

NEWS FROM YOUR PEER LIAISON



GWEN TIMMERMAN

IFAPA Peer Liaison

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**I UNDERSTAND...
I AM A FOSTER PARENT TOO**

IFAPA recognizes that foster parents often need the perspective of peers during the foster parenting and adoption experience.

I can provide support and assist you with questions regarding:

- Licensing requirements
- Training needs
- Respite care
- Behavior challenges
- Working with birth families
- Confidentiality issues
- And much more!



www.ifapa.org

This year resolve to practice some self-care

It's a new year: Time for self-reflection and resolutions. This year resolve to put yourself first for a change – at least once in a while.

Caring for children in foster care can be difficult, draining, exhausting and frustrating. Therefore it is important that foster parents take the time to step away, regroup and recharge – in other words we must take time to care for ourselves.

On top of lengthy to-do lists, we are also dealing with challenging behaviors. Children in foster care often project their anger and frustration onto us, which can wear us down.

Remember the safety talk you get before a flight begins? In case of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop from overhead; you are instructed to put your oxygen mask on first and then help those around you. The idea is that you can't help anyone else if you don't have the oxygen you need. The same is true for being a foster parent. It is hard to be the calm, reasonable and compassionate parent we want and need to be if we are too stressed out. In other words, make sure you get a little TLC.

Are you guilty of not taking time for yourself? The National Child Traumatic Stress Network offers these warning signs that you might be nearing compassion fatigue:

- You feel mentally and physically exhausted
- You are using alcohol, food or other substances to combat stress and comfort yourself.
- Your sleep is often disturbed
- You are feeling numb and distanced from life
- You are feeling less satisfied
- You are moody and irritable
- You have physical ailments – headaches and stomachaches

If you suspect you are entering the compassion fatigue zone, it's time to practice some basic self-care. This includes:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating well
- Getting some physical exercise
- Using alcohol in moderation, or not at all
- Taking regular breaks from stressful activities
- Laughing every day
- Expressing yourself
- Letting someone else take care of you

Deena McMahon, a licensed social worker, said it's important for foster parents to realize that they are worth taking care of and their happiness and well-being are essential to good parenting. She recommends making self-care part of your routine – daily, weekly and monthly.

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Suggestions include:

- Joining a support group where you can talk with others who face the same struggles
- Creating down time every day--maybe it's a morning walk, 10 minutes with the paper and a cup of coffee
- Routinely have something to which you look forward--coffee with a neighbor once a week, date night with your partner once a week or a massage once a month.

“Caring for children who have special needs is a matter of the heart. Self-care is a mind-set and a positive choice. If you can find a balance between caring for your children and meeting your own needs, you will ultimately be much better equipped to do both,” McMahon said.

Support Group Happenings

Marshalltown- Applebee's Restaurant, 3101 S. Center Street, Meets bi-monthly - beginning Oct. 6th **CONTACT PERSON:** Mindy Speake - Youth & Shelter Services / Iowa KidsNet (515-291-1292 or mspeake@yss.ames.ia.us)

Waverly- Vineyard Community Church, 319 West Bremer Avenue

Parkersburg- Monarch Therapy, 505 Coates Street

The Waverly location offers support and training while the Parkersburg location offers only training. Both locations meet monthly on the 1st Tuesday

Waverly meets 6pm- 8pm | **Parkersburg** meets 6pm-7pm

Groups meets all 12 months /Childcare at Waverly location with RSVP

CONTACT PERSONS: Nancy Magnall - IFAPA Resource Info Specialist (319-352-3600 or nmagnall@ifapa.org) **or** Gwen Timmerman - IFAPA Peer Liaison (319-883-3594 or gtimmerman@ifapa.org)

Waterloo-Grace Lutheran Church, 1024 W. 8th Street

Meets monthly - 2nd Tuesday from 6:30pm-8:30pm

Group meets September through May/**Child care is offered with RSVP**

CONTACT PERSON: Gwen Timmerman - IFAPA Peer Liaison (319-883-3594 or gtimmerman@ifapa.org)

AMP MEETINGS (FOR TEENS IN FOSTER CARE)

Waterloo AMP meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 1024 West 8th Street, Waterloo. Contact: Jessica Christman at 515-451-4233 (cell) OR jperrychristman@gmail.com

Marshalltown AMP meets every first and third Tuesday of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the YSS of Marshall County office located at 11 E. State St. Marshalltown, Iowa. Contact Alyson Hicks at Mtownamp@hotmail.com or call me at 641-751-1776.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



WINTER CRAFT

“Soap Clouds”

1 bar of Ivory soap--only Ivory!

The fresher the better.

Place a piece of waxed paper or paper towel in your microwave. Add soap and microwave on high power for a few minutes. Soon the bar of soap starts growing! (Sometimes HUGE--sometimes wimpy). So fun to play with in the tub!! If you smash it, it will break into pieces creating soap dust.



It's Here...

IFAPA's January through March 2016 training schedule. View and register for classes at www.ifapa.org.