Quality Care in a Family Setting

A Practical Guide for Foster Carers

Leon Fulcher, PhD & Thom Garfat, PhD

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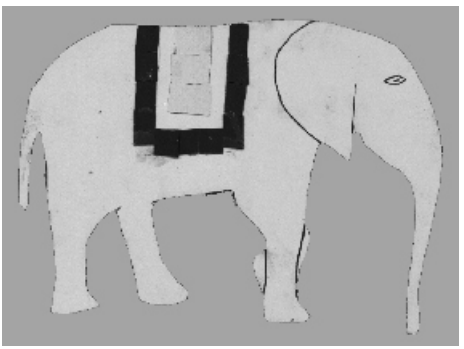
Elephant

I never could
Quite work out why
An elephant
Could never fly.

With massive ears
To flap and twitch
You'd think they'd fly
Without a hitch.

Gary



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Leon Fulcher and Thom Garfat

The CYC-Net Press

The poems are from *Rattle Your Cool*: A collection of poetry and art by children and young people who are being looked after. Published by, and used with the permission of, *Foster Care Associates,* www.thefca.co.uk

Quality Care in a Family Setting:

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Foreword

I am delighted to provide a foreword for Leon and Thom's book.

I first met Leon Fulcher early in my career [26 years ago!] My first and lasting impression was his ability to make complex concepts simple to understand. As a social work lecturer, he would illustrate his point with everyday examples making clear connections with and for the listener. This book, co-written with his long-standing friend and colleague Thom Garfat – a new friend of FCA and distinguished international child and youth care consultant – draws on their collective global experience whilst uniquely addressing — in a practical way — the policy agendas for foster care within the UK as well as elsewhere in the world.

I don't know who coined the phrase 'ordinary people doing extraordinary things' but for me it sums up who foster carers are and what they do. However, reliance on intuitive or opportunistic care and supervision of children and young people is no longer enough. The fostering task and the carer's role require a level of 'conscious competence' that makes use of but moves beyond the ordinary. This volume will assist foster carers' movement towards conscious competence. It is a practical text that will help carers reflect on their own behaviours and promote the positive use of self.

Social workers and therapists might be wondering where this fits with their professional frameworks. Much of the focus in the field of adoption and foster care in the UK is centred around the importance of attachment and often leads to disagreements about permanency. The focus on attachment has primarily emphasised specific attachment relationships and rarely extends to a focus on attachments within the wider sphere of 'belonging' of which attachment is a central component. In FCA this sense of belonging is nurtured for children, carers and staff from Day 1. Attachment and belonging are not mutually exclusive but in my view interdependent. For the child in placement, it may feel like a betrayal to attach to their foster carers but their need to belong can

be met through the broad life of the organisation, through involvement in activities, relationships with support staff, etc.

Recognising the particular significance and value of the relationship foster carers have with children and young people, for me completes the circle of continuous healing relationships which all our children, no matter what age, deserve.

This volume will aid reflective practice and become a tool for discussion between social workers and carers. Hopefully it will influence the development of conscious competence in fostering.

Estella Abraham, Executive Director
www.thefca.co.uk
Foster Care Associates, July 2008

I live in foster care

I live in foster care
Laura combs my shiny hair
My cheeks go red
When she tucks me in bed
I like going in a bubble bath
Because they make me laugh
I have Brownie friends
Gemma likes to be with me
Some of my friends two or three
Now my poem needs to end
I hope they will be my friends

Emma 8

1

A Daily Life Approach to Foster Care

Foster Carers are ideally situated to be among the most influential of healers and helpers. Think about that statement. It represents the basic orientation to this little book. Foster Carers are significant and important people in the lives of children and youth. Foster Carers are healers.

A Foster Carer's position in the daily life of a young person allows him or her to intervene proactively, responsively and often immediately to help a young person discover and learn new ways of being in the world. This immediacy of intervention creates in-the-moment learning opportunities for the young person as the young person is living their life. It is not a form of healing and helping based on reflective conversations in an isolated office, although those are often important conversations. Nor is it a form of intervention based on structured and regulated contact as might be found operating in a residential group living environment where staff working shifts create an environment quite different from Foster Caring. We recognize that residential group living environments are also powerful forms of helping for young people at different stages of their development. And it is not uncommon for young people to move from residential group living environments to intensive foster care environments. So both groups need to know more about what the other group actually

does. Thus, while intended for Foster Carers, this book may well serve to inform others about this important work.

Foster Care is based on helping young people live their life differently, as they are living it (Garfat, 2002). It is a focused, timely, practical and, above all immediately responsive form of helping which uses "applied learning and daily uses of knowledge to inform more responsive daily encounters with children or young people " (Fulcher 2004, p. 34).

Foster Care is immediate. It focuses on the moment as it is occurring. It provides opportunities for a young person to learn and practise, new thoughts, feelings and actions in the most important of arenas, daily life.

Imagine, for example, a young person who has difficulty in respectful communication and for whom the helping team has decided that respectful communication will be a part of her intervention plan. While she might take classes in 'communication' or visit a therapist to understand why she is acting in such a manner, the Foster Carer has the opportunity, in 'real time' to:

- Identify immediately when the undesirable communication is occurring, in the moment that it is occurring, so that both the young person and the Foster Carer know exactly what is being discussed.
- Help the young person reflect on her communication style 'in the immediate' – e.g., processing the feelings, thoughts and memories which are occurring as the young person is in the middle of the communication.
- Help the young person learn and practise new ways of communicating as that communication is occurring – e.g., at meals, bedtime, playing, doing chores – in short 'in daily life as it is being lived'.

Few other forms of helping have such immediate relevance for the young person.

> The words 'everyday events' suggest the routine, the non-technical and the unimportant tasks. Yet it was here, in the everyday events, that the child's development and function became impaired and problematic, and the . . . worker's skill lies exactly here, in getting the youngster's days to start going right again.
> — Brian Gannon, 2000

We have written this little volume specifically to help Foster Carers focus more directly on the daily life space where living and developmental learning are nurtured with looked after children or young people through the planned use of daily life events. It is our belief that the more Foster Carers are able to focus effectively on 'learning in the moment' the more powerful their interventions and environments will be. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things with looked after children and young people underpins any attempt to provide quality care in a family setting. We salute those who make a difference in children and young people's lives.

This volume is organized around England's *Every Child Matters* agenda (2005) for Foster Carers and Scotland's *Getting It Right For Every Child (or Young Person) in Foster and Kinship Care* agenda (2007), thereby highlighting a comparative social policy dimension to this volume and a focus on enhanced developmental outcomes for looked after children and young people. We have brought together a Commonwealth perspective on 'developmental assets' (Search Institute, 1997, 2007) which are now used in many different parts of the world and a Child and Youth Care Approach (Garfat, 1998) because *when combined, they offer powerful and helpful learning for Foster Carers,* providing opportunities for better outcomes for young people in foster care. The literature on the Circle of Courage and other writings circulated by *Reclaiming Youth International* has also been influential (see, for example, Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002) as has other resiliency and strength focused material.

The Developmental Assets

The 40 Developmental Assets were identified by the Search Institute of Minneapolis, following research on millions of children and young people, as "concrete, common sense, positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young

people". Over time, these assets have been revised and adapted for use with younger and older children as well as adolescents. As Leon Fulcher (2005) wrote elsewhere:

> The basic idea behind this *Strengths-Based Approach* is that certain external and internal influences – or what the Search Institute calls assets – have been shown empirically to dramatically shape young people's chances in life. Young people with more assets have greater chances for success. 20 external assets have been identified around four themes: *Support*; *Empowerment*; *Boundaries & Expectations*; and *Constructive Use of Time*. These *External Assets* involve family members, other adults, community involvement and safety, family, school, neighbourhood and peer group boundaries, and purposeful use of time at school, home and in the community.
>
> At the same time there are 20 internal assets or internalised characteristics that help shape daily living. These are also grouped around four distinctive themes: *Commitment to Learning*; *Positive Values*; *Social Competencies*; and *Positive Identity*. Highlighted in these *Internal Assets* are issues associated with achievement and engagement in learning activities, whether at school or at home. They also involve values such as caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility and restraint. Competencies associated with planning and decision-making, interpersonal and cultural skills, resistance skills and peaceful conflict resolution are also highlighted. Finally, themes such as personal power, self-esteem, having a sense of purpose and hope for the future are also reaffirmed as important.
>
> — Leon Fulcher, 2005

In this book, we have made no attempt to focus specifically on each of the 40 developmental assets. Further information about the Search Institute assets can be found via their website (www.search-institute.org). Here we have used this resiliency and strengths-based approach to inform daily life interventions in foster caring for looked after children and young people. Both approaches are used here to provide Foster Carers with materials from child and adolescent development to promote a practical, strengths-based approach to Foster Care. Throughout this volume an emphasis is placed on the development of a strong sense of self within every looked after child or young person. Self, we believe, is central to the helping process.

A Child and Youth Care Approach

We have been involved in working with youth and their families, and those who work with them, for a number of years. Throughout our time in the field there has evolved an approach to helping that is now recognised as a contemporary 'Child and Youth Care Approach', which focuses on the following characteristics and principles (Garfat 2004):

- *The use of daiy life events* involves using the everyday, seemingly simple moments which occur as we live with children and young people to help them find different ways of being and living in the world. The moment, as it is occurring, provides the most powerful and relevant opportunity for intervention for change.
- *Being with people where they live their lives*, means that we are involved, and intervene, in all areas of the young person's life, as it is appropriate: home, school, community, anywhere that young people interact with their world and the people in it.
- *Responsive practice* means that the intervener attends to the relevant developmental characteristics of the individual child or young person and, rather than reacting to their behaviour, responds to the young person's needs in a manner which is proactively consistent with the developmental needs and stage of the young person.
- *Intentionality,* means that everything that we do with a young person, we do with a purpose. There are no 'random interventions', rather all our interventions are planned and fit with the goals we have established with the young people and/or their families, and which we review regularly.
- *Hanging out and Hanging in*, means that we spend much of our time doing apparently simple, everyday (and extremely important) things with young people which to the outsider may seem like we are, in fact, doing nothing. It also means that we do not give up when the 'times are tough' rather we hang in and work it through, thus demonstrating our commitment and caring for the young person. Equally, when the times are good we do not automatically assume that 'all is well' for we recognise that, when the times are good, set-backs may be just around the corner.

- *Doing 'with', not 'for' or 'to'* refers to how we engage with young people helping them to learn and develop through doing things with them. We do not deny them the possibility of growing through doing everything for them (especially when they are capable of doing it themselves) and we do not stand back and do to them (e.g., order them about). Ultimately we are engaged 'with' young people in the process of their growth and development, standing beside them as a guide through stormy waters.
- *Engagement and Connection* build from the belief that if a young person is not engaged with us, and/or if we cannot connect with him or her in a significant way, our interventions cannot be effective. Relationship is the foundation of all our work. And connection is the foundation of relationship.
- *Being in Relationship* is not the same as 'having a relationship'. We all have relationships all the time but 'being in relationship' means that we are engaged with the young person at a deep and profound level which impacts both young person and helper. We recognise that we live in a relationship with young people that is created by both of us.
- *A needs-based focus* assumes that everything one does, one does for a purpose, and that purpose is to meet a need. When one helps a young person to find a different, more desirable way of meeting a need in question, then the previous way of meeting the need (usually an undesirable behaviour) is no longer necessary and it becomes easier for the young person to let go of that behaviour.
- *Present-oriented* means that in our work we are focussed on the 'here and now', on what is happening in this moment, especially between ourselves and the young person. It is based on the assumption that 'we are who we are, wherever we are' and that if a young person can change their way of being in the immediate moment we can help the young person generalise that behaviour to other situations in their life.
- *Flexibility and Individuality* refer to the fact that every young person is unique and all of our interventions must be tailored to fit the young person as we understand her or him to be. It means, then, that we are flexible in how we interact with each young person, realising that there is no one approach or

intervention which fits for every child. There is no one approach or response which is applicable in all situations.

- *Rhythmicity* refers to the joint experience of being in a synchronised moving connection with children or young people. Rhythms of coming and going, rhythmic rituals of greeting, patterns of play among children, simple repeated gestures of greeting are all examples of the rhythms we might experience with young people. Connecting in rhythm with young people helps to develop connections and joins us together in 'being with' that young person.
- *A focus on context* permeates all our work. We are conscious that everything which occurs does so in a context unique to the individual child, the helper and the specific moment of interaction. While some elements of context may be the same (e.g., agency philosophy, regulations, the physical environment) other elements of context (e.g., personal history of being cared for, previous relationships with adults, developmental stage) vary with the individual interactions between Foster Carer and young person.
- *Meaning Making* refers to the process we all go through in making sense of our experiences. An action occurs, we interpret it according to our own way of making sense of things, and then we act according to that perception. Thus two different young people may respond very differently to a simple gesture because of what it means to them. What is important is not 'what we meant to say' but how what we say (or do) is interpreted by the young person.
- *Reflection* is the process we go through when we think about our work: what we have done, what we are doing, and what we might do in the future. The effective helper is a reflective helper constantly wondering if there are better ways, or how one might do things differently, or whether what we are doing is the most appropriate given the desired outcome.
- *It's all about us* refers to the fact that, ultimately, our success or failure with young people is profoundly influenced by who we are ourselves and that it is only with a deep and active self awareness that we can assure ourselves that our actions are in the interest of the child and not simply meeting our own needs. It also refers to the fact that we are not doing this alone. The plural 'us' refers to everyone involved in helping a young person

grow and develop: Foster Carer, Birth Family, Young Person, Social Worker, Teacher, Therapist, G.P., Managers, Neighbours, Peers, Distant Relatives, etc., etc. All of us have a role to play and the more we are 'us' unified and working together, the more successful we will all be in supporting developmental outcomes for looked after children and young people.

These characteristics of a Child and Youth Care Approach are woven into the various chapters of this book, not as distinct points (although sometimes we might focus specifically on one of the characteristics) but rather as a unifying philosophy which defines how we are when we work to help young people grow developmentally.

A Team Parenting Approach

As stated at the beginning, we believe Foster Carers are well positioned to be the most influential of helpers and healers in a child's life. A large part of this is explained through Foster Carers' being ideally placed to use opportunity events in a young person's daily life, as these opportunities occur. Another large part of the reason is because Foster Carers are not alone in this work. Foster Carers are a part of a team, working together with other significant people to promote team parenting.

Each of us plays a specific role with the young people we are 'looking after'. Some of us focus on one area, some on another. Some of us deliver direct service and some of us offer indirect support to the direct carer. Some of us create the agency framework for helping and healing and some of us enact it. What is important is not so much 'what we do' but that *we do it together with a common focus on the plan of care and the goals for each individual child or young person*. Thus, as a team, we must agree on the plan, on the approach, and on how to best 'be with' the individual child or young person. This does not mean that we all have to be the same in all our interactions with the young person but it does mean that we must all be 'on the same page' in focus and approach. We need to have a common way of understanding the young person and work according to that understanding. This consistency is what makes any team parenting approach to helping

a powerful support for the young person's growth and development.

Throughout this book you will find references to teachers, social workers, birth families, doctors, nurses, etc. As you encounter them, remember 'it's all about us' and if we are not working together within a common framework of understanding, our interventions will be less effective than they might be. Thus, if you do happen to find yourself unable to connect very well with another member of the team, you will need to work with that individual so you can all come together in this endeavour of helping. Sometimes the most important work we do with young people and/or their families is in either advocating for the young person or working on our own relationships with other professionals.

> I think to get the best out of foster care in the year 2000 and beyond ... we need to work with each other in a collaborative way that acknowledges the importance of each other's role. It should recognise the importance of the concept of partnership, be creative and prepared to give new things a go. We cannot work in isolation and we need to respect each other, working to achieve positive outcomes for the children we care for.
>
> — Jill Wain, 1999

A Few Words About the Way this Volume is Organised

You will notice that this is a small book. Indeed, in the early days of writing it we were calling it 'The *Little* Blue Book for Foster Carers'. We intentionally set out to write a small book, focused and to the point because we know that Foster Carers are typically very busy people. What you have is a short book, organized into concise chapters that we hope are 'user friendly' and appropriate to those working on the front line as Foster Carers.

Each of the chapters in this book corresponds to one of the *Every Child Matters* or *Getting It Right For Every Child* agenda themes and is organized using the same format. We begin each chapter with a short **introduction,** followed by a **short story** that emphasizes that particular focus of the chapter. Next Foster Carers are offered '**a little theory'** which sets the foundation for the topic before moving to the core of the chapter**, theory into practice**,

finally ending with some **tips for practice.** Throughout each chapter you will find exercises, suggestions and ideas for activities that Foster Carers might work on alone or often with the children or young people whose lives they share.

Our goal has been to write something that is both theoretically sound and realistically practical. Our hope is that in doing so we can help you in your important work: the helping and healing of young people.

> **Children are always the only future the human race has; teach them well**.

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The gooey monster

Monsters, monsters everywhere
They can live in the sewers
And live in your house too
They leave a gooey trail in
your shower
Goo, goo everywhere.

Monsters, monsters everywhere
They live in the bathtub
They can live in the sink
They can slide under the door
They can live in the sea
They can really frighten you!

Charmaine 11

2

Safe and Secure

Trust, so essential to relationships of healing and development, can only evolve in the context of safety. Here we briefly explore the practical meaning of safety – physical, emotional, social, cultural and psychological – starting with the question: '*Is this child safe now*?' and then '*How can this person be safe and secure in the future*?' Building from Maier's arguments about 'the core of care' (1987), attention focuses on rhythms of daily living that help children and young people learn predictability and dependability, the foundations for emotional security and trust. Consistency in how we are with looked after children or young people is also important if Foster Carers are to offer them opportunities to experience a secure place and a social world that is more predictable than what they have experience before.

Quality foster care in a family setting is directly linked to the daily management and oversight of bodily comforts and personal safety needs for looked after children and young people. Because of fears for their physical safety and security, some children or young people are given ¨looked after status¨ and live temporarily in out-of-home placements while life plans are being re-shaped and implemented. Other young people live in longer term foster care. Responsive care that guarantees safety and security means engaging with the unique character of each looked after young person while attending to their personal rhythms and relational capacities. It is through engagement in daily relational exchanges

with a child or young person that personal and social development is nurtured. This is how Foster Carers facilitate learning and personal achievement, while at the same time promoting social maturation and quality of care outcomes with looked after children or young people.

A Story

Alex was ten when he came to live on an emergency basis with Martin and Emily, new carers who had recently completed training to become Foster Carers. Martin identified as the primary carer while Emily was employed in an office outside the home.

What began as a 24-hour emergency placement progressed into a longer-term arrangement for this looked after child. After 3 years, Alex remained oppositional in his daily interactions with Martin, meaning that he continued to challenge virtually all instructions or suggestions that his carer(s) offered. Nonetheless, Alex began to make achievements at school for the first time. He also began to demonstrate a sense of belonging in this foster home, giving attention to the way his bedroom was set up and beginning to participate in family life with relative ease. It transpired that Alex had learning difficulties associated with dyslexia. Ironically, Martin too, was dyslexic. Homework thus became a self-help initiative for both Alex and his carer.

The oppositional demands Alex made towards Martin led at one stage to his making a complaint about the way Martin had restrained him during a visit to the local shopping mall. Within minutes of the allegation, both Martin and Emily received immediate personal support to review the allegation, the events leading up to it and after, and an explanation about how the allegation would be managed. An independent child welfare professional working with the police investigated Alex's complaint as required for all looked after children and young people. No grounds were found to proceed with the allegation.

Alex had been angry with Martin for not agreeing to purchase a toy he found in a shop that had marked it on sale at half price. Martin explained that the primary reason for this outing had been to take Alex for his first therapy session

associated with a history of abuse. They had been 30 minutes early for the session and agreed to stop off at the shopping mall for a drink and a brief wander. But Martin had specifically emphasized as they left the car that they were not buying anything! When reminded of this as he screamed demands in the shopping mall about wanting the toy, Alex started to run away and Martin chased after him. Catching up with the boy, Martin restrained Alex with a hand on each shoulder and guided him back to the car (without the toy). He drove Alex to the therapy session and it was there, to the therapist, that Alex made his allegation.

After everything had been investigated and Alex had returned home, Martin went to Alex's room and initiated a brief conversation about what had happened. Alex acknowledged that he had been angry but didn't seem to have much awareness of how allegations like that could result in his being taken away from the foster home. Martin explained that he wouldn't knowingly do something that harmed Alex in any way.

With growing awareness about what the episode might have achieved, Alex exclaimed *"Nobody's taking me away from here! This is my home!"*

Alex remains in the home and continues to be oppositional in many of his interactions with Martin. He is perhaps a little less oppositional with Emily with whom he has had a slightly different kind of relationship. Basic life skills around personal hygiene have required ongoing attention but learning has been facilitated through a relationship with Martin and Emily where Alex has experienced a safe and secure environment, in spite (or maybe because) of his continuous testing. Alex has actually begun to experience a sense of *¨This is my home and I belong here!¨* another powerful way of saying *¨I am safe and secure here!¨*

A Little Theory

In "*The Core of Care for Children at Home and Away From Home*", Henry Maier (1987) set out developmental arguments about why *bodily comfort and the physical safety of each child or young person* are key performance indicators in the delivery of responsive foster care services, highlighting the question:

Is this child or young person safe now?

Component 1: Bodily Comfort

Bodily comfort is basic to personal care and frequently involves activities that are taken for granted. Consider the caring act of straightening out a young person's bed sheets so that she or he might sleep in greater comfort, or sitting down on the floor with a child in order to afford him, or her, a more relaxed bodily posture and more convenient eye levels. Maier claimed that as a child's bodily comfort needs are met, so does he or she feel treated with care. Being too hot or too cold, being hungry or sick; all of these offer examples of how bodily discomfort can distract a looked after child or young person from feeling cared for or wishing to engage with a new carer. Throughout life, a sense of well-being and care is experienced when one's body is secure and free of somatic stress. Physical comfort is strengthened through the involvement of another person. It is this personal involvement or investment of personal energy to attend to personal comfort and physical safety that converts physical care into ¨active caring¨. A concern for physical comfort and security extends to the way we deal with a child or young person's personal space, both in their presence as well as during their absence. It is also significant that when children or young people move from one setting to another, they often require help in order to make the unfamiliar familiar. Transitional objects – a much-loved blanket or cushion, stuffed toy, photo or trinket – may serve as a link that helps transform a strange place into something more familiar. And familiarity equates with a feeling of security.

Component 2: Differences

Individual and personal differences produce inherently different interactions. Children are quite different in temperament from birth, and these differences bring about a wide variety of interactions with, as well as from, their carers. A young person's daily interactions are more likely to vary on the basis of native temperament than because of differences in their personal histories, gender or social class. It is their temperament in interacting with her/his environment that shapes the quality of interactions. Thus, rather than establishing standardized expectations of behaviour, it is far more productive for a Foster Carer to align their responses to the unique characteristics of the child or young person living in their home, thus achieving far more effective and natural responses. Some children and young people absorb rapidly what is going on around them, as if they were ¨living radars¨. While appearing ¨inactive,¨ they are actually very energetic ¨stimulus scanners¨. Other children require continuous physical contact and bodily experience in order to feel involved. These ¨stimulus-bound¨ or ¨go-go¨ children and young people enter immediately into whatever is happening within their reach. Stimuli for these kids represent a ¨call for action¨ and bring continuously new experiences. Foster Carers have to make choices every day about a wide range of personal, domestic and life space issues. The nature of interactions experienced jointly by carer and young person are still what really matter, so finding ways of involving them as participants in decision-making processes is important. Remember: looked after children and young people have learned to be cautious about engaging with potential carers, especially as it may mean starting to do things differently from the ways with which they are familiar. Or to put it another way, if one feels safe and secure doing things in a certain way – even if it doesn't work very well – then it is often easier to stay with what we know. The fear of change can be very unsettling.

Component 3: Rhythmic Interactions

Rhythmicity – the inclination to engage in rhythmic interactions with another – is a vital feature of human development. It is a salient underlying force that brings children or young people together with caring adults. They must somehow find their joint rhythms. These elements of human behaviour require the

blending together of an individual's internal rhythms with rhythmic demands in the new environment in which they live. It is this subtle rhythmic involvement that determines the quality and, possibly, the overall direction which the interaction takes. Rhythmicity is the hallmark of real ¨togetherness¨ in later life events, such as in group singing or dance, play, team sports or even sexual activity. Rituals are a social counterpart to psychological rhythmicity, where people experience a full sense of togetherness through engaging in rituals associated with particular cultural or social practices, such as in greeting an old friend or meeting a very famous person for the first time. The reason that rhythmicity is important for Foster Carers is that looked after children and young people need ample opportunities for both experiencing rhythmicity in their own activities as well as in their interactions with caring adults. While caring for children or young people, adults momentarily become part of joint rhythm activities when they experience finding themselves fully ¨in tune¨ with that child or young person. It is during moments such as these that young people and caring adults share opportunities for moving ahead together. Think of how you might greet a child or young person as they come in from school and the ¨rituals¨ of offering and sharing juice or a cup of tea along with a favourite biscuit while chatting about what has happened during the day.

Component 4: Predictability

The capacity to predict is a measure of knowing. It is thus an essential ingredient of effective learning. To know what might happen in the immediate future lends a sense of order and power as well as a tremendous feeling of security. It may be a major breakthrough for a youngster to discover that she or he can predict the outcome of her or his actions. He or she can actually make things happen. Caring activities must therefore offer continuous work with children and young people in such a way that they truly experience and cherish the meaning of their own activities. Through a developing sense of predictability about what happens in certain circumstances, so it is that a child or young person feels safe and secure enough to keep returning to those situations with particular people, trusting that the outcomes are predictably manageable, even helpful. It is thus important for Foster Carers to mirror approval for mastering the skills needed to complete an

activity, and the personal achievements themselves. It is not simply an indicator of approval from carer to child. It is sometimes easier to use approval such as this with very young children. However, with older children, carers are sometimes less prone to mirror approval even when a young person needs it. With older children, the tendency is to get involved in regulating and evaluating their performance while it is equally important to engage with a young person's actions and mastery. Children and young people require feedback on their acquisition of competencies rather than being ¨ticked off¨ on an adult's list of approved conduct. One must never underestimate this aspect of predictability. Its effects, long-term, are very influential.

Component 5: Dependability

A sense of predictability or knowing heralds a new sense of dependence. The sense of prediction assures an individual child or young person of a sense of certainty. And a sense of certainty gives that person an assured feeling of dependence. As children or young people come to know and to predict their experiences with others, so they will grow to depend upon these persons. Such experiences frequently become significant encounters in their own right. It feels good to depend on someone else. It assures the child or young person that she or he is not alone and that he or she can depend or rely upon support. The feeling of dependence creates attachment and having attachments, and feeling dependence and depended upon feels good for both carer and young person. Dependency is natural and desirable, and a basic feature of caring for looked after children and young people. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that every child needs at least one person who is really crazy about him or her. When a looked after child or young person feels that someone really believes in him or her, then that young person starts feeling better about him or herself, and eventually about other people. When persons experience secure dependence upon one another, they can also function more independently as they feel assured of mutual attachment. Secure dependence stimulates independence and ultimately the freedom for new dependency relationship – or caring – in new and more complex relationships. Dependency is about feeling trust while predictability is about knowing and trusting what you know.

