



10 Fireworks Safety Tips

It's July 4 and for many of us that means fireworks - bottle rockets, black cats, sparklers, snakes and bees to name a few. While these are fun, we also want our children and foster children to be safe. Here are some basic safety tips.

Visit Coaching: Do Foster Parents Have a Role?

Visits between children in foster care and their families are correlated with successful reunification and shorter stays in care. However, traditional supervised visits frequently do not build on family strengths or provide parents an opportunity to demonstrate they can meet their child's safety and developmental needs. Visit coaching may be a better way.

Visit coaching is built on four principles - empowerment, empathy, responsiveness, and active parenting. The coach's primary goal is to help the parent "stand in the child's shoes (develop empathy)," while empowering them to take charge of the visit. Coaches recognize the myriad emotions (sadness, guilt, anger) and stresses the parents may be experiencing and help them learn to put their reactions aside in order to focus on their child and the child's needs. Another way to empower parents is through visit planning. This may seem elementary, but effective planning involves helping parents identify what their child needs and helping parents develop strategies to meet these needs. Hopefully, many of these strategies are fun things that parents and children can do together. Then, at least one need met in each visit ties directly to the reasons the child was removed from the home. Another important part of visit planning is helping parents recognize the different needs of each of their children at the visit and making ways to ensure each child has some individual "me" time in the context of the larger visit.

Let's look at responsiveness. In the visit coaching model, a large part of the coach's job involves helping parents recognize (see and hear) their child's needs. Then the coach helps parents organize and plan the visit around the child's needs, not the parent's needs. As parents learn to identify and address the child's needs, they begin to develop or strengthen attachment. This is especially important when it is an infant in care. The "dance" of attachment depends on (cont. page 2)

- Be sure fireworks are legal in your area.
- Responsible, sober adult supervision is a must.
- Be extra careful with sparklers. (They can heat up to 1,200 degrees.)
- Do not wear loose clothing.
- Never light fireworks indoors or near dry grass.
- Point fireworks away from humans, homes, brush or leaves, and flammable substances.
- Stand several feet away from lit fireworks.
- Do not stand over devices that do not go off to investigate "why." You may be unpleasantly surprised.
- Have a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher close by.
- Properly dispose of spent fireworks by wetting them down and placing them in a metal trashcan.

Following these simple guidelines increases the chances for a happy, safe holiday.

Each person holds so much power within themselves that needs to be let out. Sometimes they just need a little nudge, a little direction, a little support, a little coaching, and the greatest things can happen.

Pete Carroll

(cont. from page 1) the parent recognizing and responding to the infants cues. As you probably noted, all the activities of empowerment, developing empathy and developing plans to respond to the child's needs require that the parents are active participants at the visits. When parents take an active role, they begin to learn how their words, actions and attitudes shape their child's behaviors and attitudes.

So, where do foster parents fit into this picture? For starters, foster parents need to know the details of the visit plan, what needs are being addressed and how they can help work on the needs during the time the child is with them. Advocate to have communication with the parents before and after visits. Advocate to be involved with the case worker and other program staff when the needs of the

child are under discussion. (Obviously, these are important even in the traditional model of supervised visitation.)

But there are also many times where foster parents and relative foster parents may be the visit coach, especially if the visits occur in the foster home. Coaching requires training so get that before stepping into the coaching role. Remember you bring familiarity with the child's needs and knowledge of how to meet those needs to the coaching table. The challenge for you as a coach will be to recognize, and be open to, the fact that parents may meet the child's needs adequately in a way that is different from yours.

For details on implementation of coaching and developing visit plans, visit https://www.martybeyer.com/sites/default/files/visit_coaching_manual.pdf



**“Sparkling” Documentation :
A Must for Foster Parents**

Throughout the placement of your foster child in your house, it will be necessary to keep written records, and perhaps a journal, and other required documentation. This written account helps you keep an accurate account of the time your foster child lives in your home. It is important that you write in a manner which is observational, descriptive, and non biased. Furthermore, you want to make certain that your written account does not include your opinions. (If you wish to include your opinions and feelings about him, you might start a personal journal for yourself about his time with you.)

Begin your foster child's journal with his or here arrival. Explain the state of dress, behaviors you observe, and

emotional well being responses. Describe his or her progress and the responses to daily events in your home. If he or she becomes sick, include this in your written records. Note the time he or she was sick, as well as treatment, including doctor visits and any medicine that you gave. Document any changes in behavior the child exhibits, when the behavior began, and the length of time the behavior continues. Detail how you addressed this change in behavior, and how the child reacted to any rules and consequences you put into place as a result of misbehavior. Keep a notebook specifically for school work, including grades and report cards, any behavioral problems or discipline, and any conversations held with teachers, school counselors, administrators, and other school employees.



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Read about an alternative to traditional supervised visits and how you can play a role
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MidSOUTH is moving to an electronic newsletter.

