



DAY
Eight

Social Workers Speak...

Success Story!

From Social Worker Kathryn Bly: Melissa & Tony are the caregivers for a five year old boy who came into their care in 2014. He previously didn't have daily structure or has ever been enrolled in school. His transition into the structured home and school environment was difficult. He began acting out, behaviorally, through severe and violent tantrums. Melissa went to school with him almost every day during his first two weeks of school to sit next to him in the classroom and help refocus his attention. Melissa has also been taking him to PCIT (Parent-Child Interaction Therapy) and transporting him to the visitation center for his visits. Most notably, Melissa stands out as a caregiver in her advocacy for the biological parents. Melissa talks to the biological parents over the phone to answer any questions they have and update them on his progress at home and school. Melissa ensures that the biological mother and father are involved in the parent teacher conferences, field trips and the school meetings held to discuss his behaviors. Melissa attends the meetings with the biological parents so that they can all work collaboratively in making the best decisions for his care.

From Social Worker Jiann Pemberton: Rebecca has embraced her new role as a caregiver and has gone above and beyond to support the foster youth in her care. Rebecca has especially made great effort to support her foster youth's connection with his school of origin and extended family. For example, after her foster youth was in her care for a few short months she took several days off of work, during the cold holiday season, to travel with her foster youth to help him connect with family members in Minnesota that were identified through family finding. She has been a strong advocate in helping this youth identify who he is through his connection with extended family members and Rebecca continues to seek answers to any questions her foster youth has about his family. Fostering has admittedly not been an easy job, but Rebecca has not faltered in her commitment to provide the best care that she can offer.

From Social Worker Kristen Jenewin: An infant was placed with Marcia back in August, and wasn't tracking, or meeting other developmental milestones. Tri-Counties Regional Center services were put in place three times a week. Over time, I witnessed that the child was not only tracking, but was smiling, cooing, rolling over, and grabbing. The caregiver transported to and from visits to the mother every week. The caregiver was supportive of these visits, and very hopeful that the mother would reunify. The caregiver even transported the child to see the mother on Thanksgiving. When it came time to do an extended visit, the caregiver transported the child to the mother, and gave the mother a baby book that she made of all of the infant's milestones. The caregiver has remained in contact with the mother, and provides support when she can to the mother. It has been a very successful reunification in part because the caregiver really supported the mother and went above and beyond.

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DAY *Eight*

DAY Eight of 21st Century Caregiving: Foster VC Kids Resource Family Training will focus on supporting your family during foster care, a review of resources available to you, and a panel discussion. Today's class is the last class and will focus on final considerations to make before becoming a caregiver. During today's session you will be provided with information to support you while you are adjusting to your new roles, as well as other resources available to you to assist with self-care and quality care giving. We will end today's session with a panel that will include a birth parent, caregiver, and youth. They will share their stories with participants to give a real life voice to what they've been learning, as well as help them understand what makes good partnership within the foster care system.



Today's OBJECTIVES

- 1 New Roles.** Provide information to support families in transitioning to fostering family role.
- 2 Taking Care of Yourself.** Understand compassion fatigue and self-care
- 3 Resources.** Understand Foster VC Kids resources to support families in the mission of high quality care giving
- 4 The Big Picture.** Understand the various experiences and perspectives in the foster care system
- 5 Setting Yourself Up For Success.** Identify skills that will make for a high quality caregiver who partners with birth families to meet the needs of children in your care.
- 6 Becoming a Caregiver.** Make the decision to move forward in submitting and application and becoming a caregiver.

Supporting your Family through the Fostering Journey

Open communication about changes and how those changes are impacting all members of the family will be critical. It will be important that everyone feels committed to fostering even if there is fear, anxiety or confusion about the process.



- ✓ Remember what you have learned about trauma and how it impacts children's abilities to relate and be part of your family. Taking things personally will surely burn you out!
- ✓ Plan for how you will continue to provide individual attention to children in the home when fostering, as well as spending time maintaining your marriage and/or other important relationships.
- ✓ Recognize all successes (big and small) as a caregiver.
- ✓ Stay grounded in the bigger mission and reasons why you decided to become a caregiver.
- ✓ Ask for help from your Foster VC Kids team.
- ✓ Attend support or networking groups with other caregivers.
- ✓ Openly communicate with your family about how the fostering experience is going and do proactive problem solving for any challenges that are identified.
- ✓ Help all members of the family practice self-care.
- ✓ Talk openly with your children about why you may handle some things differently with foster children in the home.
- ✓ Seek out ongoing training
- ✓ Utilize respite care

For more information about supporting your family, visit:

How Does Providing Foster Care Affect Children in Your Home?