Component 6: Learning to Do

Social capabilities rest upon personal attachments. Thus far it will have been noted there has been neither reference to discipline nor training in self-management and manners. The point is that children and young people learn most readily from those who have special meaning for them. They turn to the persons they have experienced as the ones to be counted on, namely whom the children or young people perceive as being on their side. Young people are most likely to follow the persons whose ways of dealing with life issues are most akin to their own. The persons most meaningful for their power, as well as the persons closest to the children's own life situations, have the best chance for influencing that young person's behaviour. Very frequently it is the slightly older siblings and peers who may be a few steps ahead in their development who come to be role models and idols. Sometimes these figures can have almost equal importance to designated carers. It is essential for Foster Carers to keep in mind that the most potent behavioural training goes hand in hand with a sense of reciprocal closeness and attachment. When children or young people and caring adults are in a close relationship, effective social training really starts and the more complicated socialization efforts can actually begin. Fostering self-management and enriching a child or young person's behavioural repertoires are intimately tied up with the formation of a quality relationship with carers.

Component 7: Care for the Caregivers

Care for the caregiver – the final ingredient in Maier's Core of Care formulation – is fundamental to the previous six. Carers, especially Foster Carers, need to know and feel that they and the wellbeing of their family are given special attention by the 'powers that be'. Foster Carers need to know that there is always back-up support available to them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, whether by telephone or in person with a supervising social worker or service manager. Foster Carers need to be nurtured themselves and experience sustained caring support if they are to role model this quality of caring to a looked after child or young person, attending to their bodily comfort, different moods and tastes, their personal rhythms, helping them learn to know and feel trust, develop social skills, and master educational or vocational competencies. Thus, all of the foregoing applies equally to the

caregiver as to the care receiver. Caregivers are enriched or limited as agents of care according to the care they receive. And care can only be received to the extent that carers are personally prepared and willing to engage in these interactions. Care for the caregivers involves:

- self care around personal health and sense of wellbeing;
- stress management, fitness and appearance;
- relational care from a significant other or partner;
- family care through accepting contributions from other members to family life routines;
- agency care from the organization that engages Foster Carers and provides services to looked after children and young people; and
- financial recognition for the full-time professional work required of Foster Carers.

Theory Into Practice

How can this child or young person be safe and secure in the future?

Maier argued that while each looked after child or young person may achieve developmental milestones – physical, cognitive, emotional and social development – every child or young person is still different, each in their own special ways. Whether adapting to an abusive home environment or living rough on the streets, children and young people go to enormous lengths to get their physical and bodily comfort needs met and each develops her or his own personal rhythms around hunger, toileting, personal space, dress, cold and warmth, sleep, illness susceptibility, moods and habits. Professor Maier argued that each child or young person needs caring that responds to his or her own unique personal rhythms in order to promote physical and cultural safety, cognitive and emotional development, social maturation and learning, and enhanced personal well-being. Foster Carers build relationships and promote personal development through engaging pro-actively into five rhythms of caring with particular children or young people – offering nurturing care, supervision and teaching, while supporting therapeutic interventions.

Family and Extended Family Rhythms

Pro-active engagement with kinship networks and ***rhythms associated with family and extended family members*** need to be identified and initiated for each looked after child or young person (Burford & Casson, 1989). Family rhythms are closely associated with the circumstances in each child or young person's home environment that contributed to achievement of *looked after* status. Family rhythms contribute to the socialization and behavioural training each child received before coming to the attention of child welfare professionals. For all these reasons, team parenting gives priority to the active participation of family and extended family members in the care and educational planning for each child or young person. Active consideration needs also to be given to the kinship networks that help give children and young people their social and cultural identities while guaranteeing personal and cultural safety. Despite what health, education and welfare

professionals may wish or think, looked after children and young people still resume contact and maintain involvement with family and extended family members after leaving care (Fanshel et al, 1990).

Rhythms of Daily Living

Rhythms of daily living are also important, even though we sometimes overlook them. In every home, each day follows particular rhythms around mealtimes, sleep, work or play times – and all of these require sensitive daily and weekly management (Fulcher, 2005). Rhythms of daily living involve weekday routines and activities, and paying attention to what happens on weeknights and weekends. Weekly and monthly rhythms of care can be identified through an examination of school and recreational activities, shopping and laundry practices, television viewing, etc. Monthly and seasonal rhythms of care are also associated with school, work and holiday periods. Religious practices may highlight daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal rituals, as seen for example where Islamic young people over the age of 12 years engage in prayers five times a day, and also fast during the Holy Month of Ramadan during daylight hours each year. These rhythms are different from Christian practices around Easter and Christmas, or participation in Jewish weekly or seasonal religious practices and rituals.

Education, Recreation and Learning Rhythms

Each child's ***education, recreation and learning rhythms*** also need to be identified, including formal rhythms involving classroom activities and achievements but also informal rhythms associated with each child's capacity for experiential learning, to engage in recreational pursuits that provide large muscle and cardio-vascular exercise, eye-hand coordination and time-structuring through leisure activities (Small & Fulcher, 2005). Educational, recreational and learning rhythms have frequently been disrupted for many looked after children and young people and these rhythms are frequently under-developed. Paradoxically, these are the very *rhythms that connect* children and young people to a peer group, providing opportunities for behavioural, social and cultural learning so important to long-term future development and achievement (Maier; 1987). Educational,

recreational and learning rhythms are clearly influenced through the purposeful use of activities at home, at school and in local neighbourhoods (VanderVen, 1985).

Community and Peer Group Activities

Foster Carers need also to engage with a fourth set of influential rhythms associated with community and peer group activities. Responsive practices require attention to the needs of each child or young person for purposeful engagement in social experiences that help connect them to normative peer group activities (Fahlberg, 1991). Looked after children and young people, wherever they live, have frequently had their community and peer group rhythms disrupted as placement decisions are made without careful consideration of unintended consequences in decision-making. As children or young people are moved from one setting to another, or change schools, it follows that their friends are also removed and important relationships severed. Unless new relationships are formed through the management and supervision of purposeful activities with alternative peers, then children and young people in care have little choice but to return to old friends and activities where they feel safe and secure. Rhythms associated with peer group and communities of interest are important to each of us, wherever we live and responsive foster care practices build from pro-active engagement in community and peer group rhythms that benefit children and young people as well as families.

Cultural and Spiritual Rhythms of Caring

Finally, one must not ignore the cultural and spiritual rhythms of caring that operate informally as well as formally in the delivery of responsive child and youth care. Cultural rituals of encounter and exchange are commonly overlooked in the delivery of social work and child and youth services (Fulcher, 1998). Images, sounds and smells spring instantly to mind that reflect cultural and spiritual rhythms of caring, whether operating in a family or foster home, as well as in residential schools, group homes or institutions (Ramsden, 1997; Te Whaiti *et al*, 1997). Do people sit on tables, at tables or on chairs in your home? Do people eat with their right hand without utensils? Do they use chopsticks? Do people use a knife and fork in each hand, or manoeuvre their way through

dinner with a fork or spoon, except when cutting meat? Is pork served? Do young people appear in public without arms and legs covered? Are rituals of fasting and prayer evident? One quickly sees why minimal cross-cultural competencies are required if Foster Carers are to ensure that children or young people are made to feeling culturally safe (Leigh, 1998).

> "Not a gift of a cow, nor a gift of land, nor yet a gift of food, is so important as the gift of safety, which is declared to be the great gift among all gifts in this world."

Tips for Helping a Child or Young Person Feel Safe and Secure in the Future

- Make yourself available to a child or young person as she or he moves into their room, at the same time being ever mindful about not moving in too quickly. Help with practical matters, an extra blanket or pillow, a hot water bottle, juice, biscuits, fruit extension leads, light bulbs, coat hangers, waste basket, tissues – all are legitimate options that assist settling in through enhancing bodily comfort.
- Give special attention to each child or young person's Memory Box, a designated container or place where personal mementos, treasures and trivia can be saved. Without a Memory Box, it is easy for these special photos, trinkets and objects of importance to become lost, especially when looked after children or young people have histories of moving from place to place.
- Help to keep the young person's Memory Box safe and encourage them to keep adding memories to it.
- Help make a young person's bedroom a welcoming, safe and comfortable place, complete with a desk and chair for homework.
- Share household chores with the child or young person instead of leaving a list of chores to complete on their own. Children and young people learn important lessons through doing chores that help them achieve order and organization in their

life, a foundation for feeling safe and secure in the future.

- Work out what are the young person's favourite foods and invite them to help you make that food or prepare other dishes for you or the family so that cooking and being together around the kitchen is ok.
- Go with the child or young person to open days and parents' night at school, showing that you take an active interest in their learning and educational achievements. Whereas school may have been a negative experience before, do everything you can to help turn that around and demonstrate how learning can be fun even though it involves work.
- Get into the practice, early on, of spending time together with the child or young person, or as a family, reviewing events of the day and talking about what is coming up tomorrow and during the rest of the week.
- Identify and explore with the young person and then actively nurture rhythms of daily life in your own home around family and individual mealtimes, chores and responsibilities, TV, homework, recreation activities, leisure pursuits and spiritual life as appropriate. Think RHYTHMS not RULES!
- Through early involvement with the child or young person living in your foster home, where might you locate them on Professor Maier's continuum between ¨*living radars*¨ to ¨*go-go*¨ kids? How have you adjusted your own natural approach so as to engage more responsively with the developmental rhythms of the looked after child or young person in your home?
- When are the times in your home when everyone comes together and thereby has an opportunity for ¨family talk¨? In addition to those times when everyone is together, driving somewhere to go shopping or participate in an event, when does ¨family talk¨ take place in your home and what topics are discussed?
- How does the looked after child or young person living in your home meet other family or extended family members? Family friends? School mates? What about the friends of your own children or young people who are expected to share their home with a looked after child or young person?
- Develop family rituals and rhythms with intent, taking into consideration what fits best for this child.

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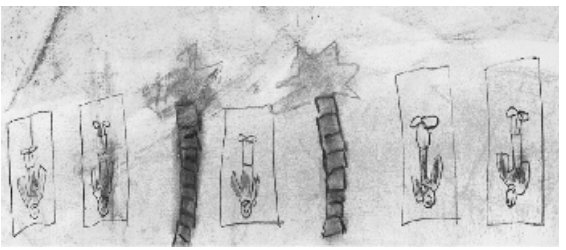
Let me be one of you

In a family who
Have a car, have fun, go away,
Eat popcorn in front of the telly.
Laugh and cry without cruelty or abuse
How can I be one of you?
How can you absorb one of me?
What do we need to make it happen?
Please approach with caution
It's not very easy to do.
Let me in then ring-fence your family
So I don't make you become my family.
Allow gradual access, but don't be fooled
For I will not trust you
Until I see no weakness to exploit,
To make you reject me.
Hold me at a creative distance,
Do not respond to my chaos inducing anxiety.
Do not expect reciprocity.
Take a long view with patience and perspicacity.
Use humour and bribing.
Adapt to ignore the bad and promote the good.
Try every trick in the book and then some more.
Take the best from my family
And with luck, blood sweat and tears,
You will be rewarded with small acts of charity.



3

Respected

Respect is about being with others in a manner which conveys that we value and appreciate another for who, and how they present themselves as people. It involves, therefore, an appreciation of individual differences and an awareness of how others are impacted by how we are with them. The person who respects, and is respected by others demonstrates empathy and sensitivity in their interactions with others. They demonstrate an awareness of appropriate boundaries, limits and responsibilities. Respectful people value and include others in decisions which affect them. Respectful people value other people's strengths and abilities, acknowledging their challenges and struggles while at the same time recognising their rights and developmental limitations.

Respect is accorded to those who live respectful lives – people who conduct themselves with integrity and treat others with high regard. It is important we remember that respect is always earned. By acting respectfully one receives the benefits of such action in return. Respect is the cornerstone of meaningful relatedness in our world. While definitions and expressions may change according to culture and context, the fundamental principle remains the same: how you are with others has a direct bearing on how they are with you, fostering self-respect.

Ultimately, respect involves not only how we interact with others but also with the world in which we live: the planet and all

which exists in it. Thus, for example, in a young person's relationship with an animal, or even a plant, he or she may develop a respectful orientation towards life. For even the care of a plant requires understanding of its needs, limits, potentials and the impact the environment has on it.

As Foster Carers, we are constantly asking ourselves questions such as, *'How can this situation be used to help this young person develop a respectful orientation towards living in the world with others?'*

A Story

Mandy was six when she came to live with Martha and John who had been Foster Carers for a number of years. They worked hard to be the best they could be and they had a wealth of experience helping children who had often found to be 'difficult' by other helpers. There was one other child, Mary, in their house when Mandy arrived. Martha and John were 'minding' Mary because their friends, also Foster Carers, had been called away overnight on a sudden emergency. Although there would not normally have been another child in the house when they were receiving Mandy, they had thought this would be okay – it was, after all, an emergency and they were the only foster home available.

They understood why other helpers had called Mandy 'difficult' within moments of her arrival. It was a Saturday morning and Mary was playing in the sitting room as Martha and John greeted Mandy at the door when she arrived with her Social Worker. Mandy took one look at the two of them with – they thought later – dead eyes, wrenched her hand from the Social Worker and stormed into the house and into the sitting room.

No 'Hello'. No time for a welcome. Mandy just pushed passed these Foster Carers as if they were a distasteful obstruction. Martha threw a quick look at John and the Social Worker and swiftly followed in to the sitting room. Not a moment had passed but already there was chaos. Mandy marched right up to Mary and started snatching the toys Mary was playing with, yelling as she did so "I want that. That's mine!" As soon as she had one, she would drop it on the floor and move to take another.

Martha walked over and placed herself between Mandy and the next toy she was about to grab. At the same time John looked at Mary and gently said, "Mary. Let's pick up your toys and go to the other room. Mandy will be staying here with Martha."

"You can't take my toys," Mandy screamed at John. "You're not my daddy. I hate you." And with that she stomped her feet twice and sat down on the floor glaring at everyone who looked her way.

Mary gathered up her toys and was quickly out the door with John. In scarcely a minute Mandy, Martha and Mrs. Creston, the Social Worker, were alone in the room.

"Mandy," Mrs. Creston began. "I think you need to . . ."

Martha cut her off gently before she got to say whatever it was she was going to say. "Mrs. Creston," she said softly, "Mandy is going to be living with us so I would like to handle this with her. I don't mean to sound rude but we are going to have to get along, she and us, so we may as well start now."

Turning to Mandy, Martha was as gentle as she could be. "Are you mad, Mandy?" she asked.

"I hate you," Mandy replied.

"Mandy," Martha continued, sitting down on the floor but not too close to her as Mrs. Creston sat down in a chair, "Here we do not take other people's things without asking. You can ask any time you want, but they must say it is okay. It does not matter what it is. If it belongs so someone else, you must ask permission."

"No. The toys are mine," Mandy shouted.

"Mandy," Martha continued, "We can sit here and wait, or we can have juice and talk. But you can not play with the toys until we talk. What do you want to do?"

Well, the story goes on but the point is made. When young people come to live with us, we meet them and continue with them, with caring, clarity and opportunities for them to make responsible choices. In this way we begin to model and teach respect and responsibility.

We see in this story a young girl who obviously struggles with boundaries and the respect of others. She presents as a girl without appropriate limits and without consideration for others. Yes, she might be afraid, or angry, or whatever else comes to mind but the reality is, she responded to the situation without respect or responsibility. John and Martha's response was to respond to her in a manner which modelled appropriate ways of being. And, in doing so, the teaching begins with Mandy from the first 'golden moment' of meeting.

A Little Theory

The British government considers respect to be so basic and fundamental that it has even started a Respect Action Plan, the goal of which is "to build a society in which we can respect one another". Whether one agrees with the Plan or not, the theme of the campaign, reproduced below from the official website, strikes a chord with all of us who work with young people:

We believe, as Martin Henley (1997) has said that "respect and responsibility are synergistic. They feed and grow off each other.

The more respect and responsibility we give young people, the more we will get in return" and therefore in this chapter we consider the two together.

The respected British expert on child care, Christopher Beedell, in talking about hurting children said that "One must respect them, both as people and for the injustices and suffering they have undergone. But this respect must lead us, as we get to know each child, to provide the firmness and demands, the strength and persistence, which we hope they will later adopt for themselves (1968, p. 8)". Nearly 40 years later, Brendtro and Shabazian (2004, p.117), reiterated this when claiming that "respectful adults simultaneously nurture the needs of youth and maintain high

expectations for positive behaviour" reinforcing the understanding that respect is learned in relationships which are caring and convey clear expectations, while offering choices about how to behave in a given situation.

In a study about the perspectives of looked after young people on the adults who cared for them, Laursen (2002) identified several characteristics of caregivers which the young people found to be helpful. Amongst those characteristics was the fact that the young people felt respected by their caregivers noting how respect was demonstrated through the ways in which the adults created opportunities for them to make choices. In the words of one young person, 'They guided me, but the decisions I was making were mainly my own". As a result of being guided and given choices the young people felt respected and, in return, respected their caregivers (Laursen, 2002). Through making such guided choices the young people developed a sense of power and control over their own lives.

However, treating young people with respect and giving them choices does not mean that we abdicate our responsibilities to them. Indeed, respect for young people implies just the opposite as the quote below makes clear.

> Treating these students with respect does not mean letting them do as they please. We are not so naive as to think we will "save" them all. But we know they learn from our daily treatment of them. We know the importance of our respectful communications with them. We also know they cannot learn self-respect and respect for others unless they experience it themselves.
> — Goulet, 1997

Thus we see that the literature emphasizes the importance of using appropriate authority and discipline in our work with young people. Beedell (1968, p.8) said that such authority is "not used for our sakes but the child's, to protect, support and encourage him,"with a view towards helping the young person develop internal controls and a respectful attitude towards others. And this can not come about through the use of punitive measures. Rather,

this comes about through clear statements of expectations that are reinforced through appropriate consequences designed to encourage or nurture learning of appropriate ways of being. In doing so, we are respectful of the child's culture, history and experiences. We convey an acceptance of the young person for who they are, even though we may want them to learn new ways (Laursen, 2002). In this way we respect the whole person.

> Responsibility-based models of discipline differ most from obedience-based models in how consequences are selected and implemented. Obedience models utilize punishments as deterrents, creating fear that something bad will happen when rules are broken, and providing rewards for doing what is expected. Unfortunately, too often, punishments and rewards are ineffective when no one is present to administer them. Such systems unwittingly teach students that rule breaking is okay as long as they do not get caught doing it. Rewards "hook" children into thinking there should be something in it for them for being good. The long-term result is more poor choices with more misbehavior underground, as students improve their skills in avoiding detection
>
> — Curwin & Mendler, 1997

Theory Into Practice

As we see from the foregoing, respect and responsibility are intricately linked and the learning of respect comes about through encounters with responsible caregivers, in environments which promote the development of respect and responsibility. In our homes we might concern ourselves with some of the following:

Respect for Self

Respect for others, it is often said, begins with a respect for self and we can help to promote this through how we are with the children and young people with whom we live and work. We teach respect for self, of course, by first being seen to be respectful of our own selves. We are faithful to our values and beliefs, for example, without imposing them on others. We maintain our own clear boundaries in all situations; we treat ourselves with respect

through the ways in which we look after ourselves in our everyday life. And we model caring about ourselves.

We also help young people to learn to respect themselves by treating them respectfully and encouraging them to define who they are in their relationships with others. We encourage them to be a part of decisions which affect their lives and treat seriously any input they have about what will happen in their lives. They are, therefore, participants in determining their own care and learning focus, engaged in decisions about activities, and in defining, for example, appropriate rules.

We challenge children and young people when we find they are treating themselves with disrespect through, for example, how they talk about themselves or how they present themselves in the world. When we see them struggling to stand up for themselves we support them to be appropriately assertive. We teach them problem-solving skills so that they might find solutions to their problems which also help them respect themselves.

We even encourage young people to treat themselves with respect through – simple as it might seem – issues of personal hygiene, how they keep their rooms tidy, how they treat their belongings, and the hours they sleep. We help them learn that, if you treat yourself with respect, you will like yourself more.

Respect for Others

Demonstrating respect for others in our lives, quite simply, makes for better lives with less pain and confusion. We help young people learn respect by, first and foremost, paying attention to how we are in our relationships with them. We establish clear boundaries and expect these to be respected. We challenge people who do not respect those boundaries. Young people see us do this in our relationships with them, and with others. They learn through observations about how they should be with others.

In our home we establish clear expectations about how the young people will be with each other and we enforce these expectations, intervening when one young person shows a lack of respect for others, such as using their belongings without permission. We create 'cultures of respect and responsibility' in which the young people are responsible for participating in helping each other and in contributing to the total environment. Everyone has their responsibility to our life together (e.g., doing

chores, helping others).

We also support other involved professionals in their efforts to develop responsibility with the young people. We support the school, for example, when they have appropriate expectations with regard to homework or school behaviour. We support the legal system when they require the young person's presence in court or at a Children's Hearing. We support social workers who carry out important child protection and youth supervision duties. In essence, we expect young people to be respectful with all the people they meet and we hold them accountable to such expectations.

We also help young people to be respectful in their relationships with members of their families for, in many ways, respecting your family is a form of respecting yourself. We help them to learn about their family history and cultural traditions and respect them for who and what they are. We also help the young people to be responsible for maintaining connections with their family, even if the other members of their family do not do the same.

Respect for the Environment

Modern thought emphasizes that we are all a part of the greater whole and are responsible for the present and the future. We also know that we are impacted, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually by the environment in which we live. Thus, in our work with young people we also want to help them to learn to respect the environment in which they live. And that begins 'at home', from assuming some responsibility for the quality of our environment. Young people can participate in numerous ways, through how they maintain their rooms, participating in in-house chores and recycling efforts, or helping maintain a good looking exterior to the home.

We also can encourage young people to become involved in environmental projects, cleaning up the neighborhood, participating in a community development project or even in keeping the neighborhood safe for all of us.

How We Are With Young People

As has been emphasized throughout this chapter, the way we are with the young people, the way we treat them respectfully is probably the greatest influence we can have. Ballantyne, Macdonald & Raymond (1998) have summarised the positive qualities of service providers that convey and promote respect. These qualities include:

- warmth and calmness
- dependability
- a genuine interest in the adolescent and family
- positive emotional involvement
- a non-blaming, non-adversarial approach where the trust of the adolescent is gained without aligning with the youth and blaming the parents
- an ability to listen and allow people the opportunity to vent
- a sense of humour

When Children Act with Disrespect

We recognize that the young people and children who come to live with us are not 'blank slates', neutrally waiting to learn about respect and responsibility. Sometimes they have learned to live and acts in ways that are irresponsible or show disrespect for others. We thought it appropriate, therefore, to close this section with some advice from Richard Curwin and Allen Mendler (2000, p.17) who, in considering how we might help young people move from a position of responding from rage to a position of responding with responsibility, said that:

"Responsibility is taught within a structure that can be created with the following six strategies:

1. Establish sensible limits.
2. Confront misbehaviour with dignity.
3. Provide healthy, viable choices.
4. Help students learn from the consequences of their choices.
5. Elicit a commitment to change.
6. Develop a sense of remorse."

Some Everyday Tips for Supporting Respect and Responsibility

- Be clear about your expectations: Children can only respond to expectations that are clear and by clear we mean explicit. If you expect children to put their toys away when they are finished playing, then say so.
- In everything you do, be respectful: Model the attitude and behaviours you want to see develop in the young person. For example, if you expect the child to put away her toys when finished with them, make sure you put away your own.
- Expect respect: Without being negatively authoritarian, insist that you are treated with respect. If disrespect is demonstrated, stop whatever you are doing and focus on the need for respect.
- Notice when the young person is respectful and let her know you appreciate it.
- Talk about the importance of respect and responsibility: While we hope that children learn through observation, finding the right times to share with them what you believe is always helpful.
- As a caring family, take on the responsibility for helping someone else in the neighbourhood: e.g. a housebound or disabled neighbour and find an appropriate role for the young person in this. In helping others, children learn respect for self and others
- Let them care for family pets if you have them: In caring for pets, children learn about respect. As silly as it may seem, animals demand respect. Yes, even a goldfish places demands on us.
- Disagree in front of the young person: Children, like all of us, learn through observation. When they see the Foster Carers disagree and successfully resolve disagreements, then they learn problem-solving skills.
- Support the teacher: Go to school with the young person and discuss with the teacher what expectations the school has of them. Be clear about what you agree with and how you will support the teacher. Do the same with other involved professionals.

- Have 'cultural evenings' in which you explore respectfully, how others are different and the same: Watch movies of different people and cultures and then talk about those differences.
- Hang posters about respect and responsibility: Children are influenced by what they see and read so take advantage of that fact. Keep age appropriate books and other media around which emphasize respectful living.
- Recycle: Recycling is a clear and concrete example of respecting the environment and being responsible for the future.
- Help the young person join clubs, groups and teams so that they learn the importance of respect in working and participating with others. Think about organisations for young people which focus on both respect for self and for others. Pay close attention to the underlying values of any group or team which a young person may join.
- Help a young person, appropriately, learn about her biological family and her own culture. Help the young person develop the 'story of me' in which they collect photographs, stories, memories, and characteristics of cultural identify which help to explain who they are. Discuss their history, family and culture with them.

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I fight a battle

I fight a battle every day
To control my feelings that I've shut away.

I am wound up and angry – stressed,
And that's why I scream and shout.

Just to be heard is what I crave,
And that's why I rant and rave.
Help! Help! Let me out,
I need to know what it's all about.

Even with my friends around,
I still need to be at home feeling safe and sound.

People think I'm a waste of space;
They only see my outer face.
The struggle that goes on inside,
I feel like I'm on a roller coaster ride.

My ups and downs I can't control,

Will I always be in this same,
DIM AND DARK HOLE?

4

Nurtured

Nurturing is a basic component of responsive care-giving since it is through nurturing that learning and growth are stimulated. The term ¨nurtured¨ implies an act or actions in the past tense, commonly associated with feeding and nourishing. As used here, to be nurtured involves actions or processes that promote child or adolescent development, including specific training or educational activities. Nurturing is thus located at the core of foster caring, helping to explain how new ways of being in the world are nurtured, encouraged and supported for specific children. Nurture also includes all of the environmental factors collectively, to which a child is subjected, from conception onwards that shape personal development. Nurture is thus different from a child's basic nature or heredity. To be nurtured means accepting relational caring, and also the nurturing or encouragement of personal, social, cultural and educational capabilities – an active process that develops over time. It is possible to nurture through both positive and negative experiences. It is thus helpful to remember that many looked after children and young people have had mixed experiences of nurturing, and that the absence of nurturing is neglect (Blum, 2000).

