

FUELED UP OR

BURNED OUT

Staying Healthy and Focused In Foster care/Adoption

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Foster Care and Adoption

- We provide foster care and adoption because of our compassion for suffering children.
- We feel called and lead to help children heal from their harmful past.
- We are the Difference Makers in our children's lives.
- As parents we need to maintain our own health so that we can meet our children's needs.
- By being proactive in your parenting approach to children helps to reduce the items that drain our energies and emotions.

Compassion Fatigue

- A physical, emotional and spiritual fatigue or exhaustion that takes over a person and causes decline in his/her ability to experience joy or to feel and care for others. (Figley, 1995; Friedman, 2002)
- Parents need to maintain a healthy balance in all six pillars of health to recharge and avoid burn-out.

Pillars of Health

- ❖ Each parent must find and maintain balance through the six pillars of health and wellbeing:
 - Physical
 - Spiritual
 - Emotional
 - Mental
 - Marital
 - Family

Physical Health

❖ *Nutrition:*

- *Eat healthy foods throughout the day*
- *Hydrate frequently*
- *Take necessary medication as prescribed*
- *Use nutritional supplements such as vitamins*
- *Have smoothies rather than Energy Drinks*
- *Avoid high levels of sugars, caffeine, salt and fat*

❖ *Maintain adequate sleep patterns and take breaks during the day.*

❖ *Exercise, get 30 minutes of cardio time 3 times a week.*

Spiritual Health

- ❖ *Start your day with devotional time and prayer.*
 - *Maintain spiritual focus throughout the day:*
 - *Radio, DVD, Pod-Cast and TV programs.*
- ❖ *Maintain a faith based connection in your community:*
 - *Participate in small groups both study and fellowship.*
- ❖ *Look for opportunities to show grace, peace, compassion.*
- ❖ *Let God lead but don't assume this is by default- stay connected in your daily walk with God.*

Emotional Health

- *Ensure your own past trauma, loss and grief are in check.*
- *Make time to relax, have fun and laugh.*
- *Focus on the positive things that happen during the day.*
- *Spend time with people you find up-lifting.*
- *Utilize self-help materials.*
- *Appreciate the small gains children make.*
- *Don't sweat the small stuff.*
- *Let go of disappointments.*

Intellectual Health

- *Use your support staff and ask for help.*
- *Stay in regular communication with your child's therapist (and teachers).*
- *Be familiar with medications and side effects.*
- *Utilize proven resources, web pages, books, DVD's, Podcast and attend trainings.*
- *Search for resources in the areas you are struggling with.*
- *Use mentors, support groups and respite.*

Marital Health

- *Maintain unity, a house divided...*
- *Develop a strategy on how to handle behavioral challenges with your spouse.*
- *Pray together .*
- *Encourage one another.*
- *Have date nights.*
- *Step in, so the other can take breaks.*
- *Update your spouse on progress as they step in to assist (return home from work).*

Family

- ❖ *Take care of your birth and adopted children:*
 - *they will have less of your time,*
 - *they will need quality one-on-one time with you, and*
 - *they can and will help, but don't have them assume a caregiver role.*
- ❖ *Have regular family meetings:*
 - *use it as a time to complement the children, and*
 - *let them share their thoughts, ideas and feelings.*
- ❖ *Use your extended family (if available and helpful).*

Balance

- ❖ Being proactive will greatly enhance your ability to reduce and manage challenging times.
- ❖ Know your family's skills and limits.
- ❖ Ask the questions that beg to be asked:
 - To CPS, Casa, Therapist and Educators
- ❖ Understand the terminology being used.

Balance

- Building a personal relationship with each child is a prerequisite for shaping change.
- Use attachment activities.
- Be a team against the harmful past.
- Help children find ways to engage in the family routine.

Balance

- Love alone is not enough to help children heal.
- There are no quick fixes, trauma is not resolved overnight.
- Know your child's trauma: severity, duration and extent.
- Help children find their talents.
- Identify how the children would like to use their one-on-one time with you.

Adding New Children

- In foster care, we take in children most often at the lowest point in their life and place them in a totally new environment.
- We can expect that the beginning of a new placement will be the most difficult time on all involved.

Adding New Children

- ❖ We start by maintaining safety and building our relationship with each child.
- ❖ They will require more time and energy early on.
- ❖ They may be:
 - slow to trust,
 - acting out their feelings with misbehavior, and
 - angry about being in foster care.

Challenging times

- Be proactive, know your child's triggers and emotional temperatures.
- Understand the trauma behind the behavior.
- Keep your own emotions in check, stay calm.
- Reach out for support.

Challenging times

- Do not feed into or add to the drama.
- Use de-escalation techniques.
- Step in and lead when your spouse needs a break.
- Accept your spouse's lead when you are stressed, let cooler minds prevail.

Support Team

- Know who your support is.
- Know their response time.
- Ask for help early on when challenged.

Refresh Recharge Refuel

- Daily devotional time
- Family prayer
- Family meetings
- Date nights
- Support groups
- Trainings, books, DVDs and Pod-casts
- In home respite
- Breaks in-between placements

Conclusion

- When we are called, we need to be careful to follow God's lead.
- Helping hurting children is a crucial mission.
- Improvements frequently follow a most challenging time.
- In a crisis don't assume it will be reflective of what the rest of your life will look like and give up.
- With the proper support and stability all children make improvements.
- Find peace in knowing God has a plan for you.