

## Avoiding Power Struggles in Foster Care

Power struggles do not discriminate. No matter what type of parent you are – single, married, adoptive or foster, no one is immune. All parents, at one time or another, have been sucked into a tug-of-war struggle; both sides wanting to “win” the war. Power struggles for foster parents can be especially difficult since a foster child can often state, “I don’t have to listen to you; you’re not my real mom (or dad).” Foster children often struggle with trust issues and need to feel have to control whatever they can. Gaining control over situations is done in an effort to not feel completely powerless.

On any given day in the United States, there are more than 500,000 children in foster care. Foster children represent a vulnerable population. Their histories of being mistreated, abused and traumatized by separation from their biological families make them prone to post-traumatic stress disorders. When they move into someone’s home, they can be afraid and uncertain, often fearing that it will be just one more home they will have to leave. It is common for foster parents to have feelings of apprehension as well. This time of getting to know one another, and establishing your role in the home can cause power struggles.

These children have been let down so many times, why should they trust adults? To test the foster parents’ commitment to them, they often engage in power struggles. They are attempting to find out just how much the foster parents care. How much will they tolerate before they reject me? There are many challenges that all parents face, but there are some



that are unique to foster parents. It is a thin line between avoiding power struggles and holding children accountable for their behaviors. It’s important for foster parents to remember the feelings of confusion, fear, loss, sadness,

anxiety, neglect and apprehension which foster children experience. It is vital to a foster child’s success and healthy development for a foster parent to address these feelings and be a consistent, loving support as the child works through the residual effects of a chaotic past.

Most power struggles happen after a stressful event when the child becomes focused on what he wants and proving that he is right. In turn, parents can become focused on winning the argument. When you realize that you are in a power struggle, recognize it and take steps to get out of it. Here are some suggestions to avoid or get out of a power struggle:

- Remove yourself from the situation; don’t allow yourself to be an audience for your child. Simply say “yelling and speaking to me in that manner is disrespectful, so I am going to leave now and we can talk later.”
- Regain/maintain your composure. You are most effective when you are calm and in control of your emotions.
- Don’t try to teach or implement an intervention during a power struggle. Teachable moments are seldom effective during a power struggle.
- Say only what is needed. Make your point in a concise manner; it is not the time to lecture.
- Be aware of when your buttons are being pushed. Teens and pre-teens like to draw you in by pushing your buttons, so you stay engaged in the conflict.
- Try to remember that their misbehavior is not to personally attack you; it’s just their attempt to get control.
- Plan ahead. Before a conflict happens, think of ways you can handle tough situations. When things are calm, discuss with your child the consequences for unacceptable behaviors.
- Know when you need to re-group. Take the time to enjoy a relaxing activity that helps you to relieve stress.

As a foster parent, it is very important for you to take care of yourself. Avoiding power struggles is one way to conserve your energy and maintain your well-being. As mentioned earlier, foster children often engage in power struggles to avoid feelings of powerlessness. One way to help a child feel less powerless is to maintain open communication. Keeping children informed of their future and having them involved in the planning of their care reduces their stress and anxiety. Providing them with opportunities to make healthy choices will enable them to understand they have a role in their own outcomes.



# SAVE THE DATE!

Foster Parent Retreats are quickly approaching!  
Go to the web addresses listed below for more information  
about the events, speakers and registration.

Wichita

August 9, 2014

Registration Dates: July 7 – 21  
[http://www.tffamilyservices.org/?page\\_id=5385](http://www.tffamilyservices.org/?page_id=5385)

Overland Park

September 13, 2014

Registration Dates: August 1 – 22  
[http://www.tffamilyservices.org/?page\\_id=5303](http://www.tffamilyservices.org/?page_id=5303)



## Care Provider of the Month Jamie and Rickey Castle

July's Foster Parents of the Month are Jamie and Rickey Castle, from Enid, Oklahoma. Jamie was a school teacher but is taking a break to give attention to fostering. Rickey is a lead maintenance tech. Rickey fixes equipment, does preventative maintenance, and other projects such as welding and paperwork. Rickey is in charge when his boss is away, yet even with his significant duties at work; Rickey finds family time to be a critical must-have. They are the foster parents to three boys. As pioneer foster parents, they immediately accepted two tweens and a toddler.

Jamie and Rickey at first just had the tweens, and upon hearing there was another little brother out there, Jamie immediately looked into taking him. The toddler age group was not one the Castles were interested in fostering, but she couldn't stand the thought of their baby brother being out there alone! The youngest moved in and the kids are an almost happy family again.

Jamie and Rickey both have been diligent in making sure their foster kids' needs are met. Jamie goes out of her way to make sure their mother gets visitation, to the point where if DHS cannot get one quickly, she'll set up a visit with mom and drive the kids across the state to get there because their mother doesn't have a car! She's the perfect example of what a Bridge resource parent should look like. She has the boys call their mother routinely and says that it makes the kids happier.

Rickey and Jamie still have their routine, structure, and normal life even as sudden parents of three. Rickey still courts Jamie and they feel that his respect and love for his

wife will show the boys how to treat a lady in their futures. They set the example of a loving family and wait on the kids to follow suit. When the Foster Care Worker was visiting last time, one of the foster kids said, "Rickey treats Mrs. Jamie nice, I've never seen that. I think I'm going to treat my wife like how Rickey treats Mrs. Jamie." This gentle guidance to healthy relationships is changing the kids each day.