Quality care in a family setting requires thinking about how to use a young person's daily life experiences as opportunities for nurturing learning along with the development of personal competencies and social skills (Garfat, 2002a). Such a perspective

requires thinking about working in the same general direction with looked after children and young people as a child's school teacher. Team parenting and shared practice involve finding a language which everyone can share, while maintaining a child-centred focus. The development of life skills through competency-based learning requires that observable behaviour is monitored and assessed, and that initial action plans are developed around what might work best with a particular looked after young person. The focus is on each child or young person's *personal learning style* and builds and expands on their natural strengths and abilities.

Learning style is more comprehensive than the rate at which a child learns. And it is not the same as a child's overall temperament. Learning style refers to what each child or young person brings to particular learning tasks, such as Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. Alternatively one might measure developmental competencies and assets as **Untested**, **Assessing** and **Achieving**. Competence is nurtured through a particular balance of developmental strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which can be observed, audited, and supplemented through specific learning strategies. A young person with dyslexia can indeed learn to read, (so long as the right approach is used and reading skills are nurtured in a systematic fashion)! Using a Team Parenting approach, each child or young person is viewed as a ¨whole person¨, a unique being who receives nurture, associates nurturing experiences, and expresses him/herself through five developmental processes — ***perception***, ***cognitive functioning***, ***affect***, ***language***, and ***motor functioning***.

A Story

> Stephen was eight when he came to the Assessment Centre for an emergency assessment because no one knew what to do with this very multiply-disabled boy who had been kept locked in a room at his birth family home. He presented as someone barely able to walk. His head rolled to the side and he was prone to shrieking and waving his hands in front of him, almost as though he was reaching for something.
>
> Information provided at the time of placement indicated that Stephen had been assessed as being severely

intellectually handicapped and there was every likelihood that he would spend the rest of his life in long term institutional care.

During a Team Parenting meeting at the Assessment Centre, David – the Special Ed teacher – explained that he had spent time with Stephen. During the course of his interactions with Stephen, this Special Ed teacher began to question whether further specialised testing of this little boy's hearing and eyesight should be initiated. It transpired that Stephen suffered from a rare condition that distorted both his audio and visual perceptions. With specialized corrective lenses and hearing aids, Stephen's head moved upright, his arms no longer flailed in front of him, and he followed David like a puppy wherever he went. It was as though a sudden bonding in this relationship had occurred.

Instead of being an intellectually handicapped child, Stephen instead suffered from significant developmental delay. He presented as a school-aged child who had received very little nurturing or basic socialisation through the milestones of early child development. He had no prior education or social contact which meant that he had always eaten with his hands, often from a plate or bowl positioned on the floor. When able to see properly, starting to hear sounds in the world around him and engage more normally with the people sharing his world, Stephen had no idea what to do or what was expected of him.

Stephen ended up going to an approved long-term foster home that ultimately led to adoption. Having Stephen in their home as a foster kid presented many challenges for his new family, but also many opportunities. When nurtured, Stephen blossomed into a delightful young man.

A Little Theory

Let's think for a moment or two about each of those five developmental modes or processes mentioned earlier. It is helpful to remember that strength-based assessment is based on four assumptions:

1. Every child, regardless of his or her personal and family situation, has strengths that are unique to the individual.

2. Children are influenced and motivated by the way significant people in their lives respond to them.

3. Rather than viewing a child who does not demonstrate a strength as deficient, we should assume that the child has not had the opportunities that are essential to learning, developing, and mastering the skill.

4. When treatment and service planning are based on strengths rather than deficits and pathologies, children and families are more likely to become involved in the therapeutic process and to use their strengths and resources (Rudolph & Epstein, 2000).

In particular, let's think about how nurturing care can respond most helpfully to the needs of looked after children and young people . When getting to know a new looked after child or young person, carers often begin with their own intuitive assessments and hunches that quite often develop into personal care plans through participation in team parenting discussions. Care planning and the nurturing of personal and social skills are enhanced through reference to each of the following:

Perception: What's Happening?

Think for a moment about how the brain interprets stimuli picked up through the senses, and these stimuli are integrated with previous sensory experiences and each child's particular neurological patterns. To illustrate, consider what is involved in tuning a television to a particular channel. The closer one tunes in to the right frequency, the clearer the picture and the sound. Perception skills work in a similar fashion and are critical for any child's learning. Perception skills also vary greatly from child to child. In their interactions with others, looked after children and young people frequently have trouble reading and responding to social cues, especially when interacting with adults. They may also experience difficulties interpreting basic information or sensory data in the social world around them. Both visual and auditory perception requires attention by Foster Carers. Competencies involving visual perception influence the extent to which a child can 'tune in' to learning situations. Some children are especially oriented towards visual experience and learn most effectively through this channel. However, a young person seriously lacking in these skills may consistently lose his or her place when reading, be unable to find things when they are right in front of them, or

become disoriented in familiar surroundings. If a child cannot judge distances and spatial relationships with confidence, then she or he may exaggerate her/his footsteps when moving up or down stairs, move awkwardly across open ground, or find difficulty with team sports. Many of the symptoms associated with 'dyslexia' are related to visual-perceptual distortions. While some children are 'all eyes' when it comes to making sense of their environment, others are 'all ears', learning more easily through the auditory channel. A young person with weak auditory perception is likely to say 'Huh?' as a first response to questions or instructions, although he or she may have had little difficulty hearing what was said. As with children who overcome challenges with visual perception, children with limited audio perception competencies associated with audio perception may encounter, indeed create, a great deal of frustration in their interactions with others. Such children may become withdrawn or stubbornly hard of hearing when they are unsure of themselves or when frightened.

Cognitive Functioning: Meaning Making

It is tempting to dwell on mental development and cognitive functioning as the most important determinant of individual learning style. Cognitive ability does play an important part in nurturing physical and social development. In practice, however, it is difficult to work out the precise nature of a child's social competencies associated with understanding and making meaning of relationship cues or responses (for more information on Meaning Making and Foster Care, see Garfat 2002b). Here an arbitrary distinction is made between language, on the one hand, and specific, cognitive skills on the other. The ability to think clearly, to move beyond concrete events to abstract ideas offers one example, often faced when inviting a young person to explain what they learned at school on a given day. Other examples can be noted when a child is required to form complex ideas and to assign objects or concepts that explain why they may have behaved in a particular manner towards another person. Both examples require the mastery of cognitive skills essential to their learning new social competencies, as needed if a young person is to develop better anger management strategies. As with the development of language skills, the precise manner in which a child's brain develops and carries out these operations is not fully understood.

On the evidence available (Piaget 1963; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), it seems that cognitive skills are partly constitutional or genetically shaped and partly associated with the variety and intensity of sensory experience in early childhood. This is why early traumatic experiences associated with abuse or loss have such profound influence on child and adolescent development. Daily opportunities to engage with responsive Foster Carers, to touch, smell, or otherwise experience concrete objects such as pets and people serve to aid cognitive development, sometimes in quite dramatic ways, as noted in the story about Stephen.

Affect: Noticing Self

Social competence relating to affect – or emotional functioning – can be said to involve a broad range of skills, each of which influences a child's or young person's overall manner of functioning. The development of social competencies associated with emotional functioning includes nurturing the skills required to manage emotional turmoil, personal thoughts, and feelings. These social competencies also influence the ways that looked after children or young people interact with others. Learning is clearly hampered when a child is handicapped by anxiety, rage, or a distorted self-image. Learning is also impaired when a young person is unable to give or receive affection. In more subtle ways, learning is hampered in a child who struggles with sadness, joy, or excitement or who constantly falters in social situations because she or he misreads the emotional responses of others and the effect that she or he has on others. A child lacking in emotional competencies may not heed real danger when they find themselves in such situations or may be completely paralysed by anxiety. Such children find difficulties in thinking ahead, in knowing when the teacher or Foster Carer(s) are angry, or in understanding why other children in the playground avoid playing with them. Without sustained nurturing, such children or young people may be unable to take risks or learn from their mistakes. Thus, nurturing a child's awareness of their emotional world is a critical task of foster caring, so critically important to their immediate and longer term wellbeing.

Language: Communication Skills

Most children learn to use language from a very early age in life. Word games and the nuances of meaning are frequently a continual delight to them. For some children, however, language can be slow or problematic. For these children, words and the use of words are less a tool of social interaction than a perplexing barrier to social relations. Emotionally closed-up young people who also have distinct language difficulties may refuse to speak or speak using single words or simple sentences. The sentences these children do use may seem confusing. In dealing with these children, their carers need to be aware of that child's difficulty with language and what this may mean for that child. A child may easily distort the meaning of words in communications with others because of such difficulty. In order to be certain that a meaningful exchange is taking place, carers need to determine whether the child cannot understand what is expected of them, or whether she or he understands but is unable to express him or herself in response. If the child cannot understand what she/he hears, she or he can develop enhanced competencies by allowing him or her more time to respond, by simplifying the sentence, or by using pictures or gestures to aid meaning. If the young person has trouble with expression, she or he can be nurtured by carers asking simple questions that elicit more precise responses. For example, if the question ¨What would you like to do this afternoon?¨ elicits no response then something like "Would you like to go shopping this afternoon?" or ¨What about going to the park and kick a ball around?¨ may be more productive.

Motor Skills: Let's Do It!

Accurate assessment of a child's motor skills is of critical importance for Foster Carers as well as teachers. Many children function best when they are actively involved physically in learning tasks. Motor skills involve the development of action and coordination of one's limbs, as well as the development of strength, posture control, balance and perceptual skills. There are two categories of motor skills: gross motor skills that include lifting one's head, rolling over, sitting up, balancing, crawling, and walking; and fine motor skills that include the ability to manipulate small objects, transfer objects from hand to hand, and various hand-eye coordination tasks. Movement and activity are

distinctive features of a child's learning style in most situations. For the young person who presents with reasonably competent motor skills, carers need to nurture these and provide positive means for such skills to be exercised, while allowing for the release of excess energy. A child with weak motor skills may be able to read or watch television, but find difficulties writing legibly. Such children can be nurtured to avoid struggles with the physical problem of shaping words on paper through the use of digital recorders or even through dialogue. It is important to distinguish between under-developed motor skills and emotional blocks to expression. A carer might arrange personal practice sessions where specific skills can be nurtured before exposing a child such as this to competitive play situations where they may experience failure and humiliation. With motor skills training, such as football or dance practice as part of recreational activities, a young person will increase proficiency as well as develop skills that enhance interactions with a peer group. Motor skills training also helps improve body awareness, self-confidence, and even specific skills, such as using a computer keyboard or text messaging with a mobile telephone.

Theory Into Practice

Perception: What's Happening?

Elements of visual perception that may require nurturing in carer relationships include:

- Laterality: Social competencies are affected by a child's ability to see him or herself as the central figure in a space, distinguish right side from left side, top from bottom, and front from back. Competence in this area is necessary for such tasks as moving through crowded spaces (a busy train, a shopping centre, rugged terrain) or distinguishing right and left body parts (getting dressed, personal hygiene).
- Directional tendency: A child's social competencies are influenced by his/her ability to orient his/her body towards a space outside him/herself. Competence in this area is necessary for such tasks as map reading, following directions to school or the shops, or helping with the laundry.
- Figure-ground relations: Social competence is limited by a young person's ability to perceive objects in the foreground while at the same time blocking out background distractions. Competence in this area is necessary for such tasks as focusing attention on one word on a page while reading, or finding a cooking utensil in a drawer while helping prepare a meal.
- Discrimination: Social competencies in this area involve the ability to pick fine visual detail in distinguishing one form or object from another. Competencies in this area are necessary for learning tasks such as discriminating between the letters *f* and *t* and recognizing a smile or frown in social relations.
- Closure: A child's social competencies in this area involve his/her ability to fill in the missing parts of an object when only some parts are shown. Competencies in this area are necessary for such tasks as spelling in written form, reading road signs from the bus, or playing video games.
- Position in space: Social competence in this area involves a child's ability to discriminate between objects that have the same general form, but vary in their spatial position. Competencies in this area are necessary for such tasks as seeing that the letters *b*

and *d* are different while reading, drawing pictures or geometric patterns on sheets of paper, or finding a room in a high-rise office block for an interview.

Elements of auditory perception that may require nurturing in carer relationships include:

- Foreground-background: Social competencies in this area require a child's ability to focus on foreground sounds and block out background sounds. Competencies in this area are essential for such tasks as hearing the teacher give assignments in a noisy classroom or paying attention to the instructions given by an adult at the dining table.
- Discrimination: Social competencies are restricted for a child if she/he is unable to discriminate between different sounds or auditory stimuli. Competencies in this area are necessary in order to hear the difference between *sat* and *sad* during a spelling test, or the difference between *no* and *now*, when an adult is giving instructions.
- Sequence: A child's social competencies in this area involve his/her ability to interpret what she/he hears in correct order of presentation. Such competencies are necessary for such tasks as hearing the difference between *bets* and *best*, or hearing which is done first when making breakfast: *put the egg into a pan of boiling water*, or *put the egg into a pan of water and bring it to the boil*.
- Closure: Social competencies are affected by a young person's ability to fill in missing parts of a whole word or meaningful sequence of sounds. Competencies are important in this area for such tasks as learning new words, discerning accents or speaking with someone over the telephone.

Cognitive Functioning: Meaning Making

Essential cognitive operations associated with meaning making include:

- Abstraction: Nurturing social competence in this area develops a child's capacity to discern between numerous concrete events, places, characteristics and relationships. Competence in

this area is necessary in order for a child to find his or her way home if living in a row of terraced houses, a tenement block or suburban neighbourhood. This requires dealing with the idea of home as different from the other houses that look the same as the one in which the child lives.

- Categorization: Nurturing a child's social competencies in this area involves his or her ability to group experiences and objects into classes, based on similarity of type or function. Competencies in this area is necessary for a child to understand basic geometry, handle tools, or simply helping to separate the laundry as part of the weekly chores of family life.
- Generalization: Social competence will be restricted in this area if a child lacks the ability to make connections between specific events and particular consequences. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary in order for a child to use the Highway Code while riding their bicycle across town, as compared with simply knowing how to ride a bicycle. Understanding the rules associated with advanced arithmetic, or figuring out that hitting the baby will always make mother angry are other cognitive skills in this area.
- Time sense: Social competence in this area involves the ability to be oriented to time and changes measured in time. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for planning ahead or for matching energy available to the duration of a given task.
- Number concepts: In this area, a child's social competencies are influenced by his or her ability to count and use simple numbers to represent quantity. Such competencies are required in relation to number concepts if a child is to engage actively in the vast range of social encounters in a technological age.
- Arithmetic reasoning: Social competencies in this area involves the ability to manage such concepts as equality, inequality, computation, and distribution in daily life. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for such tasks as shopping, making change, and estimating costs.

Affect: Noticing Self

Social competencies in this area involve a range of skills associated with the ways in which a child or young person manages relations with other people, sometimes referred to a 'presentation of self'. Nurturing these skills are important in the following areas:

- Self-Image: Social competencies in this area involve nurturing the child's capacity to maintain accurate and positive thoughts and feelings about him or herself. Competencies in this area are necessary for meaningful social interactions and for learning to tolerate one's own mistakes or learning to be more assertive in social relationships.
- Impulse Control: A child's social competencies in this area involve his or her ability to monitor and control their own personal thoughts and actions. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary in order for a child to sustain attention in a given task or to learn that she or he must 'wait their turn'.
- Social Perception: Social competencies in this area involve a child's being able to 'read' the emotional communications of others and to 'hear' what is expected of them in a given social setting. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for learning to make friends, for becoming part of a group or for avoiding expulsion from classrooms or the library.
- Social Judgment: In this area, a child's social competencies are influenced by his or her ability to weigh up options, probabilities, and potential consequences of his or her actions in different social situations. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for such situations as knowing when to be assertive and when to walk away from a fight.
- Delayed Reward: Social competencies will be restricted for a child in this area if she or he is unable to postpone gratification for future gain. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for such tasks as saving one's pocket money to buy an expensive toy or helping a young person with their budgeting for groceries between one pay packet and another.
- Foresight: Social competencies in this area involve the ability to consider future events in the midst of current activities. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for planning

ahead and for maintaining conscious self-control of behaviour.

- Motivation: A child's social competencies in this area involve his or her ability to take pleasure in and derive satisfaction from semi-autonomous achievement. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for learning to read for pleasure, to pursue hobbies, ride a bicycle, or engage in any other type of self-learning activity.
- Adaptability: Social competencies in this area involve a child's ability to remain calm, oriented, and persevering in the face of change. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for mastering the anxiety involved with transitions from one school to another, and for transitions such as moving to another town, moving from primary to secondary school, starting work, and so forth.
- Body Image: Social competencies for a child in this area involve an internal awareness of feelings in his or her body and body parts, as well as a conscious awareness of his or her body feelings in space and time. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary in order to help a young person prepare for their first date, to modify impulses to behave dangerously, or to maintain involvement with selected peers.

Language: Communication Skills

- Simple Vowel and Consonant Sounds: Social competencies in this area involve an ability to discriminate among language sounds and to produce particular sounds correctly. Nurturing such competencies are necessary for pronouncing words correctly or for learning a foreign language.
- Vocabulary: In this area, social competencies involve a child's ability to understand the meaning of words, including the comprehension of different meanings in different contexts. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for the correct interpretation of written and spoken communication and for fluency of speech.
- Grammar: A child requires a degree of social competency in this area in order to understand both surface and deeper meanings in the way sentences are structured. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for determining when a collection of words are a sentence, when sentences have meaning, when

sentences with a different word order can mean the same thing, and how the arrangement of words in a sentence indicates their relationship to each other.

- Auditory and Visual Reception: Social competencies in this area involve a child's ability to derive meaning from verbally presented or visually presented bits of information. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for grasping the complex differences involved in the question, *'Did you hit Jimmy or did he hit you?'* following a fight in the bedroom. Such competencies are also necessary in order to understand the action in a comic strip or to read non-verbal expressions on the face of an adult.
- Auditory and Visual Association: In this area, social competencies involve a child's ability to understand the relationships between words or concepts when presented orally and visually. Nurturing these competencies are necessary for such tasks as filling the salt cellar and sugar bowl with a white, granular substance, selecting categories of picture on a video screen, or for anticipating danger when seeing a young child run into the street.
- Verbal and Manual Expression: Social competencies in this area involve the ability to express simple and complex meanings in both verbal and non-verbal means. Nurturing such competencies are necessary for a child to tell a friend or adult about a school outing, or when a child needs to explain which hand tool he or she needs if they have forgotten its name. In short, competencies in this area are necessary for complete communication in almost all social situations.

Motor Skills: Let's Do It!

The general area of motor functioning involves the integration of large and small muscle activity. Nurturing of motor skills is likely to include the following elements of performance:

- Gross Motor Skills: Social competencies in this area involve the ability to use and co-ordinate the large muscles of the body, including legs, arms, and back. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for such activities as running, jumping, or climbing.
- Fine Motor Skills: In this area, social competencies involve the

ability to use and co-ordinate the small muscles of the body, including fingers and wrist, and so on. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for such activities as drawing, writing, or cutting with scissors.

- Eye-Hand Coordination: A child's social competence in this area involves his or her ability to control both eye and hand at the same time to perform a task. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary if a young person is to engage in gross motor activities such as catching or kicking a ball. Such competencies with fine motor activities are essential when drawing a picture or seeking to operate a self-powered wheelchair.
- Balance: Social competencies in this area involve the ability to co-ordinate large and small muscles so as to maintain balance equilibrium. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for such activities as riding a bicycle or hopping on one foot.
- Posture: In this area, social competencies involve a child's ability to hold his or her body erect. Nurturing competencies in this area are necessary for sustained activities such as sitting, standing, walking, or bicycle riding.

> "If you nurture your mind, body, and spirit, your time will expand. You will gain a new perspective that will allow you to accomplish much more."
> — Brian Koslow

Tips for Helping a Child or Young Person Feel Nurtured Today and in the Future

- To what extent is the looked after child or young person in your home an auditory person? Chatty, seemingly able to take in what she or he hears, even when connected to an IPod?
- How much of an auditory person are you? What adjustments might need to be made to your natural style so as to connect with this child or young person's personal learning style?
- To what extent does the looked after child or young person in your home operate through pictures, actively pursuing visual stimuli via TV, DVDs or computer screens?
- How much of a visual person are you? What adjustments might

you need to make to connect with this young person's learning style?

- How does the child or young person living in your home think about and describe the events in his or her day, or what is planned for tomorrow and the rest of the week? Daily practice with this nurtures a child's or young person's capacity to think (cognitive functioning) about and then share their experiences in particular activities with others at different times and places.
- To what extent is the personal learning style of the looked after child or young person living in your home influenced by his or her capacity to think systematically, or step back and take stock of situations before taking action? Nurturing a young person's learning style builds on natural strengths. Remember? *Learning styles follow their own personal rhythms. Connect with those rhythms and you nurture connections with the youngster!*
- How does the looked after child or young person living in your home manage his or her emotions and make these known to those living in their life space?
- How might you have to adjust your own natural learning style to nurture connections with emotional rhythms that operate with this young person?
- To what extent are your looked after young person's birth family involved with the emotional issues with which he or she lives?
- How might this young person respond to help them nurture improved relations with birth family members?
- To what extent is the looked after child or young person living in your home able to initiate or participate in conversations and participate in decision-making processes around daily life events? How might you nurture such opportunities for purposeful conversations that extend language and interpersonal competencies?
- What large muscle exercise does the looked after child or young person living in your home take on a regular, weekly basis?
- To what extent are dietary choices and physical exercise part of an overall ¨think health¨ living environment for the young person living in your home?
- How might a physical exercise regime become an activity that you and the young person living in your home might share on a weekly basis?

- How does the young person living in your home view their own motor skills – what they can and can't do – and how might continuing development of these motor skills be nurtured further?
- To what extent might the young person living in your home demonstrate perceptual or cognitive challenges associated with a personal or family history of alcohol or drug use?
- How might you best nurture connections with this young person's particular learning style and rhythms? How will you raise anxieties or questions about this with Team Parenting members for support?
- Henry Maier highlighted *the ABC's of quality caring*: ***A**ffect* (Feelings), ***B**ehaviour* (Action) and ***C**ognition* (Thinking). Both carers and looked after children and young people develop their own learning style or intuitive rhythms of interacting. Some act first, think about it later and live with the emotional responses later (BCA). Others think first, review their feelings and then act, perhaps cautiously (CAB). Still others are overwhelmed with feelings that influence their actions, where even thinking about it is too hurtful so they live in denial (ABC). What is your natural style? What about that of the young person living in your home? What adjustments might be required in order to nurture connections between the two of you?

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Walking the dog

It's winter again, the cold and the dark,
And I'm over here with the dog in the park.
He's covered in mud but he doesn't care,
I'd rather be sitting at home in my chair.

He's running around, chasing his ball,
Barking and jumping and giving his all.
He doesn't run off, he's really quite good.
Oh, it's raining again and my coat's got no hood.

The wind's getting up – it's turning quite chilly,
To stay here much longer would really be silly.
But the dog doesn't notice, he's having fun
And I've got to stay here he must have his run.

Now I'm throwing his ball and he's fetching it back,
The ground is so muddy, it's wearing a track.
Well, we've been here an hour; it's time we went home,
Then I'll clean off his fur with the dog brush and comb.
We'll be back tomorrow about the same time,
Whatever the weather come rain or shine.

5

Contributing

Contributing is about undertaking positive, caring actions which benefit others and about doing one's part to help things turn out well. Thus, the contributing young person cares about others and their well-being. She or he is affected by the feelings and experiences of others. This requires an ability to understand and know about others, their feelings, their culture and the things that they value or believe.

Making a positive contribution is not just about doing things for others. It also includes considering how *all* of one's actions might affect other people. There are times when making a positive contribution might involve not doing something that one is tempted to do. For example, when a young person is angry and may want to strike out at someone verbally or even physically, he or she can sometimes make a positive contribution by choosing to calm her or himself, not strike out and engage in positive problem-solving, thus contributing to the well-being of both self and other. When young people contribute to others they demonstrate generosity, or giving of self for the benefit of others. Generosity has been shown to be a fundamental characteristic of healthy individuals (Brendtro & Du Toit, 2005).

As Foster Carers, we constantly ask ourselves *¨What can I do to help this young person care about others and want to make a contribution to their well-being?¨*

A Story

Jimmie and Willie are young aboriginal boys who have lived all their lives in the land of their birth. One afternoon, while staying in their community I was around when they came back from a 'hunting trip', proudly carrying a caribou they had killed. They were anxious to carve it up and set about immediately, even though dark was descending and both were tired from their day's work.

"What are you going to do with all that meat?" I asked, naively, given that I did not know their culture and these were, after all was said and done, two young people in care (looked after, troubled, problematic).

"We're going to give it to the elders," Jimmy replied. "That's why we gotta do it now."

"So why not wait until tomorrow?" I asked.

"Because it is tradition," Willie replied. "We have to give it out as soon as we come back to the village. Otherwise people will think we don't care."

"Tell me about that. I don't understand," I asked them.

Willie replied as he reached for his carving knife. "When you have made a kill and you come back to the village you must show that you care about the elders by getting the meat to them immediately. If you don't do that, then people think you don't care about them, that your own interests are more important. And when people think that you are selfish, then they do not think you are worthy of being a hunter. A hunter is supposed to help the community. That's what they do."

"But you aren't really hunters," I said, realising as soon as I said it that perhaps it was not a smart thing to say.

"We know that," Jimmy replied. "But that's not the point. We believe in sharing and so that is what we do. When you give to others, you make the community a better place."

"Now, where did you learn that?"

"Everyone knows that," Willie replied. "It is just the way it is."

This generosity towards others (in this case, elders) is so ingrained in their culture and upbringing that they could not remember learning it. Once learned, generosity becomes a way of life.

A Little Theory

Contributing and making a contribution is essentially about attitude and the perspectives we bring to how we see, experience, and live our life. Do we, for example, see ourselves as having any responsibilities towards others? Do we believe it is our role to help others, to contribute to the world being a better place because of being in it?

Perspective Taking

When we think about contributing in this way, it leads us to think about how young people develop their ability to see another person's point of view, to 'take their perspective' into account in what we say and do. Robert Selman (1980) suggested that young people go through a series of stages as they develop this ability to take perspective. Selman summarised the following five stages:

- **Stage 0 – Egocentric Undifferentiated** (birth - 6 years). The child in the early years of life cannot, of course, see or take another's perspective. As they develop through this stage, however, the child comes to realise that self and other may have different thoughts and feelings but often confuses them.
- **Stage 1 - Differentiated or Subjective Perspective Taking** (age 5-9). The other person is now seen as separate and different from the self but the child still assumes that the other sees him as he sees himself. Around age 4-9 they realize other people may not understand because they don't have enough information. This helps to explain why this age group often insists on explaining why they want you to do something, or how they want you to do it.
- **Stage 2 – Self-Reflective Thinking or Reciprocal Perspective-Taking** (age 7-12). The child can now take the perspective of another and understands that the other may not see her as she sees herself. They can see the other person's 'point of view'.

