

REACH

Resource · Education · Advocacy · Crisis Intervention · Hope

Aspiranet and Kern County Adoption Support Program



Hello REACH Families!

We hope once this Fall newsletter finds you, your family has begun to settle down from all the transitions that school brings. These transitions often bring changes to families with new routines, new environments, and meeting new people. This time of year can be especially stressful for parents as they prep the home and children for upcoming changes. We hope this Fall newsletter can encourage parents to prioritize self-care and seeking supports, to be better equipped to take care of others.

*“Taking care of yourself doesn't mean me first,
it means me too.” — L.R. Knost*

Parenting can be both joyful and fulfilling, as well as stressful and exhausting. To many parents, the idea of self-care is easier said than done and takes a lot more time and energy than a parent has to give. However, self-care is a necessity - it is not selfish nor a luxury. The best way a parent can take care of their family is to take care of themselves. When parents can take care of themselves mentally, physically, and emotionally, they will have more of an ability to be responsive to others' needs and have better overall moods.

With this quarterly newsletter, our hope is to encourage parents to continue their self-care journey or to start their self-care journey. We call it a journey because there will be times when self-care comes easily and times when it feels impossible. Self-care looks different for everyone, and our hope is for you to find small ways to fill your cup. This newsletter is filled with encouragement and ideas for self-care through articles, book reviews, and an activity. Self-care also includes being able to ask for help and building your supports. We hope REACH can be of support to your parenting journey through this newsletter and our upcoming trainings/events.

If you are interested in learning more about our REACH services call 661.323.1233.

We hope you will find our Fall 2024 edition informative and helpful in your adoption journey.

The REACH Team

Kern County Fall 2024

Inside This Issue

1. Greetings
2. Self-Care and Supports in Adoption and Permanency
3. Importance of Self-Care for Adoptive and Foster Parents
4. Self-Care for Foster and Adoptive Families
5. Reach Event Highlight
6. Support Group Calendar
7. REACH Services

Your REACH Support Team

Emma Ruiz

Resource Family
Program Director
eruib@aspiranet.org

Carrie Ontiveros

Program Supervisor
contiveros@aspiranet.org

Elizabeth Hanson

REACH Social Worker
ehanson@aspiranet.org

4900 California Ave.,
Tower A
Suite 410A
Bakersfield, CA 93309
Ph: 661.323.1233
Fax: 661.323.8090

www.reachkerncounty.org

Self-Care and Supports in Adoption and Permanency

By Fernando Aquino, MSW

“Self-care is giving the world the best of you, instead of what’s left of you.” –Katie Reed

Self-care, self-care, self-care...easier said than done, right? Many adoptive parents care for children with physical, emotional, and cognitive needs, but when a parent has several children, how can they set time aside for themselves? Finding a way to care for yourself is essential for foster, adoptive, and kinship parents. It's easy for caregivers to feel they are stuck in the role of providing care and setting themselves aside. However, parents must remember filling their buckets in turn helps fill the buckets of those around them.

Many of us create mental lists of how our day, week, and month will look like, but we know changes and barriers come up all the time. First, we must give ourselves grace and understand that self-care may not happen today, but how can we be more intentional tomorrow? Giving yourself permission to care for yourself is essential. Some phrases parents can say aloud are: "I am worthy of self-care. Self-care will help me be a better parent (mom, dad, caregiver, etc.). I cannot give to my family what I have not learned to give to myself."



One way to set aside time for yourself is to establish boundaries and routines. There will always be items on a parent's to-do list that must be checked off. Establishing a routine helps provide consistency and can include built-in time for a parent to be alone to decompress or care for themselves. This will require a parent to say "no" and establish boundaries with their family about what they need. These healthy boundaries are beneficial to a parent, but also model to children what healthy boundaries can look like. Self-care activities look different to every individual. Remember that self-care is supposed to fuel you and create a space where you can feel regenerated. There are many ways a person can achieve this through several types of self-care:

- **Spiritual self-care** can pertain to a religion or spirituality, which can be a healing and re-energizing journey. Many churches and faith-based organizations offer support for foster and adoptive parents. Spiritual care can also be an independent journey through meditation or other holistic practices that create a sense of restoration.
- **Physical self-care** can include setting time aside to be physical - going to the gym, going for a walk, going to yoga, etc. Physical care can also include taking care of our bodies, such as consuming healthy foods and getting rest.
- **Social self-care** can include being around family and friends, as well as engaging with others who have shared life experiences. Parent support groups can greatly increase connection and feelings of belonging. Parents who have social connections tend to be more responsive and have better overall moods.

