

Between Families

Foster Family Matters Helping Children Manage Anxiety

Today was a day of transition for two of my children: they started back to school. The youngest started Middle School, and the middle one started High School. They were excited about new school supplies, anxious about what to wear, and worried about making new friends. These feelings aren't unique to my children. They are experienced by children everywhere during times of transition such as returning to school, but they can be especially difficult for children who have been through the trauma of abuse, neglect, and entering foster care. Foster parents are the first line of support to help children manage these emotions, and heal from the trauma of transition. As the parent of an anxious child myself, I know how difficult that can be.

Children in foster care are some of the most anxious, and many meet the criteria for at least one type of anxiety disorder. Children may have specific fears or obsessions, or worry about many areas of their lives. Common themes include the fear of separation, of attachment, of being controlled, and of being out of

control. Some children may seek constant reassurance; others may try to push you away.

Recognizing that everyone has his or her own way of being comforted is the first step to helping children become better at soothing themselves. Some children need to read, listen to music, or take a bubble bath. Others may need to go for a run. Some children may need a hug. Some children become angry and aggressive when anxious and are not able to calm themselves down. Martha B. Straus, PhD and Melanie Ernould, MA have identified several things you as a foster parent can do to help your children manage their anxiety. Some of their strategies include:

- **Take their Worries Seriously.** Empathize with them. Accept that their concerns are valid to them. Help your child identify what worries them, and help them to list the strategies they can use to calm down.
- **Be predictable.** Children who tend to be anxious need predictability and routine. Be sure to warn them of changes in their schedule and transitions that are coming up. Don't warn too early though, as that can cause them to worry more. Help them practice for large changes. When transitioning to a new school, having a tour of the school in advance can help them feel more comfortable. Giving teens some control in developing their own routines can also help them to manage their anxiety.
- **Practice Mindful Awareness.** Children who are anxious are often worried about things that are in the future or remembering traumatizing events in the past. By practicing being in the here and now, they can help to diminish their anxiety. Help them practice this by focusing internally and externally. Internally, have them pay attention to their breathing, or listen to their heart beat. Externally, have them focus on the sounds in the room, your voice, or the feeling of the sun on their face. By remaining in the present,



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of Family**

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Welcome Foster Families

James and Rebecca Rubow

Chris and Emily Keen

Christopher and Melaney Coco

Betty Turner

Sheila Burrous

Kevin Murphy and Nicole Bowles

Jamie and Tina Miller

Brenda Cavin

Recruitment Moment

Back to School Time

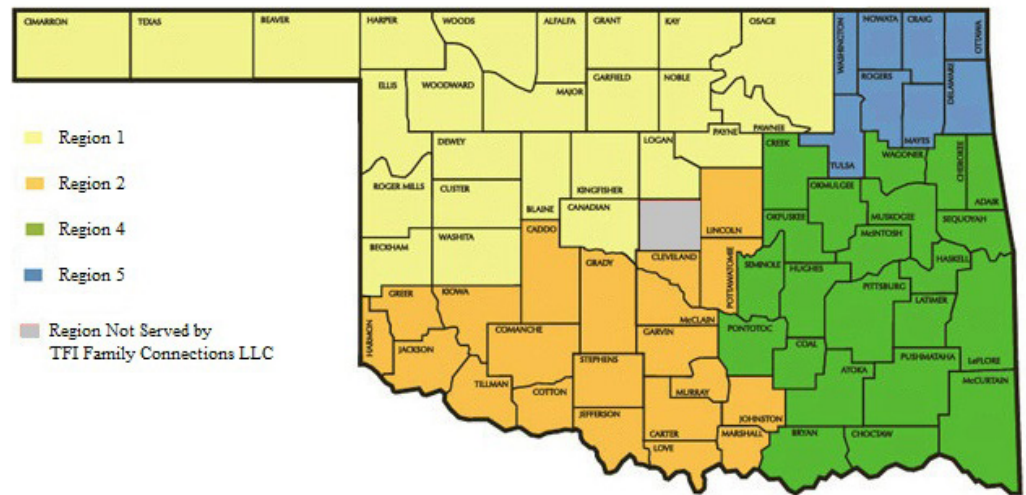
Everyone will soon be attending all kinds of school events in the very near future. Whether it's a volleyball game, football game, play or musical event, you will be interacting with all kinds of new people and families in the upcoming weeks. It's the perfect time to talk about the joys of being a foster parent and encourage your new friends to join you in helping the lives of Kansas kids.

But wait, now you can refer families to become foster parents in our new service area, the state of

Oklahoma. Yes, as a Kansas foster parent, you are eligible to receive the \$500 referral bonus for referring a friend or relative of yours in the grand ol' state of Oklahoma to TFI. Once that family becomes an officially approved home in the state of Oklahoma, you will receive your incentive! To make it easy, all you need to do is have them call us at, 1-800-279-9914, or visit our Oklahoma website at www.tfifamilyconnections.org to learn more.