- **Stage 3 – Third Person or Mutual Perspective Taking** (age 10-15). The child now understands that a third person (bystander) observing the "self-other" interaction, will view the interaction from "his/her" own point of view. In other words, they are able to recognise a third person perspective.
- **Stage 4 – In Depth and Societal Role-Taking** (age 14-adult). The child can now take a much broader perspective on self-other interactions. They become able to appreciate perspectives from a 'societal' or 'cultural' point of view and see how society contributes to action.

These various stages are interesting from a developmental perspective when we think about what we might expect of children and young people at various ages. But, equally important, the stages help us understand that *development is a process.* And at times of stress we often show characteristics of earlier stages. Just think of the times when you have been asking someone to do something and you take forever to explain what you want them to do, or how you want them to do it.

Perspective taking is important in our work with young people. For example, if we want to help young people resolve conflicts peacefully we may need to help them 'see things from a different point of view'. Or if we want to encourage them to engage in service to others, we may want to help them see things from a more global perspective. Perspective, after all, influences how we act and respond to other people and situations. In our work, we want to help young people adopt the perspective of a 'contributor' so that they might develop characteristics such as kindness and generosity towards others.

> You make a living by what you get,
> but you make a life by what you give.
> — Winston Churchill

Kindness

In looking at stress, psychologist Hans Selye (1978) has suggested that the most effective curative for stress is "reciprocal altruism," which is an act of giving to other with no expectation of immediate reward but a belief that the act will be returned in kind

at a later date. It is, in essence, an act of kindness. Nicholas Long (1997) has argued that the most powerful therapeutic intervention we have when working with others is simple kindness and to act in a kind manner requires appreciating the perspective of other, as well as developing empathy for others, which is essentially an 'attitude' we adopt. Without opportunities to give and receive kindness, young people remain self-centered and fail to develop empathy (Brendtro, 2004).

Generosity

In our work with young people we want to help them develop caring for others. Helping others is one way of demonstrating caring. And as we now see, deciding to help others results from the attitudes we hold. As Quigley (2007) said, helping others gives the helper a sense of worth and teaches them a sense of connection and interdependence with other people in their family and wider circles.

Generosity has been identified as one of the basic needs of human beings (Brokenleg, 1999). It involves sharing, giving to others and community and making one's contribution to the well being of others. As Brendtro and Du Toit (2005, p. 49-50) said "As they fulfil obligations to others, they discover that they are valued and esteemed. Giving to others develops higher levels of moral development and provides youth a sense of purpose. . . . Through helping others, young persons discover they have the power to influence their world in a positive manner."

> An apology to one we have offended can be a form of generosity, because it puts one in a position of humility. Even more powerful is the generosity of forgiveness extended to those who have hurt us. The less they deserve it, the greater the gift. Such generosity heals hurts and hatred.
>
> — Brokenleg, 1999

Theory into Practice: Promoting Contributing

If contributing is an important strength for young people to develop while they live with us, then we need to help them see things from the perspectives of others so that they might come to 'care about' others in their life and in their world.

Positive values develop in a climate of mutual concern where persons treat others with a spirit of generosity. Being treated as a person of value and being able to show concern for others gives life purpose, and meaning (Brendtro, 2004). The following are some of the ways in which we think Foster Carers might promote this attitude.

Conflict resolution: It is a simple fact of life that we all have conflict in our lives; sometimes minor; sometimes major. In our life with young people we can allow, at appropriate times, our own conflicts (as parents, for example) to show so that young people might observe how we resolve our conflicts. If, in resolving our conflicts, we take the time to inquire into the perspective of the other before reaching resolution, we model for young people how taking the perspective of another helps us to understand and appreciate their position.

When we, ourselves, are in conflict with a young person – as does sometimes happen – then we do the same; spend focussed time coming to understand their perspective. And if in that conflict they accidentally do something which we find hurtful we demonstrate our own generosity by being explicit in our forgiveness. In this way, they come to see that generosity of spirit and self is something that we value and live. As Brendtro (2004) has emphasized, *young people who experience kindness and generosity, return it.*

Finally, when two young people are in conflict with one another, as we take the time to process their resolution, we can help them take turns exploring the perspective of each other. Or, when a young person is in conflict with another person, like a teacher, we can take the time to explore perspectives with them.

> According to the basic principles of conflict resolution, the only satisfactory solution to a conflict is the one that meets the needs of all the parties involved.

So, what does it take to successfully resolve conflicts? Contemporary wisdom suggests that in order to become effective resolvers of conflict a person needs:

- An awareness of others.
- An awareness of the distinctions between self and others.
- Developmentally appropriate listening skills.
- An awareness of one's own feelings and thoughts, and the ability to express them.
- The ability to respond to the feelings and thoughts of others.

In the foregoing list we see the types of things Foster Carers can focus on with young people to help them develop conflict resolution competencies.

Promote Generosity

At times, in many of our cultures, giving does not seem to come naturally. However, in other cultures it is a fundamental value that is taught from the earliest ages. In a world in which ownership and possessions are accorded central importance, it is helpful to nurture and promote, in young people, a gentle sense of giving to others. Sharing, giving, helping someone else are acts which, in and of themselves, give back to us. Such acts contribute to a valued sense of personal worth. In our homes we can encourage everyone to help each other, with their problems of course, but also in the everyday activities of daily living. The child who helps someone else do a chore (like helping the Foster Carer with gardening) or the child who shares something she values can be appreciated by us, carefully, for the act. We say 'carefully' because we do not want our approval to become the reason for their giving.

We can organise activities in our homes where the young person and ourselves, as a family group, offer support to those who are somehow less fortunate than ourselves. Gathering food for a charity food drive, properly handled, can be an opportunity for young people to develop an appreciation for the life

circumstances of others. Doing a bit of gardening for someone who is handicapped can help young people to appreciate their own strengths. Sharing carrots from our own garden can promote an appreciation of the value of small gestures.

Talk It Up

Celebrate contributing! Notice when young people are kind or generous in their relations with others. Have discussions in your home where you plan as a group how you will, individually and as a family, contribute to the world in which you all live. When you have a chance to watch a film, choose one which demonstrates giving. Talk about how giving is perceived in other cultures. Make generosity a daily value of your home. Look for magnetic messages that can go on the refrigerator door.

In thinking about contributing we want to emphasize how important it is for Foster Carers to nurture and model what they wish to see with their looked after young person develop. We cannot direct people to contribute, or to be helpful or generous. We can, however, help them learn the value of these through helping them to experience it themselves. In foster care work we seek always to be kind, forgiving, accepting, generous and concerned for how others see the world or their immediate experience. In this way we encourage the valuing of these activities. We are wise, perhaps, to remember the words of Joy Morrow (n.d.) "equally important are the common, day-to-day chances to practise empathy in the family; to serve a sibling who has the flu, make a get well card for Grandma, or help Dad carry in the groceries. By helping our children to notice when others could use their help or support, we open their eyes and hearts".

Some Tips that Promote Contributing

- Model generosity – people learn what they experience and see. As young people observe, and experience your generosity they will learn to value it. Notice generosity in others and comment on it. Share intentionally.
- Discuss the teachings of Buddha – well, okay, maybe not Buddha – but other important religious figures who have emphasized the importance of giving, kindness and contributing to the

wellbeing of others.

- Tell young people stories of how you have experienced generosity in your life. We all have had such experiences and it is nice to reflect back on it – as you tell the story, the young person will experience your appreciation.
- Pets can be a wonderful way to develop so many characteristics. We can 'wonder' about how a pet sees our actions. We can give to a pet through feeding and grooming. We can give to the home by helping the pet to stay healthy.
- Give compliments freely. It costs so little and offers so much in return. You can have young people practise complimenting someone else on one fine thing they did today.
- Show respect for all people in all aspects of your life. Let the young people see that you respect everyone, even when you disagree.
- Find ways for young people to help others in everyday life. 'Let me get that for you', 'Can I do that for you?' These are simple yet powerful reminders of how we can be contributing to the betterment of others, and be kind, on a daily basis.
- Join a club together with a young person in your home so that together you can discuss how your participation makes a difference.
- Attend a community activity in a cultural group different than your own so that young people learn to appreciate different ways of being in the world.
- Give a young person 20 Pounds, Euros or Dollars and invite them to donate it to a charity that is 'doing good work'.
- Role-play conflict resolution.
- Help young people notice themselves through asking about what they are thinking, or how they are feeling in different situations.
- Watch other people together and speculate on what that other person is thinking or feeling.

> Don't spend your precious time asking:
> "Why isn't the world a better place?"
> It will only be time wasted.
> The question to ask is:
> "How can I make it better?"
> To that there is an answer
> — Leo Buscaglia

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> Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth
> — Muhammad Ali

Despair

Who am I?
Where do I belong?
I've been in this hostel
For far too long.

I have no family,
No feeling,
No life.
All I do is struggle and strife.

I need a stable home.
Someone to care,
Before I turn bad
Due to my own despair!

Natalie

6

Included

Introduction

Throughout the developed world, research shows that children and young people with *looked after* status in out-of-home care are distinguishable more than ever before by increasingly specialised needs (Fulcher, 1997) and by their multi-cultural identities. The world has seen an influx of immigrant and refugee children and young people with family connections to former Asian and African colonies, along with dramatic increases in the number of migrant workers from the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The children of these migrations have been caught up in their parents' old world dramas and new world realities.

This influx of children and young people across borders has dramatically altered both the need for out-of-home care as well as the demand for culturally responsive services in local communities if these children and young people are to feel included and their particular needs are to be effectively and economically addressed. Those responsible for providing emergency services in major Western cities are faced with a cultural melange of significant proportions, and a complexity of bio-psycho-social needs previously unknown or unrecognised.

Not infrequently, it is the visual characteristic of race that is mistakenly used to distinguish between people. A box on the intake form is ticked without much thought given to the meaning

of generalisations such as "Asian", "European", "Aboriginal", "Hispanic", "Black", "Islander" or "Afro-Caribbean", other than to acknowledge visibly distinguishing characteristics based on racial type. Statistics which document the racial type of children or ethnicity – without reference to their culture – serve to reinforce cultural racism through labelling that confers institutional disadvantage around some children or young people more than others. If each looked after child or young person is to feel included, and also *be* included in the daily life of those around them at home, in the neighbourhood, at school and around the community, then we need to connect with them for who they are and what makes them special, not focusing on a racial type.

Without reference to a cultural identity and personal systems of meaning, generalisations based on racial type are of little practical assistance and do little to support inclusion. In their encounters with social workers, Foster Carers and others, many inner city and minority group youths engage with others based on "the strength of childhood socialisation, interactions with their peers, often reactive to hostility and misunderstanding from the majority" (Ballard, 1979: pp152-3).

> ... inclusion is about much more than location — it is more than simply "being" in a setting — it is about making sure that young children and their families are offered opportunity fully to participate in events and developments.
> — Clough & Nutbrown, 2005

A Story

At age 18, Iain has spent half of his life as a *looked after* young person. He and his brothers – one older and one younger – moved to London with their Scottish parents. But things didn't work out for this young family and the three boys ended up being taken into care, first into a residential home as a family group, and then after three years, into the same foster home. Eight years later, Iain looks back at his time in the foster home with very positive feelings. He felt included in a family again, enjoyed being able to do family

things, and was fond of grandparents with whom he felt a close attachment. Iain's foster home was the most important influence in his life, and he knows that, now studying at university. They helped him catch up on maths and English, and encouraged him to achieve educationally.

A downside, however, is that Iain has virtually lost his cultural identity as a Scot. His accent, football team allegiance and peer group all locate him as an Englishman from the Greater London region. He knows where his parents still live, and he visits occasionally. He knows that he has several relatives in Scotland. But virtually all those connections were severed. Iain's personal identity and sense of inclusion was impacted while living in a good foster home as a *looked after* young person.

Iain was at a loss for words when asked about this, and at first couldn't speak about it. After asking for time to think about it, Iain spoke of not feeling included in a former part of his life and feeling disconnected from his cultural identity. While it is one thing to claim identity as a British passport holder, Iain acknowledges that a struggle remains for him to bridge gaps between his Scottish ancestry and his socialization as an Englishman.

A Little Theory

> I have the right to have my culture included as a strength, and also services which honor and respect my cultural beliefs.
> — Heckenlaible-Gotto, 2005

Children or young people referred for care and protection, or for supervision of challenging behaviour, are not always easy to understand and sometimes difficult to engage. Rituals of encounter between Foster Carer(s) and children or young people from diverse cultural backgrounds can be even more challenging, but also rewarding. Rituals of encounter between people are always grounded in cultural protocols (Leigh, 1998). The place that a child learns to call "home" and "my people" has a particular history and a political and economic background (Khan, 1982).

Each encounter with a child and her/his family requires that a "cultural lens" be included in one's child and youth care practice toolbox.

Culture is not "a fossilised relic but is constantly evolving to provide concepts for understanding the current situation" as children accommodate and adapt to each new home environment experience (Ely & Denney, 1987: p. 12). People "interact with their own cultural group as well as with members of the larger society" (Leigh 1998: p. 9). Like transitional objects, rituals of encounter enhance the quality of service outcomes for those facing significant life-changing events (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Maier, 1981, 1992. See the web link in the references to the 1992 Maier article). If the rituals convey appropriate cultural meanings, then purposeful communication is strengthened. Professionals focus all too easily on their "part" of a young person's *bio-psycho- social* problems and easily lose sight of the *whole* person (Guttman, 1991).

If Foster Carers are not consciously aware of their own culture and feelings about race, ethnicity and gender roles within that culture, "then understandings of minority 'cultural differences' are bound to reflect negative valuations" (Ahmed, 1983 in Ely & Denney, 1987: p12). Some think that the milestones of child and adolescent development proceed along a single path. It follows that some cultural groups are thought to advance further along developmental pathways than others. Such thinking is incorrect. Child and adolescent development occurs within different social contexts, meaning that young people are nurtured along parallel development pathways, where different cultural meanings are given to social events such as, for example, 'circumcision and coming of age' rituals or arranged marriages.

The upshot is a type of thinking which says that children from some ethnic groups have culture, whereas others have civilisation. Minority culture becomes "an interesting exotica, esoteric misguided system of beliefs, or quaint behaviour" (Khan, 1982 in Ely & Denney, 1987, p.12). Through a process of cultural assimilation, children "become recognised as civilised beings", more able to behave in the dominant culture (Khan, 1982 in Ely & Denney, 1987: p13). Faced with attitudes like these, it is difficult to feel included in neighbourhood and community life, let alone feel hopeful about day-to-day practices.

Foster Carers are not always equipped to engage with some

children and help them feel included quickly. Often there are few people to whom they can turn for advice, guidance or counsel. The notion has featured prominently in nursing, social work and social care education. In New Zealand since the late 1980s, people working in the health and social services have been required to explore the meaning of cultural safety and ways in which rituals of encounter are important when engaging children or young people of any culture, but especially those from outside the dominant culture. Cultural safety requires that minimum competencies are acquired and maintained by Foster Carers, building on personal sensitivity and active learning about the basics of cultural competence.

Cultural safety and security requires that each child or young person finds active reasons for feeling hopeful that her or his needs will be attended to, and that the needs of her or his family members and kin will also be accorded dignity and respect (Ramsden, 1997). Close family and extended family members need active encouragement to participate in decision-making with service providers about the futures of their child(ren). Research shows that family participation in decision-making leads to higher quality long-term outcomes for children and young people placed in State mandated out-of-home care (Burford & Hudson, 2000).

Child welfare professionals educated in the Western tradition with bio-psycho-social theories of child development are generally guided by values and customs founded in Judeo-Christian traditions. When it comes to working with children or young people from a culture different from our own, it is easy to make false interpretations of child or adolescent behaviour, personality development and family practices with unhelpful effects on the lives of vulnerable young people (Fulcher, 2002). Culture is represented through *intricate, highly patterned systems of social inheritance through which each group of people attains and maintains the separate version of the humanity of its members* (Mead & Calas, 1953). Respect for each child's social inheritance as they engage with Foster Carers and their families underpins the importance of feeling included for each looked after child or young person. This is why cultural safety and security requires careful consideration.

Cultural stereotyping and racism occur when the values, assumptions, patterns of learning, financial practices and lifestyles of a dominant group are regarded as superior or favoured in one

way or another over others. As with peoples with rural traditions such as First Nations, Hispanic and Black Americans, the Maori peoples of New Zealand experienced extreme disadvantage from the application of Western psychological theories and methods used by social scientists to investigate Maori character structure. Post-war research identified "character deficits" that informed New Zealand social policies with negative impact for at least three generations of Maori (Stewart, 1997). Simply trying to understand where someone from a different culture is "coming from" is a challenge.

Compelling arguments are presented about rescuing children from bad families, or offering them prospects for happier family experiences. Through cultural assimilation, minority children have been taught to become more "civilised" beings (Simon & Smith, 2001), more able to behave and function satisfactorily in the dominant culture. Foster Carers need to promote pro-active expressions of caring and help a young person feel included while ensuring cultural safety is nourished and maintained.

Each Foster Carer must take responsibility for learning about the basic cultural practices of those living in their home region, or where children or young people have been living. The objectives of cultural safety are to ensure that each Foster Carer will "*examine their own cultural realities and attitudes they bring to each new person they encounter in practice*" (Ramsden & Spoonley 1993, p. 163). The following quote from Janet Newbury says it well. You can read the rest of her article by going to the link in the references.

> ... we rarely challenge our culturally created assumptions. That is, we are not, generally speaking, '*culturally self aware*.' This lack of cultural self-awareness results in an arrogance that has the potential to create some real obstacles in the way of progress in the type of work that we do. . . 'helpers' forget that their own priorities are in fact culturally created and wrongly assume that they are universal.
>
> — Janet Newbury, 2005

Theory Into Practice

Cultural safety – the state of being in which a child experiences that her/his needs, as well as social and cultural frames of reference, are respectfully attended to — is fundamentally linked to the duty of care for children and young people. Cultural safety is essential if they are to be included in local neighbourhood and community life, and feel included as valued members of society. A handful of questions can be remembered that reinforce and promote cultural safety with children and young people living with foster families or kinship carers. To read more about the importance of culture, rituals and inclusion see Leon Fulcher's article "Rituals of encounter that guarantee cultural safety" available on-line. (See references)

1. ***"Is this child safe and included now?"***

Physical safety and security feature prominently when addressing this first question, but cultural safety gives meaning to specific acts of caring and of being included. Physical safety and security of children includes cultural safety and security. Sometimes, child welfare workers dabble in things about which they know very little and end up placing a child or young person with designated carers that leave them at even greater risk. There were times not all that long ago in Northern Ireland when placing a Protestant child in an emergency foster care placement in the only placement available – with a Catholic family – resulted in dire consequences for the social worker. Cultural safety must not be ignored. Immigrant and refugee children in receipt of care and protection foster care require that social workers network closely with whoever lives in the vicinity of that young person's family members.

2. ***"Where does this child and her/his people come from and how connected is she/he with those traditions?"***

Foster care with all children or young people cannot truly begin without building up a sense of who they are, where they come from and who their people are. Foster Carers can help children and young people identify birth family members they know about, constructing and reviewing genograms or family trees, and

support the beginnings of life story work. The aim is to establish what each child knows about the important people in her or his life, extended family as well as nuclear family, giving attention to aunties, uncles, grandparents, siblings and others whose care may have been important in a child's life. Immigrant, refugee and rural youths, indeed rural adults, may walk around with a dazed look in their eye taking in new visual and social stimuli, sometimes retreating to their rooms feeling overwhelmed by the number of new people around and the social expectations involved.

3. ***"How has this child come to be here and to what extent are they able to tell her or his story now?"***

Crisis theory helps us think about how abuse notifications, admissions to care, supervision or custody orders represent significant life crisis events for children, young people and families. If this is the first family crisis event, then the odds are good that crisis resolution will result in positive outcomes. The odds *against* getting a positive care plan with this child and her or his family will decrease significantly thereafter with each placement failure. Children or young people respond to a sense of inclusion through engaging in purposeful relationship building activities that promote cultural safety and meaningful involvement with family members. New immigrant, refugee and rural young people who find their way into urban health, education and social services are particularly vulnerable to abuse by more socially sophisticated peers. Homeless runaways, rural, immigrant and refugee children can become urban migrants who are preyed upon by "finders" who are ever ready to assist for a price. Pimps and rascal gang leaders exploit homeless children the world over. And going home is difficult.

4. ***"Where are the people who might offer the longest term security and cultural safety for this child and how can we engage them as quickly as possible in decision-making about her/his future?"***

Sadly, rather than being essential participants in any successful care plan, many parents and family members – especially rural people, new immigrants or refugees, and those from indigenous or minority cultures – are dismissed as having been responsible for their children's problems. It is easy for health and social services to operate in a mono-cultural fashion where administrative

procedures don't always reflect rituals of encounter that guarantee cultural safety. Rural families and children are faced with enormous obstacles in order to take full advantage of opportunities that may improve their life circumstances and prospects. Transport costs, access to public transport and time required to travel between rural communities and population centres can be prohibitive. Rural poverty may mean that private cars and motorbikes are not registered or insured. Specialist expertise – offered by psychologists, speech therapists, medical specialists or social workers – are frequently not available, except by special appointment somewhere else.

A Cultural Safety and Security Pledge

- I accept that I have much to learn about where this child or family comes from;
- I appreciate that regional and geographical factors shape relations between the peoples of different cultures in my region,
  i. how individual[s] may vary from the generalizations I make about their people, and
  ii. how people living in one region vary and cultural groups within each region may vary from their [wider] cultural group.
- I follow the practice where I learn from the person in the situation and learn about the situation from that person before generalizing to others.
- I demonstrate the capacity to form [and sustain] caring relationships with people from different cultures.
- I engage with mutual respect and conscious effort to reduce power disparities between myself and others whose cultures are different from my own.
- I am able to obtain [and work with] culturally relevant information in professional encounters; and
- I can engage in processes of mutual exploration, assessment, and beginning-level problem solving with people of different culture and status to my own.

—Leigh, 1998, pp. 173-4)

5. ***"How do our own cultural identities as Foster Carers influence the meaning we give to being included, and our guarantee that this child's life will not be made worse off as a result of living in our foster home?"***

Anderson, Richardson and Leigh identified seven principles they considered essential to the development of culturally competent practices (Leigh, 1998, pp. 173-4) and the promotion of cultural safety for looked after children or young people in fostering or kinship care. Paraphrased, these principles offer a pledge for Foster Carers seeking to ensure that children, young people and families in their care are included, and guaranteed cultural safety and security.

It is not sufficient to assume that children and young people will teach Foster Carers and others what they need to know in order to guarantee their cultural safety and security. Cultural competencies are the personal responsibility and obligation of each Foster Carer. Culture is an essential feature of each child's inheritance, and their feeling Included is as important as all the other variables presented for consideration at team parenting meetings and LAC (Looked After Children) reviews. Amidst the pressures and organizational turbulence of busy health, education and welfare services, it is helpful to remember that things can get "thrown out with the bathwater". In reality, many looked after children and young people that Foster Carers encounter are "not likely to have strong links with their own ethnic origins" (Ely & Denney, 1987, p.15). Helping them feel included in family life is a very important achievement!

Tips for helping a young person feel included day to day

- Get to know and use this young person's given name, pronouncing it the way that they teach you to pronounce it.
- Ask about and then remember how they explained their name and how they came to have that name.
- Introduce them to and respect their room – the private space where they sleep, hang-out when wishing to be alone, and keep their clothes and personal items.

- Identify and respect their place at the kitchen or dining table then work to include them in family table talk, moving slowly at the young person's pace.
- Identify and talk about the notion of family chores that are required as families and flatmates share living arrangements together
- Share family chores so that everyone gets practice doing something different without getting bored doing the same old chores every week.
- Think about how sitting arrangements are worked out in the family car or van, and where our new family member will be included in the seating arrangements children frequently make during travel outings.
- Take an active interest in and nurture this young person's engagement with a school, a classroom group of other young people, playground peers while giving ongoing focus to learning and enjoyment in learning.
- Include the young person in family conversations, about daily and weekly planning, about family, school and work activities, and about holidays.
- Work out favourite foods and special calendar dates around which the distinctive tastes and occasions for this young person are included in family celebrations.
- Include the young person in planning for supermarket shopping (not just the meandering search method up and down all the aisles) and then go do the shopping together having them check off the list.
- As appropriate, include the young person in extended family and community activities (such as church, Scouts, Cadets or a sports club).
- Nurture opportunities for this young person to be included:
  - — as part of a birth family and extended family with social inheritance;
  - — as a member of our fostering or kinship care family; and
  - — as someone who is special in their own special way, deservedly included in our lives for who they are.

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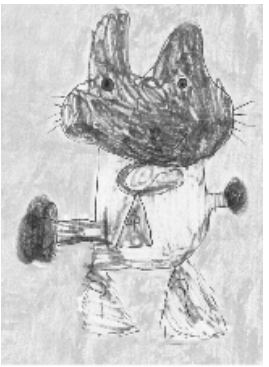
Sorry

I'm sorry for what I done
I shouldn't have said them things
You upset me and my tongue
So it just came out
All these things I done please don't count
I didn't mean to upset you
Please forgive me
I'll take you to the zoo
Because I still love you.

Melek



7

Responsible

Responsibility is about obligation, duty and yes, accountability. Although they are frequently used interchangeably, responsibility and accountability are not the same thing. Responsibility is perhaps one of the most over-used words in helping young people. One reads comments all the time about how young people must accept their responsibility, learn to be responsible, act responsibly, etc., etc. Most of the time, in phrases such as these, people are referring to accountability, not responsibility.

Responsibility involves the learned attitude we bring towards the experiences of our lives. It is an attitude which includes an awareness of our obligations to self and other, an awareness of our duties according to the roles we hold and accountability towards both self and other for how we act in the world. But one of the things we often forget is that in order to be responsible one requires certain skills and abilities. One way that we have found helpful to think about responsibility is to break it down as if it were two words: 'response able'; to be able to respond. When we think like this we are able then to ask what abilities are needed in order for a person to be 'able' to respond in the manner which we might prefer.

Our definition of responsibility is not limited to our obligations to other persons or external factors for we also believe that a responsible person is also responsible to self and for living according to the values and beliefs one holds. The person who is

treated responsibly develops as a responsible person.

As Foster Carers we are constantly wondering 'How can we help this young person in this situation develop their ability to be, and act, in a responsible manner?'

A Story

Jessica really wanted a pet. She had been asking for one for months. We were hesitant because we had never had a pet in our home before, always being worried about who would look after it, would it get abused, typical concerns when you never can be sure who the next kid is going to be or when the current kid might move out. In the end, though, we thought it might be okay and a chance for all the kids to learn a little about responsibility. We could start small, with a kitten. After all, we reasoned, looking after a pet might help anyone learn about responsibility to others.

But before we made our final decision, we decided to talk with Jessica about what 'having a pet' would mean.

"So, Jessica, we were thinking maybe you could get a kitten. But you would have to look after it yourself"

Jessica was thrilled, of course. "Oh, I will. I will," she bubbled. "I will wash it and feed it and make sure it is safe all the time."