Rickey takes the children fishing often and has purchased them poles and lures. They boys especially look forward to this and eagerly ask often to go. Jamie cooks routinely and the kids report, "Jamie's the best cooker I've ever eaten!"

Jamie ensures the boys have had doctor appointments, eye appointments, dental appointments, hair appointments, and is very proactive in their health. She is proactive with the workers, the school, and the boys' friendships. The first week of placement, Jamie took the boys to the carnival. The worker met them at the carnival, where the oldest said that her house was on 8 on a 1-10 scale. When asked what he would change, he said, "Nothing, it's perfect...except that my mom could come live with us here." When the worker talked to Jamie later, Jamie said, "It's sad when those things are said", because she just wants to "scoop mom up and help her too." That should be the desire and spirit of a foster parent, exactly what Mr. and Mrs. Castle possesses.

When times were tough and the adjustments were hard, the Castle family NEVER gave up on the children. While dealing with behaviors like physical aggression, name calling, and fights, disrupting placement on them was never an option mentioned. The Castles treat the children like their own, and "no one would get rid of their own child just because some behaviors," was the response received when placement was discussed. Jamie and Rickey keep the perfect balance of love and care for the boys, yet still hope that one day these kids can go home. They are fostering loving and healthy lifestyles and helping families along the way.

Submitted by  
Heather Lindsay  
Foster Care Worker, Oklahoma





# Happy Anniversary

## 1 year

David and Denise Lewis  
 Jake and Ginger Mattingley  
 Spencer and Amanda Brown  
 Phothisa and Keneta  
 Vongtheva/Darabouthirath  
 Pam Davis  
 Latonya Shuford  
 Leonard and Ann Swink  
 Jessica Magana  
 Mike and Diane Audiss

Tammy Hedge  
 Arman and Jennifer  
 Tashkesen  
 Michael and April Turner  
 Kenneth III and Charity  
 Porter  
 Ramona Bienka  
 Austen and Ashley Moser  
 Dustin and Piper Mullin  
 Jan Tabing

## 5 years

Mark and Elizabeth Crismas  
 Daniel and Jaida Mosier

## 10 years

Jesse and Barbara McCarley  
 Orlando and Sheila Garza  
 Kevin and Loretta Williams



## Recruitment Moment

When is the best time to recruit?

### Summertime!

Everyone is busy in the summertime. But think about what we are doing - ballgames, Scout trips, hitting the pool, and neighborhood get-togethers! What do all those have in common? You are around a lot of people. Think about the many opportunities you have while watching your kids play their summer games, or enjoy their time in the pool to talk to the other parents about the great rewards of Fostering. Generally the people attending these events are also parents and probably have a lot in common with you. What a better chance to try and recruit more homes for kids!

As always TFI continues to offer their \$500 recruitment bonus as a great incentive.

This allows you to earn a few extra dollars while recruiting for kids. So this summer spread the word about the need for more homes. Have them call us or visit us at [www.tfifamilyservices.org](http://www.tfifamilyservices.org) in Kansas or [www.tfifamilyconnections](http://www.tfifamilyconnections.org) in Oklahoma.

Enjoy your summer everyone!

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

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training, go to: <http://childally.org/train/>

Connect with us:



[www.tfifamilyservices.org](http://www.tfifamilyservices.org)



[www.facebook.com/tfifamilyservices](http://www.facebook.com/tfifamilyservices)



[www.twitter.com/tfifamily](http://www.twitter.com/tfifamily)



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## Foster Family Living: **HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!**

By Pam Richardson, LMSW  
Director, Central/Western Kansas Foster Care

The Fourth of July is a great day to spend time with your family and do fun activities. There are a lot of options for safe family fun, both in and out of the home on the Fourth of July. Here are a few activities that are family friendly and inexpensive:

One of the most obvious and most common Fourth of July activities is fireworks. Fireworks displays occur all over the United States on the Fourth of July. They are great fun. However, this is not always an option. The loud noises are not good for small children and people who may have anxiety of loud noises, etc.

For families who like quieter, more intimate family fun on the Fourth of July, roasting marshmallows around a campfire is ideal. Whether you are camping or in your backyard, roasting marshmallows can be a fun family activity. Furthermore, they are a great way to have a quiet talk with your family without the noise.

One thing that is often forgotten on the Fourth of July is our reason for celebrating. It is easy to forget amid the celebration. Therefore, it can be fun to spend some time with your family remembering why it is that we celebrate the Fourth of July in the United States. A good way to do this is to research 4th of July activities on the internet. There are many ideas for



organized games and at the same time learning about the holiday.

Another common family activity for the Fourth of July is throwing a cook out. Having a big family cookout, complete with games and good food is a great way to spend the Fourth of July. What is even better is that you can spend the day enjoying a cookout and then those family members who are interested can still have time to see a fireworks display.

Often, communities will have Fourth of July celebrations, such as carnivals, crafts fairs, outdoor concerts and community picnics. These events can be very fun with less “mess” to clean. One can typically find out about these events in the local paper or even at the local town hall.

Whatever you do with your family this Fourth of July, be safe. Limit your proximity to fireworks and please abide by your state and county laws in regards to fires and fireworks.

TFI Family Services wishes you a safe and fun holiday!