

DECEMBER 4, 2018



Registration is now open for the 2018 Families Helping Families Winter Wonderland Holiday Celebration in Cedar Rapids

If you are a foster/adoptive or relative placement family, you can follow the link below to register your family for this event. **Registration is required and must be complete by Friday December 7th 2018. If you are not registered, you will not be allowed to attend the event. [Click Here to register](#)**

Where: Hawkeye Downs – 4431, 4400
6th St SW, Cedar Rapids

When: Saturday, December 15

Time: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Struggling to Find the Perfect Gift for a foster family?

by [Carrie Craft](#)

Is there a special foster family on your gift list? Consider gifts not only for the family but for the foster parents. Your thoughtfulness is sure to be appreciated. Here are a few to help you choose the right gift for any foster family.

Gift Cards to Restaurants. A gift card for a dinner out will help the foster parents make an evening out with the family more special. Many foster children have not experienced dinners at a sit-down restaurant, but having extra children can make this outing a huge expense for the family. Consider a gift card to a fun restaurant that will be unique for the kids, or choose a family favorite. It will not only be a great help but an appreciated gift.

Movie Tickets. Movie tickets are also a great family gift idea. Many foster families may not be able to take their whole family out to the movies due to the cost. Movie tickets will be another much-appreciated gift. **[Click Here to Read More Ideas](#)**

FOSTER CARE AND THE HOLIDAYS

[Dr. John N. DeGarmo, Ed.D.](#)

The stockings are hung, by the chimney with care, in hopes that...In hopes of what? For many children who have been placed into the foster care system, they have come from homes where there was no Christmas, there was no hope. They have come from families that did not celebrate a holiday. They have come from environments where there were no presents, no tree. They have come from homes where there was not holiday joy or love.

The Holiday season is upon us. Christmas, Hanukah, New Years, Kwanzaa; these are times that can be extremely difficult for many foster children. During this time of Holiday Cheer, many foster children are faced with the realization that they will not be “home for the holidays,” so to speak, with their biological family members. When they wake up Christmas morning, and are surrounded by people who just may be strangers to them, strangers who are laughing and having fun, it can be a very difficult time for them, indeed. To be sure, it is a day that is a stark reminder to these children that they are not with their own family. It is during the holidays when families are supposed to be together, yet these children in care are not. They are not with their families, and they may not know when they will see them next.

Along with this, foster children also struggle with trying to remain loyal to their birth parents while enjoying the holiday season with their foster family. There are those moments when a child from foster care may feel guilty for experiencing joy and laughter with their foster family, they may feel that they are not only letting their birth mother or father down, they might even be betraying their birth parents and member of their biological family, causing even more grief, guilt, and anxiety within the child during this season of holiday joy. Indeed, this can be a very emotionally stressful time for all involved.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

25 WAYS TO

Nurture Hurt Children

How do you nurture a child who repels nurturing? Start with these practical ideas.

By Gregory C. Keck, Ph.D., & Regina M. Kupecky, LSW

The attachment cycle is as simple as it is profound. When it goes the way it's supposed to, most parents simply do their job of parenting—and the child thrives. Over and over again, there is a pattern of need, arousal, gratification, and trust. Like drops of water on a tender baby plant, this constant cycle eventually makes a sturdy plant with beautiful flowers. Unfortunately, children adopted at older ages, from foster or institutional care, are not always tender plants waiting to be watered. Instead, they are often prickly cacti, with needles sharp enough to keep parents away. But even a cactus needs some water, just as a hurt child needs to experience the attachment cycle—including gratification—if he is to build trust.

It is difficult for most people to understand why such children reject what all children need—love and nurturing. The answer is simple: They learned early in life to trust no one. They learned that people leave you if you love them. Consider a four-year-old child whose adoptive home is his sixth placement. Now imagine that you were an adult who had had six divorces in four years. How eager would you be to jump into marriage number seven? Even if the new spouse seemed wonderful, and had a beautiful home, would you hesitate at all? Would the new spouse need to prove his trustworthiness? Would you counsel a friend in that situation to wait before entering a new relationship? The child's rejection of nurturing is not personal. Although it feels that way, it would be directed at anyone trying to be the parent.

The challenge becomes how to nurture someone who repels nurturing, how to sneak in enough fun so that the little cactus will begin to bloom. Here are 25 ways to nurture a child who needs to learn how to accept love. Choose the ones that resonate for you.

Increasing Eye Contact

- Write an "I love you" message in shaving cream or soap on a mirror. Stand behind your child when she reads it. You may get a glance in the mirror. If not, you have still said, "I love you."
- Play peek-a-boo with your child. Don't assume that a newly adopted 10-year-old is too old to play peek-a-boo.
- Hide chocolate kisses. For each one the child finds, he must look in your eyes for five seconds and get a kiss from you before he can eat it.
- Put a sticker in your face right between your eyes. Don't comment on it. The child will look at you and laugh...eventually.
- Look at each other and name the ways you are alike...you both have noses, freckles, brown eyes. Explore each other's features.

Encouraging Touch

- Put a delightful-smelling lotion on your child and have him reciprocate.
- Talk about how you smell alike.
- Comb, brush, or braid your child's hair. Have a family "group hug" every morning before you go your separate ways.
- Squeeze together on the couch to watch TV or a movie.
- Tickle him, but stop if he asks you to.

Moving in Sync with Your Child

- Blow bubbles. Chase them around to pop them.
- Rock together. If your child rocks to get to sleep, hold him and do it for him. If he's too big to hold on your lap, buy a double rocker or swing on a porch swing together.
- Roll a ball back and forth. With an older child, toss a ball or a beanbag.
- Build something together - a block tower, a bird house, a model airplane.
- Walk to the mailbox with your child and mail a note to someone he misses - a former foster parent, a birth sibling.

Getting Warm and Cozy

- Pitch a play-tent in the living room. Let your child stay in it as long as he likes.
- Set up a card table. Put a blanket over it and play baby underneath, just you and your child.
- Put her gloves and scarf in the dryer for a few minutes to make them warm. Send her off to school with a wonderful, comfy feeling.
- Make or buy a soft, warm blanket to use while watching television, reading, or engaging in other quiet activities.
- Serve your child hot soup as an after-school snack.

Enhancing Communication

- Sit with your child and read a book you chose together, chapter by chapter, every day.
- Look in the mirror and make sad, mad, glad, or scared faces with the child in response to questions like: "How would a child feel if he lost his bicycle?" "How would a child feel if someone took his favorite toy?" "How would a child feel if he could eat a hot fudge sundae for breakfast?" "How would a child feel when he heard a ghost story?"
- Discuss where you would go if you could fly.
- Interview all of your family's helpers - doctor, therapist, social worker and see who can name all of Disney's Seven Dwarfs.