Well, we thought it was interesting that her first idea was to 'wash it' but we let that go for the moment. Actually, neither of us had ever thought about the need to wash a cat but, who knows.

"So, what would you feed it?" Mark asked.

"Oh, I would give it some of my food," she responded. "Every time I eat I will save some for her."

"Do you know what cats like to eat?" we asked.

"Oh, yes," Jessica replied. "They like fish, and cheese, and everything."

Well we could see there was some work to do here but we decided to go ahead. First we wanted to test Jessica's

commitment. So we told her that if she really wanted a kitten she would have to go to the library after school and find a few books about cats to bring home and study. Then, after she had learned about what cats need, we would see what came next. One step at a time, is what we told her. She was excited and said that she would do it the next day after school. All the kids in our home used the library regularly so we knew she had the skills she needed to do this.

The next day Jessica came into the house carrying her school bag, breathless with excitement. In an excited voice she told us about how she had seen a sign at school about someone who had some kittens to give away and she wanted to go and look at them.

"Well, did you get the books from the library and study them already?" we asked.

"No," she replied, still excited. "Mags wanted to go to the shop and needed me to go with her so I didn't have time."

"Why did Mags need to go to the shop?" Mark asked.

"Her mom gave her money to buy a new sweater and she needed me to help her choose it," Jessica replied.

"So, going with Mags to choose a new sweater was more important to you than finding the books so you can get a pet?"

"Well, no." Her reply was more hesitant now. She knew something was going on. "Can we go and look at the kittens now?"

"No, we can't. We said that after you had read the books and learned about how to look after a cat, then we would see what was next. You haven't done that, so we can't go look at the kittens."

"Please," she pleaded. "I promise only to look. I won't bring one home."

"No. First you learn about what cats need and then we can go look."

Jessica was clearly upset by this. She called us mean and said that we just didn't want her to have a pet. We talked it through and she promised that she was going to get the books

the next day. 'Nothing would be more important tomorrow' the next day she assured us.

Well, the next day she came home again without the books. Her other friend, Carrie, had needed her to walk her home. We had another little argument and then we said to her, "Look Jessica, it is up to you. It is your choice. You can get the books and learn about cats or you can do other things. It really is up to you."

Another day, still no books, something else that was important. The story went on like this and in the end, there was no kitten.

'It's about responsibility', we said one day when we were talking with Jessica's Social Worker. "She couldn't be responsible enough to get the books, so we though it was best to let her experience the consequences of that."

"It's a good point," the Social Worker replied. "And I am wondering if Jessica has the skills, the ability, to respond the way you wanted her too? Can she actually do what you wanted her to do?"

"Of course she does," Mark replied. "All the kids in our home know how to use the library."

"Yes, I know that" she replied. "But do they know how to prioritize things? Or how to be assertive with their friends? Or how to understand the possible outcomes of what they do?"

Response-able. Children need to have the ability to respond in the manner we ask if we want to hold them accountable.

A Little Theory About Being Response-able

In the introduction to this chapter we suggested that when children do not act 'responsibly' it may be because they lack the specific skills necessary to respond in the manner we wish. And we would like to emphasize that point here before going on. In 1991, Narviar Barker wrote that abused young people have difficulty "in identifying and expressing basic emotions" including those conveyed by facial expressions. Because of this, "oftentimes, abused children — being less accurate than non-abused children in identifying emotional expression — are perceived by their teachers and care providers as being less socially adept than their peers" (p.11)

In this we see the suggestion that some children, in this case those who have been abused, are unable to identify and express basic emotions in the same manner (or with the same skill) as non-abuse children. While we recognize that not all children who come into foster care have been abused, it is nevertheless important to recognize that not all children possess the same abilities. Yet we, as caring adults, often expect, especially in such common areas as these, that all children are essentially the same, and as a result misinterpret their behaviours.

Rock (2002) also addressed the issue of ability to respond appropriately in a study of 'easily aroused' children between the ages of 9 and 11 who demonstrated behaviours of concern. In this study Rock noted the following:

> "What may be lacking for the easily aroused type of child is knowledge of specific intervention strategies. These children are expressing a violation of their sense of fairness with associated anger. If they do not have specific strategies available to use, then they may engage in what adults consider being antisocial behaviors. This would include physical or verbal aggression. . . . What has been perceived as strictly antisocial behavior may be merely a distortion of pro-social behavior to aide victims. A child may simply have a lack of skills to choose alternative behaviors and so engage in behavior that actually escalates the situation at times rather than correcting it."

Rock suggests that the issue with some of the children she studied is not attitude or choice but rather a lack of choice brought about by a lack of specific abilities (skills). When I only have one skill set, it is all I can use. I cannot do something which I do not have the ability to do.

Brian Gannon (n.d.) in writing about how we could help young people, made the following statements:

> "One of the reasons for a lack of conscience and empathy in anti-social and aggressive youth is that they have not built up a sense of people's significance – neither their own significance, and as a consequence, nor a sense of others' significance. Without a capacity for empathy, they have a poor understanding of the impact their behaviour has on others."

Thus, expanding from these important examples, we draw the conclusion that there are areas in which a young person may be 'lacking ability' rather than simply 'not doing' that which we expect of them. And we wonder about the overall implications of these missing abilities. Too often, it seems to us, in our careers, we have failed to consider that perhaps the young people from whom we ask certain things do not, simply and innocently, have the abilities or skills necessary to do that which we ask. Here is a short example:

> Mikie was new to us and there was little information about him available. We kept asking him to do things, simple things actually like, "Mikie, go to your room, clean it up, make your bed, then brush your teeth, grab your books, and your coat and get back here so we can get you to school on time."
>
> He never made it. He always 'got lost' along the way. Later, when we finally got Mikie tested for school, it turned out he had a memory problem. He couldn't remember more that three (3) things at a time.
>
> He did not have the ability to do what we asked of him.

Under the theme of Respected and Responsible, the Getting It Right For Every Child (2007) with foster and kinship carers agenda notes that a child/young person who is respectful and responsible:

cares about and is affected by other people's feelings, enjoys making friends, and when frustrated or angry, tries to calm her or himself.

places high value on helping other people

has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills

cooperates, shares, plays harmoniously, and comforts others in distress.

In these four points we see the indications that, quite simply, the young person should be able to care about others and care about his or her impact on others. Yet the literature, as considered above, reports that this may be the very area in which troubled or disturbed children are lacking. So, if a young person simply cannot do this, how can we expect her or him to succeed? The answer is that we can not. And when a young person does not have an important skill or ability, it is our responsibility to help them learn that which they are lacking.

So, in our homes, we must be concerned with the abilities young people who live with us already have, and how we can help them to develop those abilities which they lack. Only then can we actually expect them to be response-able. The question lingers, what can we do in our homes to help young people become more responsible?

Theory Into Practice

Supporting the development of responsibility is not an easy task in foster care for we have a tendency to assume that everyone has the ability to be responsible – that somehow, for some reason, they are choosing not to be responsible but, as we have seen from the foregoing, that may not be the case. The young people who live with us, like all young people, need to learn how and when and why to be responsible in how they respond to any given situation. The most we can hope for is that in our interactions, and living with them they might learn these abilities so that when they leave us, they leave as more responsible people. So, what can we do?

Create Opportunities

Learning responsibility requires having the opportunity to be responsible. Silly as it may sound we have a tendency in our helping work to be 'overly helpful' making sure, for example, that children do what is right at any particular point. And sometimes in 'helping them' we forget that they need to learn responsibility through opportunities to *be* responsible. So, we might, for example, give them responsibilities within our homes: chores and the like come to mind. Consider other opportunities to help others as well, such as giving more than the norm, leading an experience, and organizing an activity which we might do ourselves.

> You have to give young people responsibility in order to have them act responsibly.
> — Kohn, 1997

Support Learning Responsibility

It is one thing to create opportunities, it is another to assume responsibility for the opportunities that are presented. "Would you be able to look after the cat for the next few days?" is the type of question which creates opportunities.

We might also try to avoid situations where children are rescued from the consequences of their actions, thus enabling them to experience what happens when they behave in a certain manner. This is not to say we allow them to hurt themselves or others, but it does mean that sometimes, painful as it might be for us to watch, we stand aside and let the consequences of their actions unfold. The child, for example, who putters along in a manner that is going to make her late for school is perhaps not best served by us rushing and pushing to make sure she is on time, thereby avoiding the consequences a school might invoke for being late. By allowing the child to take responsibility and then helping them to develop new ways of succeeding we help them learn skills for the future. A young child, for example, who has taken the belongings of someone else, may be taken aside, taught what he must do the restore balance and then be assisted in apologizing to the person whose belongings he took. In this way, the young person learns what he did wrong and learns what to do about it.

Preparation for Acting Responsibly

We all know that the young people who live with us face the opportunity (or demand) to be responsible and accept responsibility numerous times throughout their days. Knowing this we can help them prepare, ensuring that they have, for example, different alternative responses available for the opportunities which will arrive.

- The young person who has chores to do can review with us exactly what is expected.
- The young person who has difficulty staying settled in class can have different options available – perhaps he can ask permission to leave the room for five minutes every hour to talk with a support worker.
- The young person who receives a regular weekly allowance might sit down with us to review how she might spend it, and what the outcome of her options will be.
- The young person who has to 'make amends' for something she has done, can review what to do next.
- The young person who is going home for the weekend can 'role play' what he will do if various scenarios arise.

In preparing young people to act responsibility we are ensuring that we check that they have the skills necessary to act in a responsible manner while at the same time helping them develop the confidence that they can do what they need to do.

Restoring Responsibility

In spite of our best efforts there will always be times when young people have acted in a manner which demonstrates a lack of responsibility to self or other. There is no blame in this statement, simply a recognition of reality. When these moments arrive, we need to decide how we can respond, asking ourselves, as we have said throughout this book "How can we use this moment to help the child or young person learn?"

One of the strongest movements in our field today is that of 'restorative practices' in which we look for ways to help the young person learn from their experience and 'set things right' or 'restore balance'. When things have gone wrong, we can help the young person prepare for future responsibility by following the steps below:

1. Identify what went wrong, focusing on the actions of the young person, being specific about what happened and the series of steps along the way which led to the point of acting without responsibility. Help the young person to see how one step lead to the next.

2. When the unacceptable behaviour involves other people, process how they might be feeling, or what the consequences have been for the other person, focusing on the development of empathy.

3. Process how the young person is feeling about his or her actions, emphasizing the development of remorse when appropriate.

4. Review what alternatives were available along the way helping the young person to see the choices they made.

5. Explore alternatives for setting things right, noting that just as there were alternatives available when the young person acted without responsibility, so too are there different options available for accepting responsibility, and restoring balance, now.

6. Review the different possible outcomes of the alternatives available, making sure not to make the choice for the young person.

7. Once the young person has made a choice about what to do, review with her specifically how she is going to do it. A little role play may be helpful if it is going to be different or involve a new behaviour.

8. When the young person has acted to restore responsibility, review with her the process she went through helping her to see the value of what she did. For example, review the steps, how she felt along the way, how she feels now, what the outcome means.

We are not saying, of course, that this process of review and preparation to restore balance will prevent all future irresponsible behaviour but it does increase the likelihood that the young person will begin the process of learning to act in a manner which is responsible to self and others. When we go through this process with them we must be careful, as Larry Brendtro (2004) has said, to avoid blaming, for blaming "is an innate style of emotional logic which primes humans to identify and attack a perceived enemy ... blame blocks empathy and esteem and prevents one from understanding or showing concern for another ". We need

sometimes to remind ourselves that if young people have difficulty in taking others into consideration or in planning what to do or in anticipating the consequences of their actions, then they may need our help in "figuring out how to do these things" (Kohn, 1997).

Some Tips for Promoting the Development of Response-able Behaviour

Like all learning, there are numerous opportunities available in daily life. Below we offer some of the tips we have gleaned from our readings and experience in this area. While what follows is, we believe, useful information, we encourage the reader to explore the numerous articles on the internet which offer other tips for teaching responsibility, all the time remembering that young people learn best in how we are with them. If we act with responsibility, they will learn responsibility in their relationships with us.

- Be responsible yourself in all your interactions with young people any time they might observe you. This way, they learn from direct experience and observation.
- When you make a mistake yourself, process the recovery from that mistake so that young people learn that we all make mistakes and we can recover from them.
- Talk about responsibility and make it a theme of your home. Develop a culture of responsibility for self and others.
- Have clear rules and expectations setting out exactly what you expect – 'clean the sitting room' is not specific enough so lay out the details.
- Review together sometimes, the times when someone has acted in a responsible manner so that the young people learn from positive examples without the fear of criticism and rejection.
- Make sure there are many opportunities for young people to succeed in acting responsibly and acknowledge them when it happens.
- Make sure that the responsibilities you are wanting to give to young people are within their abilities and are developmentally appropriate.

- Create opportunities for young people to give to others so they might enjoy the benefits of being responsible for helping someone else feel good or live better.
- When a young person acts without responsibility don't assume that that they are bad.
- Allow young people to experience the consequences of their own actions rather than protecting them too much. It is best when there are natural consequences which we can simply let unfold. In this way it is not us, but the natural world, helping them to learn.

Ask yourself the following question**:** "Do the children in our home have the skills & abilities to:

- Listen effectively?
- Solve problems?
- Empathize with others?
- Predict the outcome of their actions?
- Prioritize things?
- Act responsibly?
- Care about others?

If the answer to any part of the above question is 'No' then our responsibility is clear and our task is defined. After all, it is our responsibility to create the context and learning for young people to live in a response-able manner.

And, simply because we like it, we end this chapter with the following tip from Brian Gannon.

> So there is something we can do with our tougher kids. More effective than moralizing and blaming, punishing and rejecting, it is the hard daily work of giving them words for their feelings, acknowledging and responding to their feelings, so that they feel attended to and significant. They in turn are increasingly able to understand when we help to articulate the feelings and the significance of others — and so, able to empathize.

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My Bones

My bones stop me from falling apart,
My rib cage protects my lungs and heart.
My backbone supports all of me.
My hip, my ankle and of course my knee,
I forgot my little toe,
And of course my big nose.
If I hadn't got a wrist,
I wouldn't be able to shake my fist.
The tiny stirrup in my ear
Helps me to listen and to hear.
My skull protects my head and brain,
So it doesn't get wet in the rain.
There are 206 bones in my body,
Without them I would be very wobbly.

Charlotte

8

Healthy

Introduction

Important issues are called into question whenever a child or young person is assigned *looked after* status, removed from their family, and placed under court order with a state-sponsored caregiver. Health care, therapeutic assessment of mental health, dental assessment and hygiene, encouragement to exercise, healthy eating, elementary first aid, healthy lifestyles and sexual health are all worthy of scrutiny for any child or young person targeted for legal guardianship and *looked after* interventions by the State.

In the busy whirl of activity as a child or young person arrives at a new foster home, it is easy to get pre-occupied with day to day issues and ignore the duty of care guardianship assigned to Foster Carers for the health and well being of looked after children or young people.

The central question:
Is this child or young person safe and healthy?

Given their life story to the point of placement in this foster home, what do we know about their physical health and well being? What do we know about their emotional and behavioural well being? What about their dental health and hygiene and when was it last checked? To what extent might spiritual health and cultural safety be important?

Foster Carers sometimes hand over concerns about their duty of care to someone else: to social workers, social work managers, policy makers and the legal profession. However, most of these *decision-makers* have little idea what the duty of care actually means in foster care relationships, nor how their duty of care impacts on daily interactions with children or young people to provide quality care in a family setting. What does the duty of care actually mean when parental authority is assumed by the state, or when a child or young person arrives at the foster home? What are the duty of care standards for Foster Carers that have been highlighted in recent Commonwealth law decisions?[1]

A Story

> I awoke with a start to the sound of John Paul screaming, and then the sound of John Paul's 16 year-old mother shouting ¨Shut your f***ing mouth!¨ at her 12 week-old son.
>
> 2 a.m.! How did we agree to provide emergency foster care for a 12 week-old baby and his 16 year-old mother?
>
> I offered to go down and put the kettle on for cups of tea while my partner attended to the health and wellbeing of John Paul ... and also to what his mother was doing.
>
> While waiting for the jug to boil, my head started buzzing about health and safety issues that surrounded the foster care we were providing for John Paul and his mother.

[1] Commonwealth law applies to a large extent in North America, excluding Mexico and Cuba. Commonwealth Law rulings are commonly referenced in American legal opinions, just as American legal opinions are commonly referenced in Commonwealth law decisions. Both American and Commonwealth legal practices and decisions trace origins to the emergence of the Common Law.

A Little Theory about the Duty of Care

The duty of care means that in particular circumstances, a person is required to fulfil a particular standard of conduct. For Foster Carers this means a duty to take reasonable care not to cause harm to children or young people placed in your home. To establish a Duty of Care there must be (i) *reasonable foreseeability of the damage to an individual or individuals where there is a likelihood of harm occurring*, and (ii) *proximity or closeness of relationship between the parties, either physical or causal*. This means having some awareness of, and forethought about *how your own actions* as Foster Carers *may impact on the lives of children with whom you work*. This is especially important given the intensity and close interpersonal relationships that develop with children or young people during their stay in a foster home.

The duty of care has its origins in the Common Law where it has been associated with negligence or wrongs carried out against another (O'Keefe & Farrands 1980, Hocking & Smith 1996). The duty of care has evolved from the old *action on the case* developments in Common Law between the 14th and 19th Centuries, where it was established that one person owes a duty of care to another based on the relationship of the parties. The general principle of 'duty of care' was formally established in 1883 and that principle – still applicable today – means that

> "…whenever one person is by circumstances placed in such a position with regard to another that every one of ordinary sense who did think would at once recognise that if he did not use ordinary care and skill in his own conduct with regard to those circumstances he would cause danger of injury to the person or property of the other, a duty arises to use ordinary care and skill to avoid such a danger" (*Heaven v. Pender [1883] 11 QBD 503*).

It was not until some years later in the case of *Donoghue v. Stevenson [1932] AC 562* that the above principle was applied. In that case, the judgement held that not every moral wrong can have a practical effect in law so one must take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that one can reasonably foresee may injure another. The modern requirements for a duty of care in Australia were established in 1984 where it was found that a duty situation

would arise from the following combination of factors:

1. a reasonable foreseeability of real risk of injury to an individual or group of individuals;

2. the existence of proximity between the parties with respect to the act or omission; and

3. absence of any rule that precludes such a duty.

In short, one must be aware that something could happen by following a particular course of action and the relationship that exists between the parties is critical to any determination of a duty of care.

¨What do these seemingly unrelated cases have to do with our foster care work?¨ Foster Carers might rightly ask.

The answer is found in a landmark decision taken by the British Law Lords in the case of *Lister and others v. Hesley Hall Ltd* [2001] [2] All ER 769. That decision provided legal precedent for the duty of care contract and any claims of negligence in health, education or welfare services. Lister and his associates were residents of Axeholme House at Hesley Hall School near Doncaster, England between 1979 and 1982. The person in charge of the boarding complex and his wife were employed to be responsible for the day-to-day operations of this residential facility run by Hesley Hall School Ltd. Unbeknown to the employers, the officer in charge sexually abused residents during the course of his employment. He was later found guilty and imprisoned for seven years.

Lister and associates v. Hesley Hall Ltd went to trial in January 1999 on two separate grounds: first, that the employers were negligent in their care, selection and supervision of the person in charge; and second, that the employers were vicariously liable for the wrongs committed by that person. The claim of negligence against the employers was dismissed but the claim of vicarious liability remained open, even though it appeared to be ruled out by the 1936 Salmond test as interpreted and applied by the Court of Appeal in *Trotman v. North Yorkshire County Council*. In this latter case, a teacher had sexually abused a pupil during a school trip. Because the school trip to Continental Europe fell outside the

[2] See *Jaensch v. Coffey [1984] 155 CLR 549* and *Sutherland Shire Council v. Heyman [1985] 60 ALR.*

jurisdiction of North Yorkshire County Council and its employer-employee obligations, vicarious liability against that County Council was not upheld.

The principle of *vicarious liability* imposes legal responsibility for the actions of someone else which have caused injury. Vicarious liability commonly occurs when there is a "superior" who is legally responsible for the acts of his/her subordinate. This doctrine is commonly applied in the employer-employee relationship. When an employee is negligent on the job, the employer is legally responsible for any damage or injury the employee causes. In the case of Lister and associates, the British Law Lords were invited to consider whether the employers of the person in charge of the Hesley Hall residential facility – depending on the particular circumstances – were vicariously liable for breaches in the duty of care committed by their employee. While the employee's duty of care had been delegated, it was argued that an abnegation of duty does not sever the connection with his employment. In a unanimous judgment handed down in May 2001, the British Law Lords agreed that appeals for vicarious liability should proceed. As a result, *employers and governing councils are now open to claims of vicarious liability for the actions of staff employed to manage residential facilities and provide foster care services*.

The courts have since extended the duty of care principle to include obligations on employers to monitor and supervise this mandate by employees or agents of the State, including social workers, child and youth care workers, or Foster Parents. In the recent case in the High Court of New Zealand concerning *S v. Attorney General* [2002] CP 253 96, the State was held to be vicariously liable for its employees' failing to adequately supervise the care of children in foster homes. When the State intervenes in family life and assigns the duty of care mandate to child and youth care workers, such a duty of care contract is conditional and time limited. Agents of the State have "a duty to take care" and to provide "a standard of good enough care" for which liability against employees and vicarious or delegated liability against employers is now established in common law.

Implications arising from all this are that the State is legally required to employ agents (social workers or other child welfare professionals) who are suitably qualified and experienced in order to execute the duty of care mandate with any child removed from

families and placed in State mandated care. If breaches in the duty of care contract are foreseeable through inadequate supervision or insufficient monitoring of staff performance, then both employers and the State can be held to be vicariously liable for its employees' failing to guarantee good enough practices and duty of care obligations for children. Both child and youth care workers and their employers are required to address issues of personal, professional and agency liability for the standard of care provided to children who are removed from parental care and authority.

Theory Into Practice

The duty of care for Foster Carers is steeped in the social and cultural traditions of parenting and parental authority. Such authority is commonly transferred to enable children or young people to attend school camps, youth group outings or attend boarding schools. The transfer of parental authority is also common with placements within extended families. Only when parents abrogate their duty of care through neglect or abuse of their child does the State intervene. The duty of care, assigned through acts of conception and birth, is willingly accepted by most parents. Parental authority is reinforced through ascribed roles and cultural expectations transmitted through extended family and kinship networks. These social and cultural expectations confer roles on older siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins that reinforce parental authority for the care of children.

If parental authority for the care of children is first achieved through childbirth, it is then reinforced through the registration of births or adoptions where a duty of care is identified through legal guardianship. Parental authority is normally reinforced through cultural rituals associated with selecting a prospective husband or wife, engagement, entering into marriage, birth of the first child, rituals of confirmation, etc. In many parts of the world, cultural practices are closely interwoven with the legal authority given to parents, families and extended family networks. Authority ascribed to parent(s) and the authority of eldership ascribed to paternal and maternal grandparents also shape the duty of care for children of indigenous ancestries (Fulcher 1998).

All three types of parental authority – *achieved*, *assigned* and *ascribed* authority – are enmeshed in the duty of care for Foster Carers. The duty of care that rests with parents must be superseded if the State is to intervene and assume decision-making powers for children. Cultural conventions and legislation justify intervention in family life by the State in a restricted number of circumstances (Fox-Harding 1991, pp. 20-21):

1. Where the parent has asked the State to terminate their rights or determine custody for their child.

2. Where psychological bonds existed between a long-term parental caretaker and a child, and the caretaker seeks to retain the child or to become the legal parent.

3. As a consequence of the death, disappearance, hospitalisation or imprisonment of parents, coupled with their failure to make provision for the child's care.

4. Where the parent is convicted of a sexual offence against the child and demonstrated gross failure to care, thereby producing emotional harm.

5. Where serious bodily injury, narrowly interpreted, has been inflicted on a child by the parent so as to constitute a breach of the duty of care.

6. Where failure to authorize medical care when denial of such care would result in death and supplying care would give the child a life worth living.

7. Where the child needs legal assistance and the parents request it or there are grounds for modifying or terminating parental relationships.

Legal Authority to Assign Looked After Status

Legal authority to intervene in family life, where parents relinquish the duty of care for their child(ren), is highlighted when a child is placed for adoption or foster care. Formal care orders transferring authority and the duty of care for children and young people to the State have traditionally been granted only in cases where a child has suffered:

(a) injury causing disfigurement, impairment of bodily functioning or severe bodily harm; or the substantial likelihood of this;

(b) serious emotional damage where the parents are unwilling or unable to provide or permit the necessary treatment;

(c) sexual abuse by a member of the household; or

(d) when there is a need for medical treatment to prevent serious physical harm where the parents are unwilling or unable to provide or permit this (Fox-Harding 1991, p. 25).

Any Care or Supervision Order that formalizes placement in a foster home represents a formal incursion by the State into the traditionally private domain of family life. Such intervention involves a substantial alteration in the way parental authority is exercised and the duty of care is assigned to agents of the State who share that role through contractual arrangements with Foster Carers. Commonwealth Courts have ruled that the State holds vicarious liability for the actions of its agents (social workers and Foster Carers) assigned a duty of care for children or young people and who breach those mandated expectations through negligence, dereliction of duty or criminal acts.

The health and wellbeing of a child or young person is closely linked to their potential placements in foster care. It follows, therefore, that a complete health status assessment will be carried out at the earliest possible time with the child or young person involved directly in checking out their health and dental care status. Getting registered or signed on with a medical practice and a dental practice are further steps that ensure that Be Healthy is a message that all parties share. Healthy living through a balanced, healthy diet and participation in regular exercise is also important. Healthy living follows on from feeling safe, nurtured and achieving through quality care in a family setting.

Tips for helping a child or young person think, live and feel healthy for the future

- When was this child or young person last seen for a full medical check-up?
- Where and when will this child be signed up with a local GP or medical centre where he or she will receive a full medical check-up and establish a time table for regular 6-monthly check-ups.

- When and with whom will it be possible for this child or young person to sign on for a dental check-up and ongoing check-ups?
- What special meals does this child or young person like and how might these meals be included within an overall healthy living weekly menu for the carer family?
- When is the child or young person's birthday, and what other special days might there be in their lives worth recognising or celebrating from time to time?
- What daily and weekly exercise regime does the child or young person follow that helps to reinforce positive relationship building and a healthy lifestyle?
- What annual health and safety checks are made around your home and what issues have been addressed since the last of these safety checks?
- How might you approach discussion around issues of sexual health and responsibility with the child or young person living in your foster home?
- How might you role model healthy lifestyle practices that address anti-smoking and anti-drug messages, and reinforce a drink with moderation approach to alcohol use around looked after children or young people?
- How might you engage life story work with each looked after child or young person as recommended through the team parenting review process?

