

NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON



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Connect with me on Facebook. Email me to find out more.

I UNDERSTAND... I AM A FOSTER PARENT TOO

IFAPA recognizes that foster parents often need the perspective of peers during the foster parenting and adoption experience.

I can provide support and assist you with questions regarding:

- Licensing requirements
- Training needs
- Respite care
- Behavior challenges
- Working with birth families
- Confidentiality issues
- And much more!



www.ifapa.org

This year resolve to practice some self-care

It's a new year: Time for self-reflection and resolutions. This year resolve to put yourself first for a change – at least once in a while.

Caring for children in foster care can be difficult, draining, exhausting and frustrating. Therefore, it's important that foster parents take the time to step away, regroup and recharge – in other words, we must take time to care for ourselves.

On top of lengthy to-do lists, we are also dealing with challenging behaviors. Children in foster care often project their anger and frustration onto us, which can wear us down.

Remember the safety talk you get before a flight begins? In case of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop from overhead; you are instructed to put your oxygen mask on first and then help those around you. The idea is that you can't help anyone else if you don't have the oxygen you need. The same is true for being a foster parent. It is hard to be the calm, reasonable and compassionate parent we want and need to be if we are too stressed out. In other words, make sure you get a little TLC.

Are you guilty of not taking time for yourself? The National Child Traumatic Stress Network offers these warning signs that you might be nearing compassion fatigue:

- You feel mentally and physically exhausted
- You are using alcohol, food or other substances to combat stress and comfort yourself.
- Your sleep is often disturbed
- You are feeling numb and distanced from life
- You are feeling less satisfied
- You are moody and irritable
- You have physical ailments – headaches and stomachaches

If you suspect you are entering the compassion fatigue zone, it's time to practice some basic self-care. This includes:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating well
- Getting some physical exercise
- Using alcohol in moderation, or not at all
- Taking regular breaks from stressful activities
- Laughing every day
- Expressing yourself
- Letting someone else take care of you

Deena McMahon, a licensed social worker, said it's important for foster parents to realize that they are worth taking care of and their happiness and well-being are essential to good parenting. She recommends making self-care part of your routine – daily, weekly and monthly.

(Continued on next page)

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Suggestions include:

- Joining a support group where you can talk with others who face the same struggles
- Creating down time every day--maybe it's a morning walk, 10 minutes with the paper and a cup of coffee
- Routinely have something to which you look forward--coffee with a neighbor once a week, date night with your partner once a week or a massage once a month.

“Caring for children who have special needs is a matter of the heart. Self-care is a mind-set and a positive choice. If you can find a balance between caring for your children and meeting your own needs, you will ultimately be much better equipped to do both,” McMahan said.

The next meeting of the Cass County “Griswold” Support Group is Thursday, January 14 at Central Church of Christ at 51 Harrison Street, Griswold. ***It's Not About You, Yelling & Disrespectful Behaviors*** This is an excellent training and child care is available; free will donation. Please RSVP to Sandra at 855-526-2116.

Monona County Support Group will meet again on Thursday, February 4, 2016, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Whiting Christian Church, 716 West Street. ***It's Not About You, Yelling & Disrespectful Behaviors*** This group has great conversation and is fun loving.

The next meeting of the Mills County Support Group will be on Monday, February 8, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at The Gathering Place, 110 S.Vine Street, Glenwood. ***It's Not About You, Yelling & Disrespectful Behaviors.*** This is a warm and inviting little coffee shop with all kinds of sweet treats!

Pottawattamie Support Group will be meeting on February 25, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 pm. at the McPherson Church of Christ, 1525 McPherson Avenue, Council Bluffs. ***It's Not About You, Sparks & Resilency***

As always, please call or e-mail if you have any questions, comments, or just want to visit.

Happy New Year!

Sandra Dollen



Indoor Snow

Supplies: 1 bar of Ivory Soap
(Use only Ivory. The fresher the better)Plac

Place a piece of waxed paper or paper towel in the microwave. Add bar of Ivory soap. Microwave on high for a few minutes. Watch the bar start growing! Sometimes it's huge and sometimes it's whimpy. Kids can play with it after it cools down. If you let it stand or smash it with your hands, it will crumble into soap dust, which makes for bath-time fun.

It's Here!

IFAPA'S January through March 2016 Training Schedule. View the schedule and register for classes at www.ifapa.org.