

# The Effects of Fostering

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## Note Taking Guide

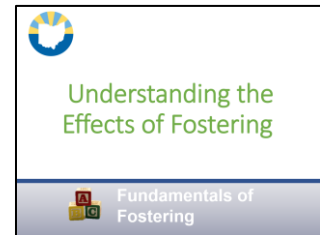
At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify what factors contribute the most to their stress as a caregiver
- Identify indicators they, or someone in their family, may be experiencing burnout or secondary traumatic stress
- Describe the characteristics they possess that support their success as caregivers
- Utilize strategies to prevent or mitigate the stress of caregiving

## Introductions and Overview

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- You are not alone in feeling the stress of caregiving.
- Remembering the rewards of caregiving can help you endure the times of stress.



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## Contributing Factors to the Stress of Caregiving

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- Each time you bring a child into your home, you have concentric circles of adjustment that must take place – you must adjust, your relationships with immediate family members must shift, and your relationship with extended family and friends will change.
- Acknowledge these changes will occur and set realistic expectations for your relationships.
- There are many misconceptions about fostering. Be prepared to respond to well-meaning but misconceived comments.



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Your assigned phrase (place a checkmark beside it):	How would you respond:
This is great practice for when you have your real kids	
Is this the same one or a different one?	
I could never foster; I'd get too attached	
You are an angel	
Guard your heart	

- Factors that contribute to stress include:
  1. Temporary nature of foster care
  2. Challenges that come with providing care for a child who has experienced trauma
  3. Feeling under the microscope
  4. Conflicting roles
- Foster caregivers wear many "hats" including parent, treatment agent, and team member, all with the underlying task of advocacy.

<u>Parent</u>	<u>Tx Agent</u>	<u>Team Member</u>
Meet basic needs including health care	Emotional and behavioral management	Work with case worker and agency
Support development	Learn new skills	Mentor other caregivers
Support success in school	Crisis management	Primary parent mentor
Provide nurture/love	Participate in therapy	Transport
Address sibling conflicts	Medication management	Document/report
Secure child care	Gather additional information about child	Participate in SAR/Court



- Self-advocacy skills can help prevent burnout. How could you advocate for yourself in these situations? (With your group, select two situations and identify a solution for each.)
  - Surprise visits at the end of the month because your caseworker hasn't planned ahead
  - Multiple appointments on the same day/time
  - Agency calls about a child in need of placement and the child in your home has only been there a few days
  - Child has multiple siblings in multiple placements and does individual visits with each one
  - Trainings are mostly in the evenings and you work second shift
  - The primary parent has told the child he can take the family cat with him to your home
  - Your extended family has invited you to a weekend camping trip but has expressed discomfort in your foster child coming with you
  - Your aunt stops by for a visit and gives a few dollars to each of your biological children, but not to the child you are caring for

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- Secondary traumatic stress cannot be resolved alone. Support from the agency and family will be needed and counseling should be considered. Caregivers should also focus on (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996):
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
- Caregivers with histories of trauma may find the child's trauma triggers their own reaction. If this occurs, caregivers should (Remen, 2015):
  - Acknowledge they are being triggered
  - Identify which feelings belong to the present and to the past
  - Be honest with themselves, their worker, and the child
  - Get support
  - Recognize that what works for them may not work for the child (and vice versa)

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## Self-Care

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- Foster caregivers who feel part of a team, are motivated to do well, and have realistic expectations have higher levels of satisfaction and think less about quitting (Beuhler et al 2003). Caregivers can ask themselves:
  1. Do I feel part of the team?
  2. Am I still motivated to do a good job?
  3. Do I have realistic expectations for myself, the child, and the people around me?
- Caregivers might need to focus on what Suzy Reading (2018), author of *The Self-Care Revolution*, refers to as “micro moments of nourishment.”
- Review the list of “micro moment” ideas from Ellen Bard’s Blog on TinyBuhhda.com. Select one “micro moment” from each area that you can commit to doing and place a checkmark by it. Then, write down the name of someone you can share your commitment with who will check in on your progress.
  - Mind:
    1. Write down the compliments you receive
    2. Take an alternative route to a place you often go
    3. Fix a small annoyance that’s been nagging you
    4. Do a mini-meditation/focused breathing
    5. Do a mini-declutter - one drawer in the kitchen, three items from your closet
    6. Other:
  - Body:
    1. Take three deep breaths
    2. Do some quick stretches
    3. Put your favorite song on and dance
    4. Drink a glass of water
    5. Inhale a favorite smell – shower gel, hand soap, aromatherapy oil, cup of coffee
    6. Other:
  - Soul:
    1. On your way somewhere, find five unexpected beautiful things
    2. Help someone- hold the door, pay for the person’s coffee behind you, bring in a neighbor’s trash bin
    3. Pet your dog or cat
    4. Give yourself a laugh – joke a day calendar, comedy website, a funny friend
    5. Explore your emotions – name whatever you are feeling without judgement
    6. Other:




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- Self-Care isn't just a good thing, but it is necessary in order to care for others ethically and with integrity. Take a few minutes to complete these self-care questions adapted from *Trauma Stewardship* (2009) by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky.

Create a Space for Inquiry (Choice)

1. What led me to foster care?
2. Are my actions influenced by my trauma history? If so, how?
3. Is being a foster caregiver still working for me?

Choose Your Focus (Freedom)

4. What is most important to me in my life?
5. What is going well in my life?
6. What is my plan B if fostering no longer "works"?

Create Compassion and Community (Power)

7. Am I supported and held accountable as a foster caregiver?
8. Am I compassionate to myself and others?
9. How can I advocate for system change?

Find Balance (Control)

10. How am I engaged in life outside of foster caregiving?
11. Am I shaking off negative energy?
12. Am I expressing gratitude?

Center Yourself (Intention)

13. Do I start my day with intention (goals for the day)?
14. Do I take time throughout the day to just enjoy the moment?

*A little Extra Information*

Family resilience is the concept that families don't just "get through" a crisis, but have the potential to come out stronger, more resourceful, and with greater understanding. There are three key processes that can help families be resilient:

1. Belief Systems: Families that share a belief system can use their beliefs to help "anchor" them and see that even a crisis can serve a purpose.
2. Organizational patterns: Families that are flexible in their roles and open to change can better adapt when crisis occurs to restore stability.
3. Communication and problem solving: Families that work to communicate clearly and truthfully can more easily stay focused on the problem and identify solutions.

Consider: In which area do you think your family has strengths? In which area do you see room for improvement? What steps can you take to build up the weakest area?

## REFLECTION QUESTION

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If you were to give one piece of advice to friends who were becoming foster caregivers regarding managing the effects of caregiving, what would it be?

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## RESOURCES

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Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework by the Center for the Study of Social Policy  
<https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>

FOCUS on foster families at UCLA. (Link to app)  
<https://nfrc.ucla.edu/focus-foster-families>

The Trauma Stewardship Institute  
<http://traumastewardship.com/>