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Alphabet poem

a	A is for apple, all juicy and red
b	B is for the warm and cosy bed
c	C is for cat who sits on the mat
d	D is for dinosaur who acts like a cat
e	E is for Elvis, a very nice name
f	F is for fishing, a very nice game
g	G is for gorilla, all big and hairy
h	H is for Heidi who looks like Mary
i	I is for icecream, all cold and white,
j	J is for Janey who said you bite
k	K is for kite, up in the air
l	L is for Lauren who said you care
m	M is for monkey who is mean
n	N is for Norris who is keen
o	O is for orange, round like a ball
p	P is for poppy who is tall
q	Q is for queen, big and fat
r	R is for Rebecca who wore a hat
s	S is for Sam who is silly
t	T is for teacher whose name is Tilly
u	U is for unicorn who is too proud
v	V is for Virshinh who is too loud
w	W is for want, all nice and bright
x	X is for x-ray, it isn't very light
y	Y is for yoghourt all nice and runny
z	Z is for zebra who is really funny

Aishling 9

9

Achieving

Achieving is about being 'actively engaged' in learning; about accomplishing something, however large or small. In this sense, achievement is what helps us develop the skills to do well in life, whether that is in a school environment or in other aspects of life. We learn all the time. The people who are most successful and satisfied with life seem to be actively engaged in this process throughout their lives. In many ways, school provides a young person with the opportunity to develop the skills, attitude and orientation to encourage them to be engaged in learning throughout their lives.

Of course being 'actively engaged in learning' is not solely focused on achievement in school, for active learning occurs every day and the opportunities to become engaged in learning and enjoying the learning process are available everywhere. Learning opportunities may occur through activities, household chores, sports, involvement in clubs, shopping, visiting friends, and in the seemingly insignificant moments of daily life events. Whether or not an activity presents an opportunity to engage in learning depends, as much as anything, on the attitude we bring to the experience. Thus, a part of helping a young person to develop as an achieving person is to help them develop a positive attitude towards the experience of learning in all aspects of life.

As Foster Carers we constantly ask ourselves 'What can I do to help this young person, in this situation, to think of this as a

learning opportunity and to enjoy it?' or 'How can this moment, this situation, help this young person to learn and to enjoy the learning?'

A Story

Mark was 'nothing special'; or at least that is how he always described himself. "I can't do nothing. I don't know nothing" was his constant refrain whenever he was asked to talk about himself. And the truth is, on many levels, Mark was right. He did not do anything, mostly he simply sat around, hung out with his friends, or just lazed about. Whenever he was invited to try something new he would respond with "what's the point, eh?" He did poorly in school, barely getting by and was never seen doing any homework.

So we didn't push him, after all that had not worked in the other places he had lived. His Social Worker reported that when other caretakers had insisted that he get involved in some activity, Mark responded by either shutting himself in his room, taking off to hang out with his friends, or, on occasion, becoming physical, once even destroying half the furniture in the living room of the home where he was staying.

When he first came to us we decided the only way to aproach this was to first try and develop a relationship of trust and safety and hope that with that we might be able to influence him.

It finally started on a September evening when I was downstairs in my workshop preparing the fishing gear for a trip we had planned for next month. While I was bent over a box of flies, Mark came down wanting permission to go out and visit his friends.

"No problem," I said. "But could you give me a hand for a minute before you go. I seem to have misplaced my fly-tying book and it should be here someplace but I just can't find it."

I hadn't thought about what I was doing in asking him to help me. It just came out.

Mark looked into the box I was holding at the time. It was filled with an array of brightly coloured hooks. "What's that?" he asked.

So I explained to him what they were, how every year I made some new ones but that I wasn't that good at it so I needed the book to help me get it right. "So the book tells you how to do that?" he asked. I confirmed this and after a few questions he started to look for the book. Once he found it, because it was he who found it, Mark started to browse through the many pages of illustrations and directions.

"I bet I could make one," he said.

"I bet you could," I replied.

To my surprise, Mark didn't go out that night. Instead he stayed in and later I saw him in the sitting room reading the fly-tying book. Later I heard him tell one of the other kids he was going to 'make some fly hooks'.

And he did. He made 'good hooks' as he called them at first. Now, don't get me wrong, it is not as if his learning was without trials and tribulations but for some reason it progressed. And once he had made some he wanted to see how they worked, so he learned about fly-casting, and different approaches to fishing, and where to fish and well, the list goes on.

Eventually Mark took over responsibility for organising our regular fishing trips, including looking after the fishing gear and proposing where we would go. He was obviously proud of his ability and in the end Mark became 'a fisher'. We noticed that, as his skill in this area developed, he started showing a greater interest in other things, especially things that involved learning about how to make something and then making it and using it. His teachers, surprised as we all were by this new-found interest in how things were made, tailored his school program towards his interests. At the end of the second year of school following his discovery of fly-tying, Mark passed his exams easily.

Now, when he is asked about himself he often says that he is either 'a fisher' or that he 'makes things'. He has a different sense of himself now. He has a sense of mastery over some aspects of his life in a way that he didn't before. I asked him

once why he had taken an interest in fly-tying. "'Cause you seemed to like it," was all he said.

Out of such small moments of interest and learning can come a different future.

> One finds that a child who is unconfident in all areas of his life may need just one area of achievement from which he gains self-confidence, and this can change his attitude to and performance in all the other areas.
> — Powis, Allsopp & Gannon (1989).

A Little Theory: The Importance of Promoting Achievement

> *"Not all students can experience the joy of success and mastery through word drills and other traditional teaching methods. It becomes necessary, then, to find alternative ways for students to achieve."*
> — Alexander & Shaw-Benson (2001)

We all seem to like to 'achieve' and perhaps that is because there seem to be so many other positive things associated with achievement. Niss (1999), for example, said that through the process of achievement one "develops a positive self-esteem, feelings of acceptance, adequacy and self worth" and perhaps there is nothing greater than that which we might hope for the young people with home we live and work. While achievement is typically associated with school, we recognise that achievement occurs in all areas of one's life and ideally continues throughout our lives. Indeed it has been suggested (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2005) that the need for achievement is inborn and that "our education and treatment models must address these needs. Otherwise they fail". Many behavioural scientists contend that the quest for competence and mastery is the central theme in the development of children and youth. (Brokenleg, 1997).

Michael Niss (1995) in discussing 'achievement motivation' tells the following story ...

A 16-year-old boy referred by his school for underachieving told me in therapy that he remembers from a young age that no one ever expected him to achieve. He was allowed to do what ever he wanted to, and whatever he did, didn't matter to anyone. On further examination of his circumstances he reported that he was always told that he was average. This message was passed on by his parents and teachers. He later said that he wished that how he did at school mattered to someone.

Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern (1990) in identifying the elements of what they have called the "Circle of Courage" took the idea of achievement out of the academic realm and into everyday life with the introduction of the idea of 'mastery', a skill which they described as one of the basic necessities for healthy living and development. Mastery, they say, involves the importance of young people having opportunities to solve problems and meet goals (Brendtro, Brokenleg & van Bockern, 1990). And as Fulcher (2007) said "Through experiencing *Achievement*, a young person is motivated to work hard and attain excellence, and through recognition of competence a young person learns that *¨I can solve problems!"* Perhaps that is, in itself, a wonderful outcome of our attempts to be helpful.

In the literature we find that mastery not only helps us achieve in the immediate but has been associated with other important attributes, such as enhanced future performance, increased sense of self worth, increased risk-taking, a willingness to learn new things, a willingness to tackle new problems, increased flexibility and adaptability to new situations. Yet not all young people demonstrate a concern with, or ability for, achievement or mastery. For example, in a study of adolescents in care, Zukauskiene (2004) found that those living in long term residential settings seemed to apply the most dysfunctional achievement strategies and did not use self-enhancing attributions, whereas those living in families fared better in this area. So, what can we do?

Mastery and 'achievement motivation' appear to be promoted or strengthened by

- Preparation (and maybe rehearsal) for future events. For example, as Brian Gannon has said "by predicting and planning for similar circumstances which might re-occur, we convey a sense of mastery rather than victimhood" (n.d.)
- Effective role modelling of risk-taking with new experiences (Brokenleg, 2007)
- Supportive home environments (Zukauskiene, 2004)
- Warm, involved and 'demanding' caregivers – persons who consistently set high expectations for achievement. (North Lanarkshire Council, n.d.)
- Interactive play and other activities of social learning (Pazaratz, 1998).
- Experiencing success in various areas (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & van Bockern,1990).
- Working together on tasks with concerned and significant adults (Niss, 1999)
- Celebrating achievements (Fulcher, 2007)
- Avoiding stigma (Fallon, 2005)

In a study of young people who had been looked after in Scotland, Happer, McCreadie & Aldgate (2006) asked them to identify what had helped them to achieve. In the course of this study five factors emerged as being critical to the success of the participants:

- having people in their lives who cared about them
- experiencing stability
- being given high expectations
- receiving encouragement and support
- being able to participate and achieve

Opportunities must be found for learners to experience achievement and success, at whatever level and in whatever context is appropriate.
— North Lanarkshire Council, (n.d.)

Theory into Practice

> He acted like he actually believed in me. I think he was the first person I had met who ever believed in me. He consistently acted like I was worth putting time and effort into. That really affected me in a lot of ways. It really made me want to do something. It really made me want to achieve and to be successful because somebody thought I could.
> — Hancock & Larson (2001)

Stable Environments

Achievement is most likely to occur in environments where young people experience stability. While we cannot, of course, always control the number of different places a young person has lived, nor ensure that their relationships with their parents is stable and consistent, we can ensure that our homes offer the kind of stability necessary for the young people to feel secure. Consistency of caring adults, consistency of expectations and an environment which is predictable in other ways helps the young person develop this sense of security (Maier, 1987).

Also in our work, we can advocate for the fewest number of changes. Together with Social Workers and other involved professionals, we can work to minimise changes in the young person's life until such time as they are able to develop the attributes necessary to handle such changes. A regular school environment, a consistent Social Worker, a consistent group in the home, and continuity of the other important people in their lives all contribute significantly.

Secure Environments

To speak of a 'secure environment' refers to the overall sense of security which a young person might feel in living with us – it includes, of course, as mentioned in Chapter 2, physical, emotional, cultural, psychological and spiritual safety of self. Thus, in our homes, we concern ourselves with things like:

- ensuring that a young person's cultural and family identity are respected and promoted
- making sure they are not harmed in any manner by others in

our home – protecting them as best we are able from physical or emotional abuse, for example:

- ensuring that they are appreciated for their attempts and achievements
- allowing, and supporting, their spiritual beliefs.

It is only from a 'secure base' that young people will venture forth and try new things. When they are insecure at home, they avoid risk-taking. A secure environment supports the development of a secure person.

Caring Environments

Surrounded by caring relationships in a caring environment, a young person feels accepted and valued. As a result, she or he is more willing to take risks knowing that success or failure is less important than the effort of doing so.

"Caring", as Frances Ricks (1992) has said, "is an action verb". Caring is expressed more by how we act with a young person than by what we say, although letting people know, verbally, that we care is, of course important. But perhaps more important is what we as caring individuals actually do when we are with the young person. Young people believe what they experience more than what they hear and so how we express our caring is important. We are, for example, on-time for appointments, follow through with what we say we will do, advocate on their behalf and constantly ask ourselves 'Does this action of mine express caring?' The more that we act as though the young person is important, the more likely it is that they will actually feel they are important.

Expecting Greatness

Not everyone can be 'great' at everything; we recognise that. We also recognise that different young people have different abilities and capacities. And that does not stop us from expecting the personal best from everyone with whom we live. One young person may have different physical abilities from the other and one may have different intellectual abilities. But in all areas the literature is clear, high expectations lead to higher achievements when supported by caring and nurturing people who are significant to the young person.

An environment that 'expects greatness' consistently assesses and reassesses young people's abilities and capacities so that our expectations are grounded in the reality of possibility. At the same time we avoid setting 'common expectations for all' (e.g., that everyone will do well in sports) so that young people can enjoy the part of themselves which is special.

A Supportive Team

We never work alone with the young people in our care. We are always a part of a team which may include ourselves, the Social Worker, the teachers, other involved professionals and most importantly, the parents and family members of the young person who are, after all, the most significant people in the young person's lives. So, we work together, developing a way of being with the young person that we can all support so that she or he receives consistent messages about our belief in their ability to succeed and do well. If we work at cross purposes, we seriously undermine the young person's possibility of successful achievement in their lives.

And in working together we model for the young person the value of cooperation and demonstrate how, working together, we can succeed with the goals we have established together. We also show the young person how people from different backgrounds and experiences can together accomplish more than any of us individually.

Achieving Success Together

When we do things with other people we develop a sense of connectedness and cooperation. When we do things with young people it provides us with numerous opportunities to:

- model facing new challenges
- model dealing with failure (and success)
- create opportunities for encouragement
- demonstrate problem-solving skills
- connect this experience to other learning opportunities
- develop new shills and encourage the young person in doing the same
- model enjoying achievement.

When we do something together with young people we also demonstrate, through our actions, that they are important to us, that we like being with them and that they are valuable and useful. Through doing things together we also show the young person that we, too, are sometimes not successful at first attempt and so we revise our strategies until we find the successful, persisting until success is ours.

Celebrating Achievement

Celebrating achievement does not mean throwing a big party every time someone is successful. It may involve much more simple things like a pat on the shoulder, a comment about 'well done' or even a momentary reflective pause in which we review how the success occurred. It may also be a simple comment at dinner about how someone achieved something today, or how they overcame an obstacle.

These acknowledgements, peppered into the moment, allow a young person to notice their achievements, even if they are reluctant to accept the praise inherent in the noticing. A comment here, a noticing there, all of these reinforce the idea that the young person is capable of achieving that which they wanted to achieve, be it a formal goal or simply a daily activity.

Me: Max, you certainly cleaned a lot of the garden today.
Max: Yea, whatever.

In that simple exchange is acknowledgement of achievement and success. Any place is a place to begin.

At the end of a day, have everyone make a list of their 'achievements' for the day. These might involve scoring a goal, or passing a test and they also might include things like "I figured out a shorter route to school'. Have the young people share these in the group, maybe even at dinner.

Some Everyday Tips for Supporting Achievement Motivation

While the foregoing might provide some ideas for how our living environments with children and young people may be different, you might be wondering what you can do on a daily basis to support achievement and mastery orientation in your home.

- Make 'Well done' a part of your everyday vocabulary. None of us are, really, used to being acknowledged frequently for our small accomplishments and this is especially true for looked after children. Acknowledging the small achievements reinforces the desire to want to do well.
- Make new opportunities available. Too often our homes are simply a repetition, day after day, of the same opportunities. Introduce new opportunities, however small they might be, for young people to achieve and succeed.
- Review the days 'successes' over dinner. They don't need to be great accomplishments. They may be simple things like "You remembered" or "You got 'this' done" but in reviewing them we let young people know we value their accomplishments.
- At the end of the day, debrief with young people how they succeeded, how they could have done things differently, etc. In this process we can help them to notice how successful problem solving skills help them to succeed.
- Encourage a little bit of 'being proud of self' or 'skiting' as they might say in New Zealand. Okay, we know that talking proudly about yourself is normally frowned upon, but when there is little support in your life, self appreciation is not necessarily a bad thing. You could, for example, have 'I am proud of me' sessions in which everyone pats themselves on the back.
- Make story-telling a part of your life. Have times when you tell stories of the success of other young people. Keep 'success photos' on the wall so people might ask questions.
- Ask the young people who their favourite 'achievers' are and why that is so.

As much as anything, supporting achievement motivation involves noticing, and commenting on, the little things of life. For many looked after young people this will be a new experience and so, as we notice their successes we might expect to see a 'So what?' attitude for they do not, often, know how to accept acknowledgement. It is so rare in their experience.

Unfortunately as care-giving people we are sometimes so occupied in the business of care-giving that we forget to notice many of the little successes and that, to us, is sad because it is in the little things where we might make the greatest impact on the lives of these young people.

Have people keep a Success Diary in which they record their achievements, large or small, including their own personal experiences, mementos and anything else which they can reflect on in the future.

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Shopping in Nottingham

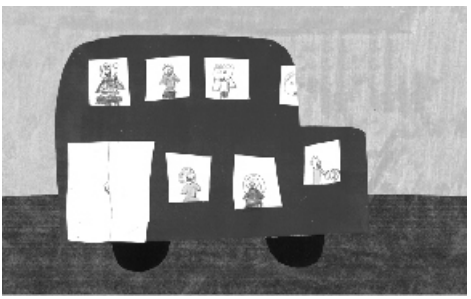
Fell out of bed
Into the kitchen to be fed
Dressed, showered on the bus we go,
Walked miles and miles, ooh, noo,
Bored out of my boots,
Train arrives and hoot hoots.
Train on the move, clitter, clatter.
People rushing back and forth, chatter, chatter.

Mark One here I come,
Miquel's here let's have some fun.
Saw a coat, wasn't quite my style,
Let's look in a different aisle.
Still whizzing past, H & M calls,
Get on the escalator to the next floor.

COME ON COME ON BUY ME!!!!
So I went to have a see.
Should I shouldn't I, is it for me?
You're the one for me, ooh yes indeed

So Debbie agreed.

Miquel 12



10

Active

In ***Getting It Right For Every Child in Fostering and Kinship Care***, the Scottish Government made formal its commitment to creating opportunities for all looked after children and young people to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community (GIRFEC, 2007). That strategy emphasized a central role given to the child or young person and their family in decisions made about their care. Five principles of entitlement were listed for all looked after children and young people:

- It is the right of every child to have their family and friends explored as potential carers if they need to leave the care of their parents.
- Any arrangement for care by family or friend must be in the best interests of the child.
- The safety and needs of the child in any assessment of family or friends as carers must be paramount.
- A child's needs for good family and friends carers should take precedence over the wishes of a parent to exclude the family from care.
- Support to a family or friend placement should be available when needed.

Whether in family kinship care or foster care with a new family, every child and young person benefits from active engagement in their social worlds.

Foster Carers help nurture young people towards becoming an active member of family life, helping them learn about the shared chores of daily living in a family home (or shared flat!). Children and young people also learn to make active contributions to the neighbourhood in which they live with other families. Foster Carers also nurture positive engagements with birth family members, extended family members and friends as appropriate. Government in Scotland has no intention to distort family relationships through any unnecessary interference in the majority of kinship care arrangements. This is especially so where arrangements have been arrived at by the family themselves, with or without the use of Family Group Conferencing.

A Story

She was reading a book as I walked into her room. It surprised me a little, frankly, because most of the other young people who had lived with us were not readers.

"What are you reading?" I asked, a little hesitantly. Truth be known I was worried that it would turn out to be something inappropriate.

"It's about how to project your voice when you are on stage," she replied casually.

"Oh, are you interested in drama?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she replied with conviction. "I am playing the lead in this Autumn's school program. I love acting."

We talked for a while. After all, she had only been with us for a few days and I did not know her well. As it turned out, she was active in school clubs, teams, community activities, and even seemed to be actively trying to help her younger brother, still at home, do well.

I was curious about this. How, I wondered to myself, is this child, who needed to be looked after, so active? After all, this was not my normal experience. Most of the time I had to nag teenagers into getting involved and doing things.

"So, I am wondering," I commented, "you seem to be so active. How come?"

"My mum always said that an active person is a healthy person," she replied. "Ever since we were really young she encouraged us to join clubs, get into sports, read, play, all that. I think she just wanted us to stay out of her hair so she could do what she wanted," she continued a little sadly.

"But it seems like you enjoy all your activities," I said.

"Oh, I do," she responded. "But you know, it is not the same as doing it with somebody, I mean, doing it by yourself is fun, but it doesn't really seem as good as it could be, you know, like if I did it with someone else. I am always doing everything by myself."

"Well, maybe we could do something together," I said.

I could not believe her reaction. It was like I told her she was going to get an extra birthday this year. She sat up on the bed and her eyes fairly sparkled. Her voice got louder and more animated.

"You mean you and me together," she fairly shouted.

Excited would be the wrong word. She seemed to grow right in front of my eyes, like Alice after she ate the mushroom. I had really never seen a kid get so excited about such a simple suggestion.

In the days that followed we explored the things we could do together. Every time I suggested something she jumped at the idea and I could see that what was exciting her was the idea of 'doing together' – something, it seems, she had little experience of doing. As we pursued the options I could not help but think about all the other children with whom I had worked and how, as they had developed more active interests they had become more connected with other people through those activities. But here was Sheri already so active, yet desperate to be connected. Almost the reverse of previous kids, but in the end it was the same, wasn't it? Doing together, being active, would not only help her develop her self, but would also connect us together.

And what could be better than that?

A Little Theory

Like other authors of his time, Hungarian Holocaust survivor Eugene Heimler spent a lifetime writing about what he had learned through experiences as a teenager surviving two concentration camps for political prisoners and two extermination camps, including Auschwitz where those entering the camp passed under a sign reading ¨Work Will Set You Free!¨ (Heimler, 1975). As a teenager, Heimler found himself the principal carer of children working in the Camp kitchens peeling potatoes and preparing food for the guards. Through access to potato peelings and scraps of food, Heimler and some of these children survived and later re-settled, in the UK, Canada and the US.

Like other survivors, Heimler wrote about psychological experiments involving meaningless work that was carried out with prisoners. When rubble resulting from Allied Forces bombing needed to be cleared, volunteers stepped forward from amongst the prisoner population to help clear it. Such activity had a purpose and gave prisoners some kind of meaning in life. They were helping to clear rubble. Then the Nazi psychologists decided to test ¨meaningless work¨ and required prisoners to move rubble from one end of the compound and then move it back again, hour after hour. As exhausted prisoners lost all sense of purpose, time and time again they committed suicide either by throwing themselves upon the electrified fences or being shot while running away. In his later professional work with the chronically unemployed and so-called ¨work-shy¨ youths, Heimler highlighted the emotional significance of purposeful activity.

If purposeful activity is important for a child's or young person's sense of personal wellbeing, so too is activity an important vehicle through which purposeful communication takes place. VanderVen (2003) talked about different types of activities that can be used at bedtime to help children slow down (using a bath and a story at bedtime) or rev them up (for the right age group, a Ninja Turtles DVD), change moods (going out for an ice cream), facilitate restorative alone time (with an iPod music session) or nurture relational group work (in a 5 a side football team).

Every child or young person who achieves ¨*looked after*¨ status – for whatever reason – presents a unique set of challenges as well as

opportunities for those who provide daily life spaces of care and nurture developmental outcomes that will make a positive difference in those children's futures. It is easy to focus on problems, because often there are many. The biggest challenge is to focus on personal, family and relational strengths these young people carry with them helping children and young people build from strength to strengths (Maier, 2004). This means focusing on what makes each child or young person resilient and nurturing developmental assets that will equip them to become more emotionally, mentally and physically healthy young adults, and prospective parents (Altman, 2002).

Research carried out by America's Search Institute in Minnesota during the past decade involving more than 3 million North American children and young people (www.search-institute.org) identified 40 developmental assets that were highly correlated with quality outcomes for young adults, measured for example, through longer-term involvement in mental health and criminal justice services. 20 of these developmental assets are considered **External** to the child or young person, reflecting themes of *support*, *empowerment*, *expectations* & *boundaries* and *constructive use of time* within family and extended family networks. The other 20 developmental assets are nurtured within each child or young person, reflecting an **Internal** *commitment to learning*, *social values & self worth*, *competencies* and *positive identity*.

It is worth noting that 15% of the ±3 million children and young people participating in these North American studies reported 10 or less of the 40 developmental assets. These were the young people most likely to have achieved ¨***looked after***¨ status. 41% of the respondents reported 11-20 assets; 35% reported 21-30 assets; and 9% with more than 30 developmental assets. This research also showed that boys and young men experienced a deterioration in developmental assets (indicative of reduced resiliency) as they progressed from intermediate through secondary school. It was only at the end of secondary school that boys started catching up developmentally with girls. The big challenge for Foster Carers is: ***How do we assist the most vulnerable children and young people, those with ¨looked after¨ status and fewest developmental assets – to become more developmentally resilient?***

Getting It Right For Every Looked After Child (The Scotland Government, 2007) means examining where *We Can and Must Do Better* (Scottish Executive, 2007). The ***From Strength to Strengths*** initiative focuses attention on 20 Search Institute outcomes, amended in order to make them more meaningful and accessible to European and Commonwealth populations in the South Pacific and North America. **12 External Assets** are wrapped around each looked after child from the first Golden Hour of Opportunity of their arrival into the foster home. **8 Internal Assets** are then nurtured on a daily basis from Hour 1, Day 1. (Go to the Learning Zone at www.cyc-net.org and register for the 20 Module ***From Strength to Strengths for Foster Carers*** Course that can be accessed from your own home.)

Each ***From Strength to Strengths Outcome*** is monitored and recorded on a weekly basis by a designated Foster Carer, regardless of how long that young person stays in the foster home. The designated Foster Carer records either **UNTESTED**, **ASSESSING** or **ACHIEVING**. In one sentence the Foster Carer explains why any of the ***From Strength to Strengths Outcomes*** remain **UNTESTED**. They also give evidence for Outcomes they are **ASSESSING** or where they have seen the child **ACHIEVING**. Looked after children and young people are encouraged be active participants in weekly ***From Strength to Strengths*** reviews and recordings.

By the time of the first statutory LAC (Looked After Children) Review is convened[1], both the young person and their designated carer can summarise developmental outcomes achieved during the initial 4-12 weeks of the placement. They monitor these thereafter as agreed. The first 4-12 weeks is arguably the most significant crisis period for any *looked after* child (Pikes, Burrell, & Holliday, 2005). ***From Strength to Strengths*** summaries help to inform and guide a more child and family-oriented ***Looked After Care Plan*** that can be implemented during the ensuing three months to a year. It is this level of developmental focus and practice consistency that looked after children and young people require if their *Corporate Parents* – those responsible for monitoring looked after status – are to demonstrate that they can and will do better!

[1] Commonly within 4 —12 weeks.

As specific developmental outcomes are identified, they focus attention on a looked after young person's participation in home and community life (Thompson, 2001). Each of these developmental outcomes reinforces the importance of children and young people having opportunities for active participation in creative activities during alone times, as well as opportunities for small group and peer group activity. Purposeful activities are frequently a focus for ongoing dialogue and review. We make no apologies here, for encouraging Foster Carers to nurture pro-social activities in their households. Ask yourself the question: ¨Do I want my child or teenager actively involved in this?"

ACTIVE
Service to Others – Young person serves in the community 1+ per week.
Youth Programmes – Young person spends 3+ hours per week in school or community sports, clubs or organizations.
Planning and Decision-Making – Young person plans ahead and makes choices.
Creative Activities – Young person spends 3+ hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theatre or other arts.
Reading for Pleasure – Young person is read to or has learned to read for pleasure 3+ hours per week.
Youth as Community Resources – Young person performs useful roles in the community.