COMPANY INFO

This newsletter is produced by MidSOUTH in cooperation with the Division of Children and Family Services

Visit our website for information on training opportunities.
www.midsouth.ual.edu

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Dr. John DeGarmo has been a foster parent for 15 years, and he and his wife have had over 50 children come through their home. He is an international consultant to legal firms and foster care agencies, as well as an empowerment and transformational speaker and trainer on many topics about the foster care system. He is the author of several books, including The Foster Care Survival Guide, and writes for several publications. Dr. John has appeared on CNN HLN, Good Morning, America, ABC Freeform, and elsewhere. He and his wife have received many awards, including the Good Morning America Ultimate Hero Award. He can be contacted at drjohndegarmo@gmail.com, through his Facebook page, Dr. John DeGarmo, or at The Foster Care Institute.



Who will tell our stories? How will we connect with our past? Can I know where I am going if I can't remember where I've been? Foster children's experiences with you are important. Take the time to write it down.

Another important activity to document are visits between the child and various family members. Visits are an important factor in both the life of your foster child as well as his or her biological family members. Keep an account of every visit, including the date, times, and locations of each. Document significant emotional or behavioral changes after these visits. Do your best to describe these in full. If you have any contact with the birth parents and biological family members document the discussion. Likewise,

document each conversation you have with the child's caseworker, CASA, Attorney ad Litem or other people who are involved in the child's care. As noted in the Visit Coaching article, be familiar with the visit plan and be sure to document your efforts to make the visit successful.

If the child displays any serious conflicts or unusual behavior towards his biological family or caseworker, or even towards himself, document this in detail, as

well as report it to the caseworker immediately. (If the conflict is with the worker, consider involving the supervisor.) If you suspect any kind of abuse during family visits, take before and after pictures of the child. Share these with the caseworker and document that you provided the pictures.

Check your foster parent handbook to be sure you are completing all documentation expected by your agency. (Adapted from an article by Dr. John DeGarmo)

How Do Family Traditions Benefit Adopted Children?



Holiday seasons are a perfect time to reflect on family traditions. Consider your family of origin? Were there things you always did on the 4th of July, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, birthdays, or other holidays?

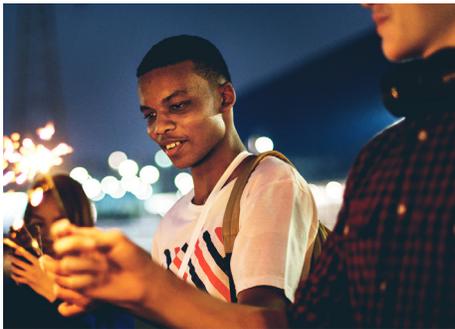
are unexpected. For all of us, and especially adopted children, family traditions can provide connection, security and a safe place to land.

allow the adopted child to celebrate both the new parents and the birth family.

Honoring a child's traditions and at the same time creating new ones benefit adopted children. Family traditions give us roots and offer stability. In our frequently chaotic world, we move at a fast pace. We cope with a variety of challenges, many of which

Some adoptive families create traditions to honor both their adopted mom and dad and the birth parents. In an open adoption, the birth parents may even be present and part of the new traditions being made. Even if the adoption is not open, adoptive parents can help structure and create traditions that

Holidays may be bittersweet. Be open and talk with the child about his or her feelings. Incorporate elements of the fun things children remember doing with their family of origin. Even children adopted at birth may need traditions that recognize their culture of origin. Be bold. Be innovative. Trust that building these traditions is beneficial to your child.





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*History never really says
goodbye. History says,
"See you later."
Eduardo Galeano.*

*Thanks for the
memories!*



MidSOUTH has published Foster/Adopt Pride for over 20 years. But, like so many things, it is time for a change. With all the information available on the Internet, there is less and less need for a paper newsletter. It seems as if we have the whole world at our fingertips. You can find training, information on issues affecting foster and adopted children, and support for foster and adoptive families.

We encourage you to visit the MidSOUTH site often because we post training opportunities available across the state. Check us out at www.midsouth.ualr.edu. Or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

MidSOUTH will continue to conduct the initial Foster/Adopt Pride training and complete the SAFE Home Studies with prospective foster and/or adoptive parents referred by the Division of Children and Family Services. Contact information for MidSOUTH trainers is available on our website.

Here are a few other resources that you can access online.

- <https://www.drjohndegarmofostercare.com/>
- <http://foster2forever.com/2013/03/online-foster-care-training.html>
- <https://www.fosterclub.com/foster-parent-training><http://www.parentcenterhub.org/>

fosteradoptive/

- <http://foster-adoptive-kinship-family-services-nj.org/connecting-families-support-groups-foster-parents/>

This list is in no way exhaustive but gives you a starting place to search for answers to questions and to find available online training.

It has been an honor to provide the newsletter to you. Foster and adoptive parents are special people and accept challenges that not everyone can handle. Thank you for the work you do every day on behalf of abused and neglected children.