We encourage parents to ask themselves, what do you need to feel better about your parenting journey? If your answer is time for yourself or self-care, then we hope you can find ways to take care of yourself and fill your cup.

Sources:

<https://creatingfamily.org/adoption-category/adoption-blog/self-care-for-adoptive-foster-and-kinship-parents/>

<https://www.renewedseniors.com/post/filling-your-bucket#:~:text=If%20the%20bucket%20is%20empty,put%20our%20best%20selves%20forward.>

The Importance of Self-Care for Adoptive and Foster Parents

By Lex Clements, BA

Adoptive and foster parents face unique and complex challenges. Many of these families are raising children with special needs, and dealing with emotional and behavioral issues that require immense patience and dedication. As rewarding as it can be, the demands of parenting under such circumstances often lead to stress, burnout, and feelings of being overwhelmed. This makes self-care not just a luxury but a necessity. Prioritizing physical, mental, and emotional well-being allows parents to be more effective caregivers and better able to meet the demands of their children's needs.

The Barriers to Self-Care

One of the most significant obstacles adoptive and foster parents face with self-care is time management. With therapy appointments, school meetings, and the daily responsibilities of caring for children, time for self-care can seem impossible to find. Parents may also struggle with guilt, feeling that any time spent on themselves detracts from time spent on their children. This guilt can be compounded by the societal pressure to be a “perfect parent,” which leads to comparisons with other parents who seem to be managing parenting and their lives better. Additionally, many parents hesitate to ask for help, fearing it might be seen as a sign of weakness or failure.

Why Self-Care Matters

Despite these barriers, self-care is vital for maintaining long-term well-being. Neglecting self-care can lead to emotional exhaustion, which may manifest in irritability, depression, or health problems. Children, especially those with traumatic backgrounds, are sensitive to their caregivers' emotional states, so parents need to remain balanced. By taking time for themselves, parents can model healthy behavior for their children, showing that self-care is a critical component of a balanced life.

Strategies for Self-Care

Adoptive and foster parents can take several steps to prioritize their well-being. One approach is to simplify routines and set realistic expectations. Not every day has to be perfect, and allowing room for flexibility can reduce stress. Scheduling regular downtime, even if it's just a few minutes each day, can make a significant difference. Activities such as meditation, journaling, or going for a short walk can help alleviate stress and provide mental clarity.



Support systems are another crucial aspect of self-care. Whether it's through family, friends, or support groups, having a network of people to lean on can alleviate the pressure of trying to manage everything alone. Professional counseling can also be a valuable resource, providing a space for parents to process their experiences and emotions.

Finally, it's important for parents to find joy in small moments and indulge in little treats, whether it's savoring a favorite meal, reading a book, or taking time for a hobby. These moments of self-compassion can recharge a parent's energy and improve their overall mood.

Long-Term Benefits

When adoptive and foster parents take care of themselves, they are better equipped to care for their children. Their patience increases, their decision-making improves, and they are better able to manage the emotional complexities that come with adoption and fostering. Moreover, self-care can strengthen family relationships, as a well-rested and emotionally stable parent is more likely to engage positively with their child. Over time, this creates a more harmonious household, where both parents and children thrive.

By addressing the barriers to self-care and adopting practical strategies, adoptive and foster parents can ensure that they are not just surviving but thriving in their roles. In doing so, they set the foundation for a healthier, happier family dynamic that benefits everyone involved.

For more insights and resources, explore the full articles at [Families Rising](#) and [LifeLong Adoptions](#).

