

## Between Families

# SELF-CARE: Do it for yourself, your family, and your kids

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If resource parents had a motto, it might be “children first,” or perhaps, “children and their families first.”

Either would be fitting. Foster and adoptive parents and kinship caregivers do what they do because they want to see children and their families heal and thrive. Their focus is on the welfare of others.

But they’ve got to be careful. Meeting the needs of the children in their care can be so all-consuming that sometimes they put themselves and their own needs last.

This, of course, is a mistake. To be healthy, children need healthy families. But when we neglect ourselves, we may suddenly find we are overwhelmed, exhausted, drained, frustrated, angry, resentful, and unable to take joy in the good work we do.

### **Self-Care Is a Skill**

One thing to keep in mind about self-care is that it is a skill — something you can practice and get better at. You will make mistakes or slip up, but if you keep at it, it will become easier and a natural part of your daily life.

### **Self-Care Basics**

Suppose you are a resource parent who is presently doing nothing to take care of herself. Where should you begin?

Here are a few basic self-care practices that should be part of every person’s life:

- Get enough sleep most nights; for some people this is six hours a night, for others eight.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet, including breakfast. Avoid eating on the run, behind your desk, or in your car.
- Get some form of regular exercise.
- Visit your doctors and follow their recommendations.
- Use alcohol in moderation, or not at all.
- Take regular breaks from stressful activities. Nonstop parenting can be a stressful activity. Find a way, somehow, every day, to have at least a few minutes to yourself.
- Take a relaxing bath, read a book, sit on the porch, have a cup of herbal tea.

- Laugh every day.
- Express yourself. If you’re feeling frustrated, sad, or angry, be honest about your emotions before they get out of control. Tell your children or spouse calmly that you are angry before you fly off the handle. Express the positive, as well, by making time to engage in something that you love, such as a craft, a game, writing, painting, or a sport.
- Nurture your relationships with your partner, family, and friends. Have a hobby or take a class, get a massage, or have a regular night out.
- Let someone else do something to take care of you.

By taking care of ourselves, we make it easier to face the challenges that come with parenting children who have endured trauma.

*\*To read this article in its entirety and learn more about self-care, including how to create a self-care plan, visit [fosteringperspectives.org](http://fosteringperspectives.org).*



## Foster family living

### ***Indoor winter activities for kids***

With the holidays behind us, the kids may start to feel cooped up inside as the winter months drag on. Here are some creative ways to engage children in fun family activities during the winter months.

#### ***Indoor picnic***

Throw a blanket on the floor and enjoy a meal or snack on the floor. You can involve stuffed animals and dolls in the fun as well. Consider a winter hot cocoa picnic by using a white blanket and cotton balls placed near the fireplace while enjoying hot cocoa and cookies.



#### ***Indoor ice skating***

All you need is some wax paper, rubber bands and carpet. Secure the wax paper over a child's feet or shoes with rubber bands. It is slippery, but lots of fun!

#### ***Coffee filter snowflake blizzard***

Using scissors, cut coffee filters into fun snowflake designs. Hang them from string all over the house for an indoor blizzard.

#### ***Newspaper snowman***

When the snow isn't falling outside, make snowmen inside from old newspapers. Roll newspapers into balls for the body of the snowman and decorate with household items such as scarves, hats and construction paper.

#### ***Bake cookies***

Kids love to help in the kitchen. You can even make it educational by teaching them how to read, measure and follow a recipe along the way.

#### ***Marshmallow tinker toys***

A bag of marshmallows and pretzel sticks are all you need to build the

perfect 3-D house or tepee. Your child simply skewers the sticks to create a unique design.

#### ***ABC bingo***

Cut out various simple photos from magazines, such as photos of apples, guitars, lizards, potatoes, etc. Glue them to a piece of cardstock and use M&M'S as the bingo markers. Then randomly select a letter of the alphabet and the child places a marker on the photo of the item that begins with that letter.

#### ***A trip down memory lane***

Spend time together looking at old family photos and videos and work on a child's lifebook!

#### ***Homemade winter cottage***

With a large cardboard box and a few craft supplies, kids can be entertained for hours. Cut out holes for the doors and windows and let the kids decorate with markers, ornaments and even fake snow for the roof.

\*Some ideas listed are adapted from [parents.com](http://parents.com) and [innerchildfun.com](http://innerchildfun.com).

# Outstanding foster care providers

## Kansas care providers of the month Matthew & Shilo Morton

Matthew and Shilo Morton have been a great foster home for TFI. They have maintained several sibling sets and work well co-parenting with biological parents. They are a great support to biological parents and often go above and beyond to show support for them.