> "You are what you do and become what you've done."
> — Karen VanderVen, 1999

Theory Into Practice

Let's think for a few moments about what being active might mean for a looked after child or young person living in your foster home. If quality care is to be produced in your family setting then as Foster Carers you will want to reflect on the kinds of activities that your looked after child or young person might be encouraged to engage in. In exploring types of activities that might be nurtured in foster family homes, imagine being the new foster child recently arrived for a short-term stay, entering different rooms and pausing to reflect on the kinds of activities that happen in these spaces within your own family home ...,

1. Activities that happen in Kitchens and Dining Rooms

Eating touches the hearts of most children and young people. This means that cooking and baking smells, warmth, cups of tea or coffee and welcoming chat makes the family kitchen a kind of Mission Control centre for most families. The same may be said about shared flatting arrangements. Invitations to be active around kitchens in support of family life and to nurture relationships through kitchen-related activities range from food preparation, cooking, baking, setting the table, cleaning up, dish washing, etc. Think of these as activities instead of chores, because it is possible for Foster Carers to engage in kitchen related activities with a more positive orientation to their task. If there is a dining room in the house, then opportunities are provided for extending kitchen activities into more formal dining arrangements. These offer opportunities to practise waitressing, setting a table for formal dining, performing as a juice or tea steward, or the provider of tray services between kitchen and the dining room. There are many ways in which children and young people can be engaged and nurtured into purposeful relationships with carer(s) while being active around the kitchen.

2. Activities that happen in Study Bedrooms and Private Spaces

Bedrooms, and the expanded notion of Study Bedrooms, represent private spaces for looked after children and young people in a foster home. Careful assessments are made of bedrooms and the availability of private spaces in the formal

approval of foster homes. While young people may be encouraged to do school homework at the kitchen table or more public spaces, there is still much to be said for nurturing a child's use of a designated study area with small table or desk within their private space. That way they can arrange their desk for personal use in addition to setting up their bedroom so that it reflects positively something of their personal and social identity. Daily life activities that naturally develop around Study Bedrooms include opportunities associated with laundry, tidying up clothes, perhaps ironing, making the bed, vacuuming the room, etc. Once again, the issue isn't about simply introducing rules about household chores. Instead, think of nurturing opportunities for the learning of life skills. When life skills are learned interactively with a sensitive Foster Carer, then relationship building and task-oriented learning go hand in hand.

3. Activities that happen in Washrooms and Toilets

Other spaces in the foster home involve shared spaces that, depending on occupancy and who controls the lock, become very private spaces. Activities that place in these private spaces are rarely shared. This does not mean that activities that take place in private spaces are not of concern to the vigilant Foster Carer. Nappies and toilet training for younger children extend to life skills required for personal hygiene after toileting. One must not underestimate the life skills learning associated with wiping oneself after toileting, especially if a child has not systematically learned such skills at an earlier age. On-set of the first menstrual cycle is another important illustration. And then, of course, there is the common family experience of children pounding on the bathroom door (when that is the only toilet), demanding access and the curtailment of private activities behind the locked door. As the door finally opens, so it is that the social and public relations of home life continue. And in moments like that, purposeful learning opportunities are highlighted around life skills associated with tidying up after a shower, towelling up water on the floor and potential slip hazards for others, learning to clean the toilet and change toilet paper, cleaning the sink and shower facility, room ventilation, etc.

4. Activities that happen in Corridors and Stairwells

Interpersonal exchanges and rituals of encounter that take place daily in the corridors and stairwells of foster homes are rarely given careful consideration. What one is wearing when leaving the privacy of one's own bedroom and moving to the toilet after waking in the middle of the night is very important for all members of the foster home family. A night light strategically located in corridors and in public stairwells is always recommended. Younger children are frequently seen playing with toys or with dress-up in corridors between bedrooms, or just off the kitchen or family room. It is as though they can be sort of private while maintaining sight supervision of carers and other family members. Most will recall times when teenagers have stormed down corridors, gone into their rooms and slammed the door. Opportunities presented for purposeful activity with others in corridors range from learning basic social protocols around Good Morning exchanges, illness (as in running to the toilet or vomiting), helping another take something from the laundry to particular rooms, vacuuming or cleaning corridors and stairwells, playfully sliding down polished hardwood corridors in your socks, resolving interpersonal exchanges of the negative variety that quite often erupt in corridors. The main thing to remember is this: Never underestimate the kind of social activities and exchanges that begin in the corridors and stairwells of your foster home.

5. Activities that happen in Family Rooms, Sitting Rooms and Public Spaces

Most foster homes have public spaces where family members gather, often to watch television, perhaps listen to music, watch DVDs, perhaps use a PlayStation or other type of video game. Unlike private spaces where the occupant sets most of the rules about entry and use of facilities, in public spaces of a foster home there are more frequently ground rules. It may be that there are designated chairs or seating arrangements, as with ¨That is Dad's chair¨ or ¨Mum always sits there¨. Ground rules normally apply with regards to the television or video controller(s). These may operate on a *¨first come, first served¨* basis, or *¨we always watch the Six o'clock News¨*. Then there are those who attempt to pre-register their intentions with the television when it is located in a public place, as with *¨Mum and I are watching the last episode of* ***Lost*** *on*

Tuesday night¨. Test Match or Football Game supporters in the family frequently book their tickets for *¨the Family Room on Saturday¨*. Opportunities will daily present themselves to engage relationally in shared activities with children or young people in Family Room and Sitting Rooms. The learning of social repartee represent important life skills for looked after children and young people. Creating special times around television, DVDs, sports nights or slumber parties are all valuable opportunities for children and young people to feel included and valued. Such opportunities grow from their presence, enabling children or young people to engage actively in normative family activities.

6. Activities that happen on Decks, Patios and in Gardens

Moving outside the foster home house or flat, one often encounters a deck, a patio or gardens. Gardens may range from the postage stamp variety to vast expanses of greenery, foliage and play areas. Add the prospect of a pet or pets, depending on the size of the place, and a whole new world of opportunities can open for a child or young person. At first, a child may feel anxious about engaging with a world outside the foster home, uncertain about pets perhaps through prior bad experiences. What will happen in the garden? When welcoming a new foster child, be sure and walk them around all the garden and spaces associated with the foster home. Talk with them about the garden and show them how you look after it. Engage young people in the BBQs and outdoor picnics that may happen on a deck or patio. If there is space, use the garden for kicking a ball or engaging in an activity like badminton, tether ball or throwing a ball with the dog. Children or young people who have never had access to decks, patios or gardens are sometimes more hesitant. Most, however, come to enjoy such public spaces offering opportunities for both private and public activities.

7. Activities that happen around Barns, Paddocks and Farm Buildings

Some looked after children and young people are fortunate enough to be placed with rural families where they are offered opportunities to learn about growing up on a farm. Dairy farming experiences range from feeding and watering the stock, calving, milking and so forth. Stock farming introduces a child to

harvesting and storage of hay, feeding and attending to animals, working with dogs, and so forth. Grain farming introduces one to farm machinery, tractors, quad bikes, harvesters, etc. Clearly there are major health and safety issues that must be addressed in order for farming and rural families to become registered foster homes. Still when they are registered, carefully selected young people are provided with active learning opportunities that can be life changing.

8. Activities that happen along Streets in Neighbourhoods & Communities

It is more common that looked after children and young people will find themselves venturing out onto the street, to the local park, neighbourhood shops and community. Locating the nearest bus stop and learning about the bus routes are important to a young person getting oriented to a new neighbourhood. A bicycle introduces mobility and the likelihood of meeting up with other bicycle riding youths in the neighbourhood, or it may be that the more popular form of transport in the neighbourhood involves a skateboard. Major emphasis needs to be placed on safety. Sometimes publicly and sometimes discreetly, Foster Carers monitor activities that develop along neighbourhood streets and neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood and street activities taking place within a network of family and extended family relations means that when children are mis-behaving anywhere in the neighbourhood, they will be dealt with by concerned adults seeking to re-orient them away from their mischievous ways. Neighbourhood watch opportunities are many. Most important, Foster Carers need to lead by example when it comes to establishing and maintaining neighbourly relations with those living along their street or neighbourhood.

9. Activities that happen on School Buses, at School and in School Playgrounds

When asked to think about memories as a school boy or girl, and about classroom and playground life at primary school, most will be able to reflect on a particular place, perhaps smells, maybe the sounds of pigeons cooing, being splattered from high places or a school bell. Others will recall how the school day actually began and ended with a school bus ride, where the occupants of the

school bus were neighbourhood associates or friends, sometimes arch enemies, who happened to require the school bus. If the looked after child or young person living in your foster home catches a school bus, take an interest in what she or he says about the bus rides. Other young people take public transport, whether a bus, train or underground, and learning opportunities abound for Foster Carers to engage in activities as a family or with the child or young person living in your foster home. There are both life skills learning about public and private transport as well as relational opportunities to engage in shared activities that can be fun. Teachers normally have given thought about the use of purposeful learning activities in and around classrooms. Less attention is given to what happens in school playgrounds where social and life skills are developing with peers through group-oriented games, one-to-one (dyad), threesome (triad) and small group exchanges are all important components of school playground activities. Active listening to tales from the school playground while having a biscuit and a cup of tea or drink are always important.

10. Activities that Cross Boundaries between Schools and Neighbourhoods

Brief mention should be made of activities that happen when children and young people from one street or neighbourhood engage with kids from other neighbourhoods. There are many places such as swimming pools, recreation or sports centres, school playgrounds and courts where children and young people from different neighbourhoods converge. Street groups form into cliques, sometimes gangs, engaging with street groups or cliques from elsewhere. Depending on where your foster home is located, this issue can be a big one to engage. Most Foster Carers, however, won't find themselves living along gang boundaries but children and young people going about their daily lives, minding their own business, have become the fatal victims of cross-fire between feuding gang members.

11. Swimming, Camping, Tramping, Orienteering and Risk-Taking Activities

Looked after children and young people often join Foster Carer families in a variety of sporting, recreational and leisure activities.

Risk assessments for water sports, tramping, camping, orienteering and adventure activities are important for any family. However, additional duty of care obligations are involved whenever looked after children and young people engage in risk-taking activities. Whoever it is that holds statutory responsibility for a child or young person's looked after status and their placement in your foster home, that person must give their approval, preferably in writing. Swimming lessons are normally approved when offered by licensed instructors and lifeguards. Participation in the Cadets or Scouts requires scrutiny of volunteer leaders. This may involve routine checks as carried out by an active parent or more formal Police Disclosure checks aimed at removing unsuitable youth club leaders from direct relations with children and young people. There is a myriad of life skills to be learned and enjoyment to be gained through individual recreation and leisure activities as well as team sports and competitions. Being active, feeling active, thinking active, living active reinforces health and wellbeing, a major contributor to quality care in a family setting.

Tips for helping a child/young person be active

When thinking how you might help a child or young person become a more active participant in the daily life of your foster home, consider for a moment how you might communicate the message, ***¨How can I help you become more active participants in the daily life of our foster home?¨*** (and also part of our neighbourhood and community).

Think of the words you might use to explain how this message will be communicated. Then, because we think active learning (learning from experience) is sometimes more helpful than passive learning (learning from reading), let's try out some tips for helping a child or young person be active through playing Word Games.

Instructions: Using the list of Active Words for Quality Foster Caring, pick one of the words and then pick one of the words to the right before using it in a statement about an activity you'd like to do. So let's try using Word Games for tips about helping kids be active:

In the left column below shaded in grey you will see a list of key *Active Words*. In the right column next to each are a number of *Action Words* that go with the *Active Word* next to it. Choose an *Active Word* and then pick one of the *Action Words* alongside it. Now use that *Action Word* in a statement about an activity you'd like to do. At different times, pick another *Active Word* from elsewhere on the list and repeat the exercise. We give you an example for the first *Active Word*, (using the *Action Word* vigorous) just to get you started.

Active Words heard in Quality Foster Caring

Active	(adj) lively, vigorous, energetic, full of life, on the go, full of zip, dynamic; (Antonym: inactive). (also in force, functioning, effective in action, operating, operational, functional, working (Antonym: ineffective) and working, involved, committed, enthusiastic, keen (Antonym: passive). *An Example: Let's have a vigorous game of football!*
Action	(n) act, deed, exploit, achievement, accomplishment, feat, stroke (also connotes battle, fighting, combat, conflict, engagement, encounter, clash, skirmish, dogfight, raid, war, warfare; and also suit, prosecution, lawsuit, proceedings, case, court case, charge (Antonym: ambush)
Activity	(n) action, movement, motion, bustle, commotion, doings, goings-on; (Antonym: inactivity). Also connotes pursuit, interest, hobby, occupation, leisure interest, endeavour, pastime
Act	(v) do something, take action, take steps, proceed, be active, perform, operate, work, discharge duty, accomplish. Also connotes (n) action, deed, doing, undertaking exploit, performance, achievement, accomplishment, feat and connotes (n) work, take effort, function

Acting Up	(n) naughtiness, misconduct, mischief
Acting Out	(n) performance, performing
Play Acting	(n) fantasy, pretence, role-play, imagination, a story, a game; (Antonym: reality)
Actual	(adj) real, definite, genuine, authentic, concrete, tangible
Actually	(adv) in fact, really, in point of fact, in reality, truly, essentially
Activate	(v) make active, set in motion, set off, turn on, trigger, start, get going, stimulate, galvanize, initiate, motivate
Enact	(v) pass, ratify, endorse, perform, act out
Self-Actualisation	perceived personality, somebody's personality, or an aspect of somebody's personality, especially as perceived by others; self-interest, somebody's own individual interests and welfare, especially when placed before those of other people; self, develop a sense of self.

Some Closing Ideas for You, the Foster Carer

- **Active:** Consider going for energetic walks and invite others to go with you.
- **Action:** Acknowledge the efforts and thank others for helping with the dishes or clearing up.
- **Action:** Say I'm sorry whenever there are clashes that might have been resolved more peacefully. Also remember there are personal boundaries beyond which one will face legal proceedings.

- **Activities:** Don't you just love pastime activities, team sports or hobby pursuits on a rainy day!
- **Act:** Acknowledge achievements. Let them know you are proud of their achievements.
- **Acting Up:** Remember – each of us has a mischievous streak!
- **Acting Out:** Learning to perform socially takes practice. It's not always about getting it wrong and causing trouble, especially if you've been told that a lot of times.
- **Play Acting:** Role play a different way of dealing with a teacher or responding to a peer after they have taken something from you.
- **Actually:** Go to the cinema and on the way home, chat about how the film characters might operate if they moved into the house next door.
- **Activate:** Our new wireless broadband connection has been turned on. Let's talk about the family ground rules we're going to use when accessing the internet.
- **Enact:** To what extent does our foster home welcome, put young people at ease, and stimulate their enjoyment in learning?
- **Self-Actualisation:** Developing a sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-confidence involves an active approach to daily living. Just do it!

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Fun Fair

Spinning in the waltzers
Feeling rather sick
Eating candyfloss
Head feels like a brick

The fair can be fun
You can play on slides
The dodgems are bumpy
But there are lots of other rides

The fair can be fun
But it's really loud
Music blasting everywhere
In a busy crowd

The fair can be fun
You can play on slides
The dodgems are bumpy
But there are lots of other rides
The big wheel can be scary
When you're high up in the sky
Feeling scared and lonely
Trying not to cry

Jack

11

Enjoyment

Enjoyment is about receiving pleasure from something one does. It may be an experience derived from interactions with or in the company of others, such as play, or something one experiences solitarily, such as reading or another hobby. When enjoyment is a part of everyday life, life is a more pleasant experience than it is without enjoyment. Responsible enjoyment, which is our main concern, involves deriving pleasure which does not hurt, or interfere with, another person.

Enjoyment is especially important in connection with learning. The more a person enjoys the experience of learning – in school or in everyday life – the greater is the possibility for achievement and a fuller life. Thus, in helping young people to learn to enjoy, we create for and with them opportunities that will be enjoyable for them. We do this, not in the sense of 'catering to them' or always trying to please them. Rather it is in the sense that the young person will derive pleasure from the experience itself. Because the experience of enjoyment is intrinsically satisfying, young people who derive enjoyment are encouraged to repeat the experience. The person who experiences enjoyment also wants others to share the experience. So when we help a young person to achieve responsible enjoyment, they will be motivated to do the same for others, thereby contributing to the well-being of others.

As Foster Carers we wonder in any given situation, 'Is the young person deriving responsible pleasure from this experience and what could I do to help her or him find enjoyment here?'

A Story

I am walking with the dog through the neighbourhood. It is minus 20 degrees Celsius and there are a few feet of snow on the ground. It is stunning. As I walk down the streets I think I am walking through the middle of a Canadian Christmas card. It feels unreal. I am in awe that anything can be so beautiful. Everywhere I look there is fresh sparkle as the moonlight catches the frozen world.

Later I am talking to my friends who live in a different (and warmer) country. I tell them it is minus 20 and there are a few feet of snow on the ground. They think it must be horrible. "It will soon be over", they say. "Not too soon, I hope", I reply. Years ago I would have agreed with their wish.

When I was a kid growing up, we seldom saw snow or felt cold like this. When it did come, as it will occasionally when you live in Canada, it was a rare and exciting event.

Short-lived but special. Now it is an annual occurrence. We expect it here in Quebec. We anticipate it. And yes, sometimes we even welcome it. For when the snows come, the world changes. The autumn red of the maple leaves is long gone. The golden grasses of late summer are buried. The green of spring and summer are but fond memories. Mighty trees bow under the weight of the snow. The world is painted in a soft pristine white beauty and draped in wonder.

It's all a matter of perspective. What you get used to. What you learn to like. What you eventually accept as a part of your world. Winter in Canada is an adjustment, but a recurring one. Anticipated. Surprising. Stunning. Delightful. I walk the same road I walked with my friend in the fall. He was stunned then. I am stunned now. Each season paints its own picture.

As I walk I pass people out enjoying the evening, houses lit for the holidays, footprints left by others who walked,

enjoyed and then disappeared into the warmth of their homes. The world is cold but filled with life and life passages. I am struck by the privilege of this experience bundled as I am in the warmth of northern winter clothing.

But it is only this amazing because I am willing to let it be so. I could experience it as harsh, unwelcoming, cold, savage, ugly. I could be sad, bored, angry, waiting for it to end. But then it would be a long winter. It is a matter of choice. The outcome of a decision made. As the dog and I walk through this wonderland, I am aware that life is filled with opportunities to realise an attitude towards the things we encounter and I am pleased that I discovered this perspective.

The dog doesn't think about it. She just enjoys the walk. I try to copy her. Dogs do seem to know how to enjoy their experiences.

A Little Theory

> Enjoyment may play a pivotal role in gaining access to categories of experience, either through the direct effect of rewards or through enhancing internal locus of control.
> — Haworth, 1996

It is important for us to distinguish between enjoyment and achievement for, as the research shows, if we focus only on the outcome we end up supporting young people to focus on those outcomes rather than the pleasure and enjoyment of the voyage. While it is true that in many instances the outcome is important, it is also true that many of our greatest enjoyments come from the pleasure of doing an activity. Think for a moment of fishing or walking or even just lazing in the sun – in these the enjoyment lies primarily in the process (although we do confess that catching a fine fish for dinner can enhance that enjoyment!).

Maslow (1970) in identifying the needs of individuals, identified 'enjoyment of new experiences' as one of characteristics of the highest of human needs. William Glasser (1984) in identifying the

five basic needs of all individuals identifies the importance of fun. He suggested that 'having fun' is as basic a need as belonging or acceptance. He actually said that fun is the generic reward for learning.

Liu and Wu (2007) said that enjoyment can be defined as the degree to which performing an activity is perceived as providing pleasure and joy in its own right, aside from performance consequences. They have suggested that when a person's behaviours are prompted by intrinsic motivation such as interest and enjoyment, they are more willing to persist in such behaviours in the future. In this statement we see the importance of enjoyment for learning and maintaining new learning. Enjoyment has also been linked conclusively to the continuation of physical exercise (Wankel, 1993) and the improvement in reading skills. Jacobs (2004), in a large scale study of elementary school readers, found that the more that enjoyment of reading increased, the greater were the skills evidenced by the readers. Enjoyment has also been linked to skill development in music, arts and other subjects.

In a recent Canadian study of adolescents, it was noted that enjoyment is one of the prime motivators for participating in physical activity, as noted in the following quote (Allison, 2005).

> ... one participant said that he "just wants to do it for the enjoyment of the activity." Participants were concerned about events, such as competition, that diminish their enjoyment of the activity. For example, a participant commented on the consequences of focusing on winning when participating in sports: "That's when you start playing for ... not the fun of it. You start getting too aggressive; just to win. That causes stress." ... a participant said that ... he experiences a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment when trying to learn new skills."

Importantly, new research is showing that enjoyment is an important contributor to the quality of life (Faulkner & Layzell, 2000) throughout the life span – it is good for young and old alike! So, enjoyment is a valuable life quality with many benefits for all.

The literature suggests that whether we enjoy something or not is ultimately a choice that we make. Perhaps that is the best

message we can take from the literature: that it is our role to help young people make the choice to enjoy life and its experiences. We are wise to remember what Henry Maier (2003) has said – that ultimately, mutual enjoyment is a relationship building experience – so, we may as well enjoy it, too. Enjoyment is, after all, one of the main reasons why people keep doing what they do.

As Kirkland (2000) has said, one of our goals in helping youth is to help them to find ways to "enjoy self and life".

> "No man is a failure who is enjoying life."
> — William Faulkner

Theory into Practice

So, given the evidence that enjoyment is important in so many areas, especially learning and learning new ways of being and acting in the world, what can we, as Foster Carers do to help young people enhance their enjoyment of experiences which we hope will help them to lead better lives?

Assessing Enjoyment:

A publication of the Children's Services Network (2005) in Britain found that, in studying outcomes of children's homes, the *enjoying outcome* was underdeveloped, "since there is very little scope to describe how children and young people's enjoyment of learning is supported". As noted, there is difficulty "in measuring enjoyment in view of its subjective nature". While it may be true that it is difficult to know what counts as enjoyment, other than subjectively, we must never-the-less focus on enjoyment given the obvious positive outcomes associated with it.

When young people first come to live with us we might ask ourselves 'Do they enjoy life?' or 'Do they have enjoyment in their lives?' Or are they simply going through the motions, doing what is necessary without having any enjoyment or even 'fun' as Glasser has suggested. Some of the things we might look at include:

- Do they seem, in general, to enjoy life?

- Do they enjoy school and the learning activities associated with going to school?
- What areas of their lives seem to give them pleasure (even if we do not approve of these areas)? Reading? Playing? Sports?
- Do they seem able to have fun?
- Do they engage with others in doing activities just for the simple pleasure of the doing?
- Are they engaged in activities that 'might' offer enjoyment?
- Do they seem to know how to enjoy themselves?
- Do they, simple as it seems, ever talk about enjoying something?

But, even if we do see indicators such as the above, how do we measure 'enjoyment'?. Perhaps the simplest answer to this question is that it depends on the culture in which it is expressed. In some cultures such gestures as smiles, laughter, and 'high fives' may indicate enjoyment, where in other cultures, less obvious indicators may be the norm. It is important, therefore, that we consider a young person's culture and history as we make our assessment.

Prompting Enjoyment

Given the importance of enjoyment it seems appropriate that we would nurture young people to experience enjoyment in particular areas. So, how might we do that?

- **Help young people to find areas of involvement which give them pleasure.** As each young person is different so each of them might find enjoyment in different areas. One may find pleasure in sports, another in the arts. One young person may enjoy simple walks in nature while another may enjoy something more intellectual. Our job is to explore different areas with them, supporting them in trying different things, until they find an area or activity which gives them pleasure.
- **Help young people find enjoyment in school and academic learning.** Many of the young people who come to live with us do not have positive experiences of schooling. In order to help them do better in life we want to help them have a positive experience, even to enjoy, the process of learning. Part of doing this is for us to make it valuable but more importantly is for us to work to make it actually possible. So, we need to assess a

young person's ability and capacity and evaluate the school programme to ensure it is realistic. When the expectations of the school environment are beyond a young person's capacity, they will never enjoy school. This does not mean they have to like maths, but perhaps they can come to develop positive relationships with special teachers so that they enjoy the experience of that teacher and therefore come to have positive associations with the school environment. This may be the first step in learning to enjoy more of the school experience.

- **Build enjoyment into your daily life experiences with young people**. Too often, helping seems to have to be terribly serious. And yet much of the literature suggests that having fun, pleasure, and enjoyment is an important part of helping young people to connect, develop relationships and heal. We thus need to ensure that there are daily opportunities for all of us, Foster Carers and young people alike, to have fun together. We may have reading times, or walking times, or sports times together, as for example as a family group, refraining from too much competition and instead focussing on the process of what we are doing. Asking young people if there are things they enjoy that we can do together opens up many opportunities for 'joint enjoyment' and relationship enhancement.
- **Encourage enjoyment**. Strange as that may seem, people don't always notice what they are experiencing. And sometimes young people feel guilty when they are enjoying themselves, especially if their own parents feel guilty about them living away from home. So, we can help young people enjoy themselves by noticing, and indicating that it is okay, when they do seem to be enjoying something. Simple comments like 'You seem to enjoy reading' can go a long way towards helping a young person to further their enjoyment. Notice that we are focussing on the process and not the outcome. While outcomes are of course important, it is in the process where enjoyment lies. We can also encourage young people to enjoy life by simply taking time to notice things with them which they may not normally attend to, such as watching the clouds float by, or listening to the sounds around us. Simple, yet powerful ways to help young people notice the enjoyable aspects of life.

Sit down with a young person who is living with you. Discuss together what gives you both pleasure, the things you enjoy and things you may enjoy together. Be prepared, however, because you, too, may have to try something new.

Some Everyday Tips for Promoting Enjoyment

While it may seem somewhat pedantic to suggest 'tips for enjoying', we think it is important to look at how we can do so in our everyday lives with young people. So, here are some 'tips'.

- Make an effort to notice the wonders and beauty around us.
- Go for walks, runs, strolls, in the sun and in the rain.
- Do something which is going to seem silly.
- Try a new activity, something neither of you have done before.
- Tell jokes until your belly hurts from laughter.
- Smile a lot, laugh fully, enjoy wit.
- Discuss 'What did you enjoy today?' over dinner.
- Ask 'How will you enjoy yourself today?' at breakfast.
- Have a cup of hot chocolate on a cold evening and talk about how good it is.
- Celebrate successes of whatever quality.
- Comment out loud when you are enjoying something you are doing.
- Practise enjoying all your senses with young people – taste, smell, touch, listen, look.
- Find opportunities to create with young people: build, paint, make music, write a play, cook, build a sand castle.
- Help someone else together.
- Stop and smell the flowers.
- Feel the wind; warm, cold, and the scents that it brings to you.
- Catch snow flakes in your mouth as they fall.

I Enjoy ...

What sports do you enjoy?

I enjoy ...

- ☐ playing football
- ☐ playing basketball
- ☐ going swimming
- ☐ skateboarding
- ☐ skiing
- ☐ bowling
- ☐ hill walking
- ☐ playing tennis
- ☐ playing cricket
- ☐ walking the dog

What foods do you enjoy eating?

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

What do you enjoy reading?

