



Family Newsletter



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Self-care: The antidote to parental burnout

STORY BY **KELLI OSTROSKY, MARE ADOPTION NAVIGATOR**

Self-care is a common topic brought to the attention of foster and adoptive families. But if people adopt to take care of others, what makes their individual needs so important?

As the headline says, self-care is effective in reducing parental burnout; a very real challenge for parents raising youth who have experienced foster care.

All parenting is hard, but adoptive parenting is often more unpredictable; a complex road with many more twists, turns, frustration and stress. One common mistake that newer adoptive parents make is to compare adoption to parenting biological children or their own childhood experiences.

Simply stated, adoptive parenting is

just different, which is why self-care should be an intentional focus.

I was recently conversing with a foster and adoptive parent about the adoption journey and the similarities it has with river rafting.

I commented on the winding route with many unexpected bumps, barriers and bends along the way, often catching adoptive parents off-guard. We agreed that this was such an accurate analogy to summarize the sometimes overwhelming, taxing chapters that parents who adopt youth from foster care can face through the years. Here are a few issues that can arise:

- "Secondary PTSD," often referred to as vicarious trauma.

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Learn more about foster care adoption at www.mare.org.

In time, parents can become affected by the trauma endured by their adoptive youth and by their attachment-based behaviors.

- Losing a sense of being very important to the family dynamic. When caregivers feel that they aren't at the "top of the list" of household and family priorities, it may impact their ability to concentrate and take the best care of their family.
- The complexity and challenges of a former foster care youth's functioning at school, at home and in the community. In short,

this can really test an adoptive parent's patience.

To be sure, adoption is rewarding, but the struggle to stay on course is real!

That's why self-care is so important for foster and adoptive families. Self-care is effective in preventing parental burnout from the unpredictable twists, turns, frustrations and stressors.

Self-care not only can reduce stress but also can get adoptive parents to prioritize physical and mental health while improving the

adoptive parent-child relationship.

Below are helpful links for further explaining why self-care is important, how to implement it into everyday life and six types of self-care strategies to choose from. The last resource conveniently includes a printable wheel with easy, actionable ideas to incorporate into everyday life, before (and after) the stress load gets too high.

When self-care is a prioritized, parents can truly appreciate and enjoy their adoption experience.

- **Why self-care is important:** <https://nacac.org/resource/self-care-barriers-adoptive-parents>
- **Tips on how to implement self-care and pop-up trauma informed parenting guide:** <https://creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/adoption-blog/self-care-for-adoptive-foster-and-kinship-parents>
- **Types of self-care and a printable wheel of types and options:** <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/focused-topics/trauma-informed-care-in-child-care-settings/lesson-4>



NACAC



Creating a family



Virtual lab

Photos from
another great
Michigan Heart
Gallery Premiere!



Clockwise from top,
MARE's Jessica
Thompson with Piper
(C010322), MARE's Jessica
Franks with her daughter,
Nevaeh, and
Zackary (C010342).

Meet Kauron, a rising star in football

Kauron's name has links to a planet in Star Wars. It also can mean shrewd, businesslike, successful, serious and studious.

For this Kauron, it could mean a different "ous," as in famous! That's right; he's got the skills to provide plenty of thrills. Have Kauron strap on a helmet, suit up in pads and pop in a mouthguard, and you've got the makings of a gridiron great. "He loves all things football and will talk all day about it," says one of his close adults.

But it isn't just a future in football that fills his fantasy for fame. Kauron is an apt athlete with an appetite for approval in other athletic avenues such as basketball. In fact, he loves all sports, whether it's playing them or watching them on the TV or on the sidelines.

Maybe Kauron will become a broadcaster because of his penchant for sports-themed banter. "He loves to talk sports," says a close adult.

Kauron looks forward to having an active forever family who likes spending time together.



Kauron, C010508



Ashlee, C010367

TV show villains better beware of Ashlee

If there's a crime show on the TV, consider Ashlee on the case.

"Ashlee is fascinated by crime shows, stories and books," says one of her close adults. "She has watched the 'Criminal Minds' TV series multiple times."

Do a little detective work yourself and you'll discover Ashlee likes reading and writing, especially during and after school. You'll find out that on the weekends, she likes hanging out with her friends, perhaps playing Uno, which is her favorite game. Ashlee's favorite food is pizza, her favorite color is blue and her favorite animals are dogs. She says she enjoys celebrating holidays and birthdays by spending time with family.

If she's not watching crime shows, Ashlee is listening to music or going on walks to the park. Any detective would like to have Ashlee's creative instincts. She loves artistic activities such as drawing and painting.

Ashlee's imagination takes her to a lavender farm and a sandy beach in Florida because "it looks beautiful," she says. In addition to traveling, Ashlee dreams of having pets. And it's no mystery what her other wish is: a family.

Kids' Corner

How to Make and Keep a *Nature Journal*

----- rhythmsofplay.com -----



What a better way to be a proactive parent than practicing self-care while teaching it to your children? This activity is appropriate for all ages, including adults!

In this easy, relaxing and stress-reducing craft, you can make a nature notebook with your kids.

Step 1: Sit quietly in nature. Explore all five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Take in all of the senses surrounding your body. Pay attention to the small details in the sky, air, grass, trees, wildlife.

Step 2: Write down, in detail, what you experience.

Step 3: Gather clippings from nature such as leaves and flowers. Press them for a week or two between heavy book pages and wax paper, if desired. Glue them on notebook pages. A store-bought journal would

work just fine, or feel free to bind and create your own with craft paper, a hole punch, ribbon or yarn, etc.

Step 4: Add writings (story, poem, single words – as simple or as detailed as you or your children would like) that go with any clippings or even pictures you would like to include. Craft scissors and a glue stick, stickers and assorted scrapbook materials can be used to add to the writings.

Congratulations! You just had fun while meditating, using creativity, practicing self-care, self-regulation and teaching it, too! These are all therapeutic ways to connect with your child.

For more about this project, visit <https://rhythmsofplay.com/get-outside-connect-create-nature-journal-notebook/>

MARE's adoption navigators are experienced adoptive parents who offer guidance and personal knowledge to potential adoptive families. They have years of parenting experience, resource and service-finding skills, and knowledge of foster

care, infant and older, and domestic and international adoption procedures. To contact a MARE adoption navigator, call us at 800-589-6273 or scan the QR code at right and fill out a form to have an adoption navigator contact you.

Calendar

December 3 MARE In-Person Meet & Greet

Oxford

10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

For more information, contact jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org or call 734-528-2070.

Take note: Watch for notices of upcoming Meet & Greets on www.mare.org and on Facebook.

November is National Adoption Month

Follow us on Facebook as we recognize outstanding adoptive families and feature youth who await their forever families.

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