The Mortons go out of their way to make placements feel like members of their family, providing the same opportunities they do for their own children, such as basketball, football camps, cheerleading, band instruments ... the list goes on and on. Thank you, Matthew and Shilo, for the great care you provide to children in care. You are an inspiration to many and we value you more than you could ever know!



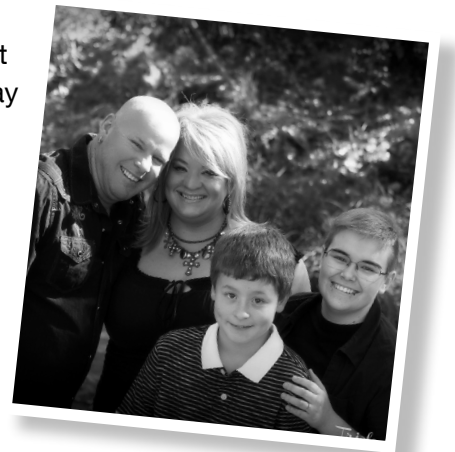
## Oklahoma care providers of the month Kenneth & Paulette Payne

Kenneth and Paulette Payne recently won a large grant through Paulette's job that will give all Oklahoma Department of Human Services foster children in Payne, Kay and Noble counties a duffle bag, hygiene products, pillow, blanket and a toy.

This initiative arose from a conversation Paulette had with a woman who aged out of the foster care system in Oklahoma, learning how it affected her life. The woman shared a memory from when she and her foster mom were driving down the road and she saw a homeless person carrying a trash bag full of clothes. The woman stated she also felt just like a homeless person that day because all of her clothes were in trash bags as well due to moving from foster home to foster home. Paulette says this story haunts her because no child should feel like they are homeless.

Paulette was motivated to make a difference, so she applied for and fought hard to win this grant so foster children would no longer have to use trash bags for their belongings. She was awarded \$5,000 in funding and continues to lobby for the remaining \$5,000 she applied for with hopes to hear more this month.

The Paynes are strong advocates for the children in their home and for any child who needs their help. They are always available to help other foster homes and lend a hand when needed. TFI is thankful for this couple and their willingness to serve children in need.





## Oklahoma news

### ***New foster care worker***

TFI Family Connections is pleased to announce Kristen Ford is now serving as the foster care worker for Grady, Caddo, Custer, Washita and Beckham Counties. Ford's supervisor says her depth of knowledge makes her a tremendous asset to TFI and the families they serve.

"Kristen has over 400 hours of training in regards to child abuse, substance abuse and mental health," explains Amy Bloodsworth, TFI foster care supervisor. "She also received the Reunification Hero Pinnacle Award in 2012 for successfully reuniting the most families, so we're excited to have such a dedicated, caring individual on our team."

In her new role with TFI, Ford is responsible for training foster parents and preparing families for foster care, recruiting families for foster care, providing support to the foster families after they are certified and continuing to support the family while children are placed in the home.

### ***Foster youth to receive additional support***

CAS Cares, Inc. awarded \$600 to TFI Family Connections in support of Project YES!. Designated for youth enrichment activities, Project YES! will assist foster parents in Comanche County

who have school aged youth with stipends for school related and extracurricular activity fees. These funds will enable TFI to provide an additional resource to our foster homes and youth to encourage foster youth participation in activities like sports, art and music class, dance, debate or summer camp to name a few. It can also assist with additional school fees such as school pictures, graduation, driver's education and field trips.

## Happy anniversary



10 years

Pamela Marshall

5 years

Clifford & Christine May

Edwin & Angela Plooster

1 year

Tyrell & Sahona Albin\*  
Nicole Burdick  
Amy Glenn  
Ronald & Ronda Hall\*  
Raymond & Traci Hamilton\*

Stephen & Charlotte Hardin  
Joshua & Dene Kaster  
Steven & Shelly Keith\*  
Daniel & Stacy Kent  
Jason & Amanda Lanier\*

Evert Ludlum & Amanda Keller  
Steven & Kenzie McBryde  
Leann Mosqueda  
Michael & Renee Schields  
David & Angela Ullrich\*

\*TFI homes in Oklahoma.





217 SE 4th St

Topeka, KS 66603

800-279-9914 | [tfifamilyservices.org](http://tfifamilyservices.org)

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FOSTER  
*hope*  
FOSTER  
*love*  
FOSTER  
*care*

