



## Tips for Foster Parents

### Things to Buy/Make:

Nightlights – Even for older kids. Put them in the kitchen, bathroom, and living room areas as well.

Sound machine – Approximately \$20 from Amazon

Melatonin gummies

Bubble liquid – To practice blowing the bad feelings away

Lavender spray – Otherwise known as “monster spray” or “good feelings” spray

Band aids – and more band aids. You can’t have too many. Seriously.

Clothes hamper

Coat hangers

Chore charts

Step stools

Flash lights for the kids (Walmart has some in their automotive section for \$1)

Extra sheet sets – depending on the age of the child, 3 sets

Water bottles – (depending on age) Your kid will lose 1000 of these the first week. Buy these at the dollar store.

Healthy snack area + snacks – a shelf, bin, etc. that is just for the kiddos. Make sure it’s things that they can get at any time without asking (apples, boiled eggs, cheese sticks, peanut butter, crackers, carrots, yogurt, microwave popcorn, etc.).

- I also have an “emergency snack area” that they need to ask permission to get into, but it’s more special, infrequent snacks like Dove ice cream bars, fancy chocolates, etc. This usually is a signal to me that we need to check in on something.

## Sensory/Calming Items:

Don't forget that as great as these things are for your child, it might help you to use them as well.

Swings

Hula hoops

Plastic bin of dried beans

Lava lamps

Coloring – Half Priced Books has a great selection of coloring books for adults/older kids.

Sand trays

Playdough (even better – make it together)

Yarn crafts (knitting, crochet, or embroidery. We make dog blankets for Austin Dog Rescue with fleece and do a blanket stitch around them)

Exercise balls

Himalayan salt lamps – I don't know that these work as advertised, but the soft glow from them is lovely and peaceful.

For the parent: spend at least 10 minutes of your day in silent prayer, meditation, focused thought, whatever you like to call it.

## Calendars:

Daily/Weekly/Monthly calendar –

- Daily calendar - what the child should do every day. I haven't been doing this, and now I know that I need to, even for older kids! I will be keeping this in the bathroom. It includes things like showering, hanging up the towel, brushing teeth, putting dirty clothes in the hamper, etc.
- Weekly – I keep this on the child's bedroom door. It includes any plans/expectations for the week, such as Science Fair Project Due!, CASA visit, therapy appointments, swimming at the Y, etc.
- Monthly – this is mainly for me, but I keep it in the kitchen where it's clearly visible. This will save you when you're filling out your monthly reports. I write EVERYTHING here. Dinners with friends, therapy/dental/pediatric appointments, respite, good things (“nice note from teacher”), etc. I don't write “bad” things here, such as “nastygram from teacher again,” etc.

## Books:

*The Care and Keeping of You for Girls* – this is great as kids shift into puberty. In a matter of fact, but gentle way, it discusses feminine hygiene, types of bras, shaving, etc.

*Maybe Days – A Book for Kids in Foster Care*

*Love You From Right Here: A Keepsake Book for Children in Foster Care*

*Transforming the Difficult Child* – for parents

*Toddlers are A\*\*holes – It's Not Your Fault* – (parents, obviously) laughter really is the best medicine. Not for the sensitive.

*The Body Keeps Score* – for parents

## Activities:

YMCA – Williamson County. Available for non-members for an additional fee.

- Kids' Night Out for children 0-14 on Saturday specific evenings. Members pay \$20 for 5 hours of supervised childcare. You can purchase an extra hour for \$5, making the total time from 5-11. Kids can swim, play video games, eat pizza, etc. during this time.
- Parents' Night Out – free for members one Friday each month. Reservations required. Timeframe is from 4 – 8. An extra hour can be purchased for \$5. Pizza can be purchased for \$3.50, or you can pack them a dinner.

Swimming – This is a great way to burn off energy and have some play time. We go on Sundays, and I think of it as “washing off the old week” and welcoming the new one.

Yoga – This is a great one. Some yoga instructors even have a Trauma Informed Yoga Instructor certificate.

- Everything covered in yoga is something that our kiddos need extra help with: burning energy, body awareness/proprioception, increasing focus, gaining a sense of control, setting positive intentions/increasing self-esteem, eliminating negative thought loops, practicing breathing techniques, and managing stress.
- If you fear that your child might be disruptive, talk to the instructor before signing up. They might recommend a smaller class, or perhaps you can do a one-on-one class in the beginning to get started.

## When You're Trying to Figure Out What Kiddo is Thinking:

Complete the following sentences, and ask them to do the same.

Parent: I'm hurting because I think you're hurting today and I don't know how to help.

Child: I'm hurting because \_\_\_\_\_.

Parent: I'm really hoping for (whatever is appropriate).

Child: I'm really hoping for \_\_\_\_\_.

Parent: I'm glad you shared this with me. Do you know how I might help you with this? (They might not know. You might need to throw out some options, or say you're not sure what to do and you promise to look into whatever this issue is.)

Child: I am looking for help with \_\_\_\_\_.

### Other:

Our trainings talk a lot about "self care." This can take many forms.

- Paying for yard work that you would normally do yourself.
- Going to bed early some nights.
- Saying no to one extra errand, or saying yes for HEB curbside pickup.
- A rotisserie chicken, store-bought potato salad and French bread on paper plates.
- Respite.
- Date night.
- Confession – I keep a travel pillow in my car. At least once I've slept in the car during my lunch break. It. Was. Awesome.

The healthier you feel, the more you can love on and advocate for these kids.