkhill Drive,
Parkhill, Ontario

Phone: 519-294-6213

Fax: 519-294-0279

E-mail: BluesNews@bluewatercares.com

www.bluewatercares.com

bluewatercares.com

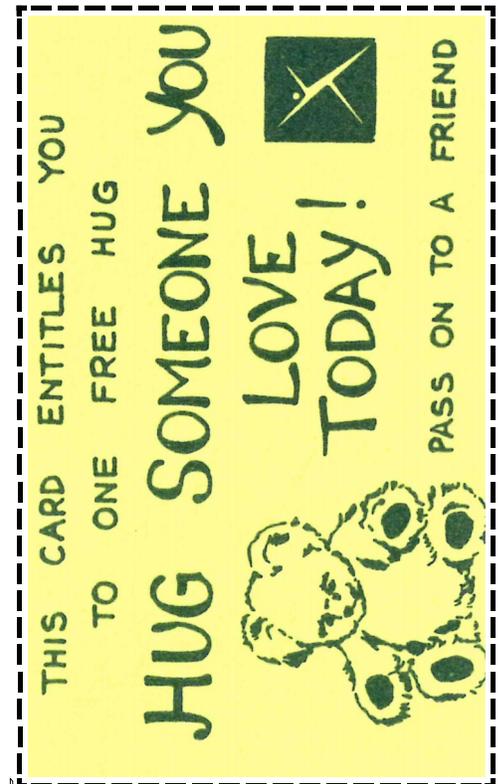
say what?!

Music can be a powerful tool for communicating difficult feelings or thoughts. Songwriters often give a voice to our thoughts and express our feelings better than we might ever have dreamt.

Here are a couple of Youtube links

[FIGHT SONG](#)

[ReMoved—The Film](#)



HUMOUR

Mildred, the church gossip and self-appointed monitor of the congregations' morals, kept sticking her nose into other people's business. Several members did not approve of her extra-curricular activities, but feared her enough to maintain their silence.

She made a mistake however when she accused Frank, a new member, of being an alcoholic after she saw his old pickup parked in front of the town's only bar one afternoon. She emphatically told Frank (and several others) that everyone seeing it there would know what he was doing!

Frank, a man of few words, stared at her for a moment and just turned and walked away. He didn't explain, defend, or deny. He simply said nothing.

Later that evening, Frank quietly parked his pickup in front of Mildred's house, walked home... And left it there all night.