What kind of movies do you enjoy?

Where do you enjoy hangin' out?

> No enjoyment, however inconsiderable, is confined to the present moment. A man is happier for life from having made once an agreeable tour, or lived for any length of time with pleasant people, or enjoyed any considerable interval of innocent pleasure.
> — Sydney Smith

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Running away from it all

Why be so hard on yourself,
When others stand by your side?
Why throw away a chance in life,
When you never even tried?

They never did anything wrong,
And never put me in danger.
Both of them looked after me,
Even though I was a stranger.

They connected to me and saw my emotions.
They taught me confidence and taught me to be strong,
But I am running scared of having a family,
And I am running because I am scared I belong.

Anthony 17

12

Belonging

Belonging is about having a sense of place, a connected significance to others. It involves a feeling of being valued by and attached to other individuals (like in a family or group), a neighbourhood or community, a culture or a people. Having a sense of belonging is fundamental to developing a sense of worth (Laursen, 2005). Without a sense of belonging, a young person feels detached, disconnected and alone.

One can 'belong' to more than one group or place at a time as the human capacity for belonging seems almost unlimited. One can belong, for example, to a family, a foster family, a school, a sports group, a church, a peer group and a neighbourhood association all at the same time. While sometimes these senses of belonging can create conflicts (family and peers being a common example) a young person can balance these with the proper supports and guidance.

Belonging provides the secure base from which we are able to comfortably venture into the world, try new things, and successfully encounter new experiences – it is this attachment and belonging, for example, which allows the child to gradually move away from the parent and explore her surroundings. Those first few exploratory steps, we might say, are founded on belonging safely. Belonging with others, which develops through a sense of identification with those others, evolves as we do things together and thus 'doing things' with young people is an important part of

their development. After all, belonging is perhaps the most basic of human needs and if this need is not met, a young person will seek to have it met elsewhere

As Foster Carers we always wonder, 'What can I do to support this young person to develop a sense of secure belonging here, or elsewhere, in her or his life?'

A Story

John had been in the foster home for only three months but had seemed to settle in well. He had come to us after a number of other placements in his short twelve year life. Although we had, we thought, done everything we could to help him settle in to our home, he kept running away. Well, maybe not running away, but 'taking off', 'not coming back' and the like, and he was frequently absent from his new school.

Late on a Thursday morning we received another call saying that John had not been in school that day. We weren't too worried because John had done this before and had always come home for dinner as if everything was okay. In the late afternoon he wandered in.

"John! Where have you been?" I asked. "The school called to tell us you weren't there again." I was annoyed but was trying not to show it because I really did want to understand.

"Nowhere. Just hanging around," he said, giving his normal reply.

Normally at this time I would have pushed him on the need to be responsible and follow through on going to school, but this time I decided to ask about why he was doing this.

"John, where do you go, what do you do when you take off like this?"

"I don't do nothing", he replied.

"Well, where do you do this 'nothing'?"

"With my friends", he replied.

"What friends?"

"The ones from the old neighbourhood."

I didn't know this. I had thought he was hanging out with kids from his new school because he had always done okay in his previous school and only started to be absent from school when he moved in with us and changed to a school closer to home, the one all the other kids in our home went to. His old neighbourhood was a long series of bus rides away.

"Do you mean kids from your old school?"

"Ya. Them. My friends."

"But you have friends at your new school. Why do you go back to the old school?"

He looked at me like I was stupid. "Well, they're my buds, ain't they? Like, they know me and I know them. The kids at the new school, they ain't the same. Like I don't fit in, eh?"

It was strange, I thought. John had seemed to fit in well in the foster home so I had assumed he didn't have any trouble making new friends and finding a place for himself.

"What do you mean 'you don't fit in' with the kids at the new school?"

"They're different, aren't they? A bunch of snobs with their fancy clothes, their funny way of talking and their little clubs and their groups of friends. They make me feel different. The guys in the old school, they're just like me."

I decided to explore a little further because I was wondering if I was wrong about him fitting in here so well. "How do you feel about living here, then?"

"It's okay."

"But do you feel like you fit in here?"

"Nah. All the other kids are different than me. Like at school. It's like you're all a big family and I am just visiting. It's not like the other kids are friends or nothing like that. It's okay though," he said as if trying to make sure I didn't feel bad.

Well, there it was. I had been thinking John was fitting in okay and here he was telling me that he felt like an outsider in both the school and our home. I knew that he had moved a lot and I guess I had assumed he was just used to it.

But in retrospect when he had made those other moves he had always kept going to the same old school. When he moved in with us we all thought it would be too hard for him to travel every day back to the old school and that starting in this new school might give him a fresh start and something in common with the other kids in our home. But in the end, all it really did was disconnect him further from the place where he felt a sense of belonging.

John still felt a sense of belonging with his old friends and his old neighbourhood. He did not feel that sense of connection and belonging with us or the new school. So, he took off all the time to meet his need to feel like he belonged. He, like all of us, did whatever was necessary to meet this basic, human need.

A Little Theory: The Need to Belong

> *"We all need to belong, to feel we fit somewhere with other people in situations where we don't fear or experience rejection" (Smith, 2000).*

While much of the focus in our field has been on the importance of attachment, the focus in recent years has shifted more towards what we call '*belonging*'. Yet this notion of belonging is not new. Maslow (1943) believed that most maladjustment and emotional illness was the result of a failure to meet the basic human need for belonging. In grouping 'belongingness' together with love and affection Maslow suggested that when this need for affiliation and acceptance is not met, the individual will forsake everything else in order to meet the need. It was, in his mind, that basic.

Since that time, work with troubled young people has emphasized a focus on the meeting of basic needs and, while the needs identified have varied over time, the need to belong has

remained consistent (e.g., Glasser, 1988; Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1998; Pittman & Wright, 1991) and has been identified as a universal phenomenon (Fulcher, 2004). Indeed it has been suggested that all behaviour is motivated by a desire to meet one or more of our basic human needs (Garfat, 2002). As Smith (2002a) has said, "the underlying needs of those who offended and those in need of care and protection are essentially similar". Thus, if we want to understand behaviour, we have to identify and understand the need which is being met by that behaviour.

So why is a sense of belonging important?

Crandall (1981) showed that when students feel a sense of belonging, they have a greater sense of personal worth and confidence in themselves. Further, a sense of belonging has been associated with feeling more secure, greater self-esteem, improved school performance, the development of a strong sense of identity, willingness to take risks, valuing others and too many of what we might consider 'positive characteristics' to mention. Suffice it to say that a sense of belonging increases our sense of personal security and everything which flows from that.

The other side of the coin also holds importance for us, for without a sense of belonging, people seek out a place, sometimes any place, where they might belong, as noted by Burnett and Walz (1994) who said that even gangs become important to young people when they provide them with a sense of belonging that they do not experience in other places in their lives. In essence, if the young people with whom we work do not develop a strong sense of belonging with ourselves, our homes, our schools or some other significant group, they will go to find it wherever it is available to them. For, ultimately, we all want to feel significant in life and as Brokenleg (1998) stated "significance is assured by belonging".

Theory into Practice

> *"Be related, somehow, to everyone you know."*
> *Ella Deloria (1943)*

Assessing Belonging

If belonging is important, a basic need which must be met for all of us, then it stands to reason that as Foster Carers we need to focus on this issue. We might, for example, wonder about a young person's current state of belonging or how we can support the belonging which does exist or help the young person to develop a positive sense of belonging when it does not. When young people come to stay with us, we pay attention to things like:

- Are they active members of particular groups (sports, clubs, church, gangs, etc.)?
- Do they speak positively of significant others in their lives?
- Do they regularly spend, or want to spend, time with other people (e.g., their pals)?
- Do they have a sense of their own cultural identity, especially if they are not members of the cultural majority?
- Do they seem comfortable taking risks (e.g., meeting new people, joining in new activities)?
- Do they have family, immediate or extended, with whom they are in contact (visits, phone calls, letters)?
- Do they seem to feel valued (by friends, family, neighbours)?
- Are they involved in 'community life' whatever that community might be?

While there are other characteristics associated with a secure sense of belonging, these offer us some ideas about how belonging shows up in the lives of young people. When we ask ourselves the question 'Does this young person belong anywhere?' we are looking for activities in his or her life which might be demonstrating that belongingness.

When Larry moved in to our foster home he was a member of the local Boy Scouts troop. He had been a member for a long time and had accumulated many badges of accomplishment for various skills. In the home, he would constantly read and practice to acquire more badges and he would spend hours making sure his uniform was perfect from one meeting to the next.

We tried to get Larry involved in other activities, because we thought his interests were quite limited, but any time we suggested doing something different (go to a movie, play a game, go camping) he would refuse and resist, sometimes even violently. After a while we realised that the Scout troop was the only place where he really felt like he belonged and he believed that the only reason he was accepted, and belonged there, was because he was a 'perfect scout'. Anything else we asked him to do threatened this sense of belonging.

We remember well the old practice of restricting young people from the community when they first moved in with us and we wonder how many times we created unnecessary struggles by restricting a young person's place of belonging.

Respecting Belonging

When young people are with us, we also wonder about the purpose of any significant behaviours in which they engage and how these might be associated with meeting their basic needs. In thinking about the need for belonging, for example, we might wonder:

- if they seem to be on the phone all the time, is that about belonging with someone (friend, family)?
- if the items that they seem to guard and protect fiercely are symbols of belonging for them?
- if running away puts them in contact with their pals or places, with whom they feel a sense of belonging?
- if getting into trouble is a part of the price of belonging to a particular group?
- if spending a lot of time in Internet chat rooms isn't a sign that they have limited places of belonging?

> Kelly Shaw tells the story of a young man admitted to their centre who was passionate about keeping with him a particular knife. It concerned the staff that the young person would have a weapon and so he was confronted. In the end it turned out that the knife was a symbol which represented, for the young man, his culture and history (The knife was associated with a harvest ritual). This did not make it acceptable for the young person to have a knife while living in the centre, but it did give the staff a different way of understanding it and therefore they could divine a different manner of responding to it which respected the belonging needs of the young man
> (Shaw & Garfat, 2003).

We are careful, therefore, when a young person first moves in with us to not threaten his or her sense of belonging, even if that need may be being met by a group we find unacceptable. Conventional wisdom tells us that if a young person has an inappropriate way of having her needs met, it is our role to help her find different, more appropriate, and possibly stronger ways to meet that need so that the old need-meeting behaviour is no longer necessary. Therefore, if a young person's need for belonging is being met inappropriately, we are respectful of this and help the young person find new, more appropriate, ways to meet that need. However, the reality is that many young people who come to us often do not have many positive experiences of having their needs met so they will, certainly initially, be sceptical of our approaches. First, then, we must develop a relationship of trust so that they might, because of a sense of feeling connected with us, be willing to take risks, to try something different. At no time, however, should we disparage the young person's current way of having this need for belonging met for to do so will, in the mind of the young person, be seen as a threat to their sense of safety and security of self which comes from belonging. While we may not appreciate the way in which the young person is meeting her need for belonging, we respect that is essential at this point.

Promoting Belonging

> *... without a sense of belonging, everything else is pointless . . . a sense of belonging is the foundation of becoming one's self and an essential element for living.*
> — John O'Donohue, 1997

When a young person comes to live with us no matter how we value her way of belonging, we continue to support the meeting of this need for it is a need that continues with us throughout our lives. We do this in numerous ways, including the following:

- Safety and Security of Self: Helping the young person to feel safe and secure (physically, emotionally, culturally, psychologically and spiritually) in the home, the community, the school and any other areas in which she is involved. When one feels safe, and even protected, in these areas, one is more available for engaging and making connections with others which is the foundation for developing a strong sense of belonging. Through connections one comes to identify with the persons or places with which one is connected and this developed identity of connection is a characteristic of belonging.
- Developing Rituals of Inclusion: Mark Smith (2002b) of Scotland has said "It's through rituals that meaning is made between youth and their carers". When we engage in rituals with a young person we develop and confirm a sense of common belonging, of togetherness (Costello, Barker, Pickens, Cassaniga, Merry, & Falcon, 2000; Maier, 2004). In our homes rituals of inclusion may include such things as specialised processes of integration into the home, regular group meetings, celebrating successes and the like.
- Promoting Individualised Roles in the Group: When we have a clear role in a group, we have a valued place of belonging within the group. We become important, through the actualisation of our roles, to the functioning of the group. Some roles may be formal (e.g., the equipment organiser) and other may be more informal (e.g., the joker) but all roles define our place of belonging within the group and when we have 'a place' in a group it becomes important to us. On the other hand, we recognise that some roles can develop which are hurtful or abusive to others and these we must challenge while at the same time promoting other ways of belonging.
- Creating Shared Experiences: Doing things together connects us in belonging together. Doing things together may include activities like sports or hobbies, formalised mealtimes, going on vacation, or helping out in the community. Part of belonging to a group involves developing relationships of significance and

as Brian Gannon (2003) has said "building a relationship means building a store of shared experiences". The more we can create shared positive experiences through doing things together, the more we feel like we belong. Ultimately, as Iwaniec (1997) said, "young people need to develop through positive experiences a sense of belonging".

- Promoting Membership in Groups: In many ways everything we have said so far has been about promoting group membership. However, the young person's world is greater than the home we share together and extends to the community of which we are all a part. So we also encourage and support young people in becoming members of community groups, teams, associations and the like. This may involve groups at school, sports teams, social groups like the Scouts or the Chess Club, or neighbourhood associations. A person can belong to many different groups at the same time and within these different groups they are able to explore different aspects of their selves for within groups we find the opportunity to become more self-aware (Gale, 2003). Promoting membership in groups can also include helping young people be connected to, and identify with, their own culture and its history.
- Promote Family Connections: All young people have family. While their closest relatives, like their parents, may not be able to care for them, those people are none-the-less, family. While contact may be limited for whatever reason, connections can be developed or maintained. Connections and relationships can also be developed with extended family members who, perhaps, have not been so involved up to this point. In many ways family, for most of us, is probably our only permanent and life-long place of belonging and so it simply makes sense that we would support this connection for young people.

Some Exercises for Learning and Developing Belongingness

- Together with the young people in your home create a collage of things you have done together about which everyone has a positive memory. This might have been a trip, a common task, etc. Build today, memories of belonging for the future.
- Have the young people draw 'relationship maps' where they draw a diagram, with themselves in the centre, with lines connecting them to the people with whom they feel connected.

When they are done, talk about what they get from these relationships.
- Develop, with the young people, a 'theme' for your home – it might be something like 'caring is a community activity' or 'together we will make it' or, even something like 'if we laugh, we succeed'. The idea is to come up with a theme which everyone can accept and which will permeate all aspects of your home life.
- Have the young people develop a Belonging Book. This would be like a scrapbook in which they store mementos, photos, stories, etc., of the groups to which they belong.

Some Everyday Tips for Supporting Belonging Development

In discussing the importance of little rituals that promote a sense of belonging, Mark Smith (2002b) tells the following story.

> "How often did I ride roughshod over behaviours that had some sort of significance to kids but that I put down to them just being awkward? Whilst many rituals are personal and just seem to emerge, we can, through appreciating their existence, seek to arrange them. Think about the rituals of encounter involved in how we greet kids on a daily basis. I remember Colin. Every time we passed in a corridor we would lower our shoulders and gently nudge each other. I've no idea how this little ritual started but it was one way for two emotionally inarticulate Scottish males to say to one another, Hey, I like you!"

This little story reminds us of how everyday events can be used to promote connectedness and belonging. It does not all have to be complicated. Mary Beth Hewitt (1998), for example, asked some students how they 'knew they belonged' in certain groups, and the following are some of what the students had to say:
- They spell my name right.
- They ask me what I want to be called.
- They take time to talk to me.
- They recognize my moods.
- They listen to me. They smile at me.
- They take an interest in what's important to me.

- They let me help.
- They recognize when I'm gone and welcome me when I return. They include me.
- They don't change what I've done without asking me first.
- When they ask for my opinion, they incorporate it.
- They welcome me back no matter what. They may not like what I did, but they don't hold it against me.

These are simple examples of the everyday importance of how we choose to be with young people and how the way that we are with them impacts on their sense of belonging. And there are so many other things we might do, such as:

- At mealtime, discuss what everyone did during the day,
- Discuss the values we live by in our home and how these showed up during the day.
- Develop consistent bedtime and morning routines.
- Hang pictures of 'us' around the home.
- Encourage youth doing things together – e.g., activities, chores, play.
- Make decisions with the young people, whenever possible, about little things in the home.
- Touch young people appropriately and frequently.
- Take a moment to chat in the middle of a busy day.
- Be clear about expectations of everyone, including us as Foster Carers.
- Offer to help with tasks for which the young person is responsible.
- Ask young people to talk, in a group, about what they have done with others during the day.
- Model helping the neighbours.

The list could go on and on. That is because, ultimately, it is easy to promote belonging. You can probably think easily of a dozen other things you could do and, as a matter of fact, that could be a useful exercise for us to end with.

> "*Acceptance and a sense of belonging was a yearning for me, not an expectation.*"
> — Masson, 2000.

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Time

Time for goodbye
Time to cry
Time to move on
Time to choose one
Time to break free
Time to save me
Time to hurry up
Time to make up
Time to say sorry
Time to worry
Time to waste
Time to hate
Time to give
Time to live
Time to say help
Time to help myself
Time to think right
Time to think twice
Time to be good
And time to be loved

Hollie 15

Summary and Conclusions

You have now spent time reviewing and reflecting upon key policy outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters* (2005), the policy agenda established by government for English children and young people: **Stay Safe**; **Enjoy and Achieve**; **Be Healthy**; **Make a Positive Contribution**; and **Achieve Economic Wellbeing**. Foster Carers in England will do well to keep these policy objectives in mind throughout all that they do. Some might even want to physically place these five objectives in a prominent place in their foster home – perhaps even attach this list with one of those little sticking magnets to the refrigerator door where they can become a daily reminder to all who live there that we are serious about reinforcing these themes throughout all that we do with looked after children and young people.

Similarly, we have seen that the National Strategy for Scottish looked after children and young people in kinship and foster care – *Getting It Right For Every Child in Kinship and Foster Care* (2007) – reinforces many of the same policy themes as those found in Every Child Matters (2005). Both kinship carers and Foster Carers have been challenged to keep children: **Safe**; **Nurtured**; **Healthy**; **Achieving**; **Active**; **Respected and Responsible**; and **Included**. Each of these policy themes has been broken down and examined as you worked through this volume, which we hope offered practical guidance for Foster Carers about how to transform laudable policy objectives into daily life opportunities for looked after children and young people. We think that both policy agendas require consideration and that national identities as English or Scottish – while important – require a whole lot more than rhetoric if looked after children and young people are to

thrive and achieve developmental outcomes that give them a solid foundation from which to tackle the challenges of life as young adults and, in all likelihood, parents.

Foster Carers all too often hear child welfare professionals, teachers, policy makers and politicians, the media, neighbours and birth family members and extended family members talk about the **Outcomes** that they expect for children and young people living in local communities. As we have seen, **Policy Outcomes** such as those noted above, are written in such a manner that few would deny their importance. Then of course there are **Organisational Outcomes** that identify what social workers are expected to achieve whenever decisions are being taken about whether a child or young person is assigned *looked after* status. We have seen how very specific legal issues associated with the duty of care guide decision-making as designated representatives of social service and social work departments engage with children or young people deemed at risk of neglect or abuse, or where their daily behaviour is deemed beyond the control and supervision of family members or guardians to the extent that state intervention is required.

As important as Policy Outcomes and Organisational Outcomes might be – and they are indeed important – such outcome agendas must not deflect attention away from the **Developmental Outcomes** that looked after children and young people achieve during the course of their time in foster care. We think that much greater attention needs to be given to Developmental Outcomes since these provide the foundations which influence the extent to which all the other outcomes are achieved. The on-line course – **From Strength to Strengths for Foster Carers** – located at the *International Child and Youth Care Network Learning Zone* at (www.cyc-net.org) focuses attention on 20 Developmental Outcomes that Foster Carers can use, in association with all team parenting resources around them, to maintain focus on the specific developmental needs of the child or young person living in their home – no matter how long they stay. We think that the problem facing many looked after children and young people is that sadly, policy outcomes and organisational outcomes rarely give priority to what developmental outcomes have been achieved by the time these youngsters become young adults or parents in their own right.

Before concluding, we think it is helpful to quickly summarise major findings from research carried out by Sinclair, Wilson and Gibbs (2005) about why foster placements succeed or fail. These researchers found fundamental problems with the way that child welfare professionals and policy makers approach the use of foster care. Many see foster care – as with residential care – as *¨a confession of failure¨* given the assumption that *¨it is best if children remain with their parents. Parenting by the state is seen to be expensive and ineffective – something which should only be undertaken as a last resort and which should be as temporary as possible¨*. This helped to explain why Sinclair et al found so many foster children in their study *¨repeatedly tried at home¨* and *¨so few … stayed in foster care beyond the age of 18¨* (2005, p. 233).

These researchers concluded that *¨the old approach to foster care as a kind of quasi-adoption is no longer accepted¨* and that *¨the concept of foster care as a port in a storm¨* as noted by Thoburn, Wilding and Watson (2000) was a lingering reality (Sinclair, Wilson & Gibbs, 2005, p. 233). Foster caring is still seen by many, if not most, child welfare professionals as a benign activity carried out by carers most commonly seen as 'the salt of the earth'. And yet, Foster Carers are rarely acknowledged as responsible parents nor treated as responsible professionals. We hope we have shown that Foster Carers are in fact among the most significant potential influences for change in the lives of looked after children and young people. While teachers arguably play a potentially significant role in the future opportunities available to looked after children and young people, Foster Carers are the people who really determine whether such potential will be realised.

Key findings identified in the research reported by Sinclair, Wilson and Gibbs (2005) are summarised below since we think these findings are important with respect to Policy Outcomes, Organisational Outcomes and Developmental Outcomes for looked after children and young people – everywhere!

- Additional money, support adapted to carer's particular circumstances, and more effective recruitment packages would increase the supply of carers and hence reduce strains on the system (p. 236).

- Greater use of care by relatives and friends requires careful consideration. *Kinship care* has particular problems of its own (because of potential family disputes and material problems common amongst kin), is often poorly supported and should not be regarded as a cheap option (p. 236).
- Foster care by friends and family members offers potential advantages in terms of continuity and the maintenance of family ties, allowing for longer stays in foster care without using up scarce resources. This should also facilitate more culturally responsive placements (p. 236).
- All authorities need to recognise the need for long-stay fostering, encouragement for placements to continue after the child is 18, recognition and encouragement for the work carers do with children after they have left the foster home, and a willingness to support rather than oppose adoption by Foster Carers including assistance with legal fees, adoption allowances and subsequent support that is equivalent to that offered to other carers (p. 236).
- The criteria for allocating financial and social support to placements should be based on need, not legal status. Adoptive placements should receive high support if needed (p. 237).
- There needs to be greater reliance on social workers' professional discretion when supporting looked after children and young people in foster care, rather than strict reliance on arbitrary rules and procedures (p. 237).
- Children's problems have to do with relationship difficulties that are commonly compounded by difficulties at school and associated challenging social behaviour. An understanding of these difficulties and of the children's wishes for a normal family life – and a say in the arrangements for their placements and future – should be the bedrock of foster care policy, training and practice (p. 241).
- The likelihood of achieving a 'good fit' that matches Foster Carers with prospective placements should be increased by paying attention to what the foster family say, providing them with good information about the prospective foster child, and paying attention to Foster Carers' views (p. 244).
- Potential for so-called *negative spirals* should be reduced by early intervention that:
  — helps carers tackle negative behaviour early on;

— encourages responses to the good things the child may be doing (building from strength to strengths); and
— reinterpreting a child's behaviour so that it is less likely to be seen as a personal attack on the carer (p. 244).

- In supporting looked after children and young people, social workers need to:
  — pay attention to the differing views of children on contact and return;
  — work with carers and children on the kinds of support needed over contact; and
  — distinguish between birth family members when thinking about contact since foster children often want contact with particular relatives. Social workers are often unaware of these wishes, and contact with grandmothers seems to be particularly helpful (p. 245).
- Carers need to:
  — avoid confrontations with children over their views about their parents;
  — avoid conflicts of loyalty over parents; and
  — encourage contact in a discriminating way (p. 245).
- Foster Carers need to adopt a wide view of the importance of school since it is not simply an arena for acquiring qualifications. School may also have a key impact on the child's quality of life and on her or his social skills and behaviour (p. 246).
- Home environments must adapt to the needs of looked after children or young people who come to live there (p. 248).
- If looked after children or young people are not to return to their parents, foster homes need to be available for that young person for as long as needed, and beyond age 18 if necessary (p. 248).
- If looked after children or young people are to return home, there is a need to provide their families with at least as much support as is currently available to foster families (p. 248).
- Foster Carers and social workers need to value small gains, and concentrate on changes which can be achieved (p. 249).
- Social workers and carers need to take a wide view of schooling, be alert to bullying and other causes of unhappiness, and also be quick to spot opportunities offered by school for a wide range of positive experiences and achievements (p. 250).

In the end, Foster Carers will continue to play a pivotal role in the child welfare strategies of all Western countries. We support

the notion that foster care is no longer an activity left to good-hearted volunteers (although the 'good heart' is still essential). Quality care in a family setting requires that carers be willing to leave full-time employment and devote their attentions and energies to full-time caring for looked after children or young people. Such devotion requires formal recognition and remuneration if looked after children and young people are to be guaranteed safety, nurturing, achievement opportunities, physical, emotional and dental health, respect, opportunity to make positive contributions, achieve economic wellbeing and throughout their lives, feel included as full participants in daily life. In the end, it is a simple opportunity cost-benefit equation: either we invest time, energies and resources in helping looked after children and young people achieve developmental outcomes that contribute to future wellbeing and opportunities, or society will continue to throw money at anti-social behaviour, binge drinking and knife violence along with negative investment in burgeoning prison populations.

We promote quality care in a family setting and trust Foster Carers — carefully selected, trained, supported and remunerated – to do extraordinary things with looked after children and young people. And listening to young people talk about their experiences in foster care (check out www.sepodcasts.org) serves to confirm this conclusion.

Thanks for reading us.

Take care,

Leon and Thom

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"This volume will assist foster carers' movement towards conscious competence ... a practical and suggestive text."

Getting it right for every child in kinship and foster care starts from the premise that every child matters, regardless of where they live. While training, support and development standards are now used to enhance, monitor and evaluate the quality of care given to looked after children and young people, Foster Carers are frequently expected to perform their pivotal roles without practical guidance and support. Building from a strengths-based, daily life approach, *Quality Care in a Family Setting* seeks to redress that deficit, offering practical assistance for Foster Carers to do extraordinary things with the children and young people for whom they care.

Leon Fulcher, PhD and his wife Jane have been foster carers, and have worked in numerous countries with young people who were successfully placed with Foster Carers. In working across cultures and geographies, Leon has developed the ability to bring clarity to often complex subjects. Leon also specialises in caring for caregivers, team working and promoting learning opportunities.

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