<http://adoption.about.com/od/marriage/a/How-Does-Providing-Foster-Care-Affect-Children-In-Your-Home.htm>

Strong Foster Families Work to Keep Relationships Strong

<http://adoption.about.com/od/fosterparenttraining/a/Learn-How-To-Be-A-Strong-Foster-Family-In-Four-Weeks.htm>

Compassion FATIGUE

Just as flight attendants remind parents to put their oxygen masks on before securing the masks of the children they are traveling with, we want to remind you to secure your oxygen masks on a daily basis!

Compassion fatigue happens when we accumulate and carry the stories of trauma—including images, sounds, resonant details—we have heard, which then come to inform our worldview. It can affect your own mental and physical health, and impair your ability to parent effectively.

Warning Signs may include:

- Mental and physical exhaustion.
- Using alcohol, food, or other substances to combat stress and comfort yourself
- Disturbed sleep
- Feeling numb and distanced from life.
- Feeling less satisfied by work
- Physical complaints- headaches, stomachaches

A more severe form of this is called Secondary Traumatic Stress or Vicarious Trauma and it is when your own symptoms/behaviors mimic those of someone that has been through a traumatic event.

Warning Signs may include:

- Intrusive images
- Nervousness or jumpiness
- Difficulty concentrating or taking in information
- Nightmares, insomnia
- Emotional numbing
- Changes in your worldview (how you see and feel about your world)
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or helplessness
- Anger
- Feeling disconnected from loved ones
- Avoidance of the child or further exposure of the trauma
- Overly reactive, maybe even punitive, when the child acts out or expresses symptoms of trauma.
- If you have experienced your own trauma, the child's trauma may be serving as a trauma reminder for you.

It is important to remember that any one or two of these warning signs are normal signs of stress. If these things represent a significant change in how you've been feeling and functioning or if any of these interfere with your ability to work and parent, you will want to seek help and support. Having a few of these on a regular basis means you may be on the path to fatigue or secondary trauma.



Self-Care BASICS

Having a plan for regular self-care can protect you from compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress. You will want to create a daily, weekly, and monthly plan for self-care. Self-care is not rocket science but it does take a commitment to practicing.

The goal should be to help you maintain a balance between work and relaxation, and between your commitments to others and to yourself. It should include activities that you do purely for fun! It should also include a regular stress management approach, such as physical activity, meditation, prayer, reading, etc.

Some tips include:

- Get enough sleep.
- Eat well.
- Be physically active.
- Use alcohol in moderation or not at all.
- Take regular breaks from stressful activities.
- Laugh every day.
- Express yourself.
- Let someone else take care of you

For more information on Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma, visit: <http://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/learn/vicarious-trauma>

Foster VC Kids Can Help!



The Foster VC Kids team recognizes that you can't and shouldn't foster alone. You need access to a range of support so that you can provide the highest quality care to the children in your home. **This may include networking group, therapeutic services, additional training, seeking respite care, and utilizing community resources to meet the needs of children in your home. Part of your self-care plan should include using these resources.**

The Foster VC Kids team has created the **Caregiver Resource Guide** to help you know what kind of help is out there for you as a caregiver, and how to access the resources you need! This guide will provide information on basic needs/ durable goods, extracurricular activities and support for children, respite care, education resources, ILP, medical resources, accessing mental health services and more!

The Foster VC Kids website (www.fostervckids.org) is your gateway to tons of information and resources. When you visit the website you will find:

- The most current version of the Foster VC Kids Caregiver Resource Guide
- An event calendar that will let you know about networking and support groups, caregiver conferences and training, family events, and other special Foster VC Kids events.
- Past and Current issues of The Foster Network, our Foster VC Kids bi-monthly newsletter
- Information on resources such as iFoster, Foster Health Link, ILP programs, the Children's Services Auxiliary, and our respite care program
- Forms and other documents you will need as a caregiver
- Our Foster VC Kids Blog
- Information about adoption, relative caregiving, and caring for teens
- Satisfaction survey to let us know what's going well and what we can keep improving upon

fostervckids.org

DAY Eight

Thoughts, Feelings & Actions NOTES



Day Eight Homework

As your final assignment, you will re-take the Casey Family Applicant Inventory to identify any changes in your scores and how this training has increased your skill level in areas such as managing challenging behaviors, supporting development, working as part of a team.

Your RDS worker will talk with you about these assessments to develop a plan for support and development as a new caregiver.



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