Submitted by Jason Cecil, MSW, Director of Regional Recruitment Services

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Care Provider of the Month

Tara and Aaron Kippes

Tara and Aaron Kippes have been an all-star newcomer foster family. The Kippes have been a foster home for less than a year and act with such grace, dignity and confidence that one would be sure they had been in the foster care field for years. They have gone out of their way to help mentor, role model, and educate biological parents on basic parenting skills and effective communication. The Kippes put in overtime assisting the reintegration team as well as biological families with transportation and keeping connections between children and their families with extra phone calls. Their patience is astounding and their level of empathy and understanding is truly amazing. They can find strengths in anyone, even when these strengths may be hard for others to see. Aaron and Tara are very determined and when met with opposition they charge forward staying positive and never losing sight of the end goal of reuniting a child with his or her family. It has been my delight and I am truly blessed to have had Tara and Aaron in my PS-MAPP class and to have had the opportunity to watch them grow so quickly as a foster family.

Submitted by Melissa Gallaway, LMSW

Helping Children Manage Anxiety (Continued from Cover)

they can have control over what they think about and decrease their anxiety

- **Laugh and Play.** Anxiety and fun don't work well together. When children are having fun, they forget to be anxious. Do silly things to help your children laugh. Watch that TV show that makes them laugh. Find joy and share it!
- **Don't overprotect.** Parents of worriers sometimes try to protect their children from fearful situations to help the child be less fearful. This can result in the child's anxiety taking over the family life. Gradual exposure to fear can help your child overcome their anxiety. Role play with the child through the situation. For example, as a child, I was so fearful of snakes that I would jump and scream when I saw them on TV. Gradually, I have overcome this anxiety by introducing myself to pictures of snakes, watching them on TV, seeing them at the zoo, etc. to the point I can be near them, and not have to run out of the room. My heart may still race, but I am not running (I still don't want to be surprised by one though, and running over

one in my car really creeps me out!). Progress, not perfection, is the goal!

- **Reward Brave Behavior.** Foster children have often survived frightening and tough situations. Recognize their efforts to manage their anxieties and worries. Praise them when you see them take steps to manage their anxieties, such as getting on the school bus to go to school, even though they are worried about making new friends at the middle school.

Be sure to work with your foster child's therapist as you identify strategies to address their anxiety. As they become less anxious, there will still be times when they will feel overwhelmed with fear or doubt. With practice, they can manage and defeat it!

For more ideas on helping your foster child overcome anxiety, read Straus and Ernould's article "Ten Ways to Help Children Feel Less Anxious", found in *The Foster Parenting Toolbox* (Phagan-Hansel, 2012).

Submitted by Rachelle Roosevelt, Vice President, Foster Care and Program Development

Foster Family Anniversaries

One Year

Romond and Tammy Graham

Davy and Amanda Allison

Donna Craig

Eric and Kammi Bean

Clinton and Mary "Margarita" Nance

Bob and Sharlyn Splean

Kenny Cochrane and David Gonzalez

Kandi Starr

Three Years

Dan and Michelle Pavelac

Marvin and Debra Moore

James and Patricia Pugh

James and Cezanne Weis

Yolanda White

Scott and Mae "Michel" Buster

Chad and Vicki Sue Rhodes

Five Years

Rita Perez and Kim Ptasznik

Brian and Margaret Popp

Courtney Dealy and Mollie Sultenfuss

Leanna Adams

After hour emergencies, please call 1-877-921-4114.

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training, go to: www.childally.org/train/foster-training/

Visit www.tfifamilyservices.org for more helpful information.



Like us on Facebook, facebook.com/tfifamilyservices, and follow us on Twitter @TFIFamily for tips, support group reminders, and more!

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Foster Family Living

For families looking for low-cost outdoor activities, consider taking your family Geocaching. What on earth is Geocaching, you ask? Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. The containers typically contain objects of meaning to the person who left them there, along with a log book for the “finder” to sign. Finders also often place items of their own into the containers for the next person to find. Geocaches are hidden all over the world and players of the game routinely share their experiences online. To learn how to Geocache, simply visit www.geocaching.com, where you will find a multitude of information on how this treasure hunt works.

Besides the “cool” factor that comes with participating in a world-wide treasure hunt, spending time in green outdoor settings is believed to help reduce the severity of symptoms associated with ADHD in children (Faber-Taylor, Andrea; 2011), a diagnosis many of our children in care have. Additionally, a study of 337 school-age children revealed that spending time in nature “bolsters a child’s resilience against stress and adversity, particularly among those children who experience a high level of stress (Wells, Environment & Behavior, Vol. 35 No. 3).” As you know, the children you provide care for every day have experienced unusually high amounts of stress in their young lives. So reduce their (and your) stress levels: get outdoors!

To read the full articles cited above related to the benefits of children connecting with nature, visit:

www.apa.org/monitor/2008/03/outdoors.aspx
FrancesKuo_AndreaFaberTaylor.html

www.news.illinois.edu/news/11/0915_ADHD-greenspaces_