Self-Care for Foster and Adoptive Families

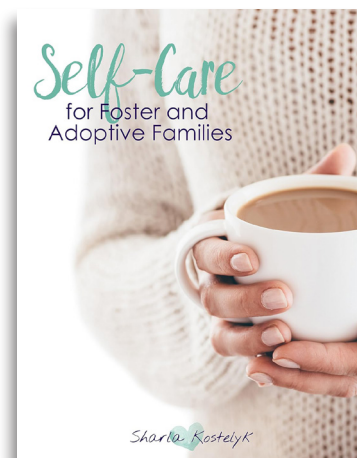
by Sharla Kostelyk

Book review by Griselda Santillan Mejia, MA

What is self-care? Self-care is the action of engaging in activities regularly to reduce stress and better our health and overall well-being. The book *Self-Care for Foster and Adoptive Families* by Sharla Kostelyk is a book written specifically for foster and adoptive parents and its emphasis is to give tools and ideas on how parents can help improve their self-care routine. This book is a great read for foster parents who are just beginning their journey as it gives them examples of some of the realities of being foster to adopt parents. Parents often forget the importance of self-care as they may feel they don't have the time for it or feel other things are more important.

In this book, the author takes the time to share her own experiences, making it very relatable for parents. Sharla was a foster parent for 8 years and is a parent of 2 biological children and 5 children who were adopted. The fact that Sharla helps make the book so relatable makes it easy to recognize that the struggles she speaks about are very similar to what other parents are struggling with. In turn, she helps them realize they are not alone. She takes

the time to be personal and shares many of her own stories of successes, as well as failures, which makes it relevant to parents. She says "not everything will work for everyone" and takes the time to talk about it. She emphasizes building the support system that surrounds parents and utilizing the support so parents can engage in self-care activities. Although some of the tips can seem like common sense, they are written in a way that reminds parents what is important, especially in the middle of difficult times. Sharla reminds parents it is okay to ask for help, and accept it, rather than feeling they need to be superheroes who must do it all. *Self-Care for Foster and Adoptive Families* reminds parents that loving themselves is a key component to being a successful foster or adoptive parent.



Self-Care Activities

By: Beth Hurlbert, MS

Self-Care is the practice of establishing behaviors to promote health, well-being, and manage illness. Self-care will look different for everyone, but it should promote health and happiness for you. What we hear most from parents is, they don't have time for self-care. Our challenge to you is, let's find a way to make it work for you. We are suggesting two different activities to try to integrate self-care into your life.

Schedule self-care in your calendar:

1. Identify an activity that promotes self-care for you—It can be physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, environmental, social, or financial. If you can't think of one, go to any search engine and type in "self-care" and you will get a list of ideas.
2. Get your calendar out (phone, paper, etc.) Just like you enter all your children's appointments and events on your calendar, enter your self-care time on your calendar. Set an alert and make it the same color as the other important appointments on your calendar. This is the most important appointment that you will have that day.

3. When your alert goes off- Give yourself permission and do the self-care activity you selected. Don't put it off, don't make excuses, JUST DO IT!

Change your perspective on a task you do with your kids:

1. Example—You have to drive your kids to their sports practices. We could all grumble about the time we spent in the car running our kids around.
2. Let's change our mindset—I GET to spend this time with my child.
3. Now what are you going to do to make it a memorable time? Listen to a favorite song together and sing it at the top of your lungs. Stop and get your favorite treat together. Have a conversation with a Southern accent the whole time. The sky is the limit when it comes to ideas on how to make this a fun and self-care moment.

We hope you try one of these activities for your own self-care. If the first one doesn't work, try the other one. If neither works, search for something that does work for you. You need to take care of you!

Source: [google.com/selfcare](https://www.google.com/selfcare)

REACH Event

H I G H L I G H T

Kings
County

By Katia Hawkins, BSW, MS

Kings REACH hosted a Movie & Picnic Night for REACH families over the summer, with the movie “Moana.” A Movie & Picnic Night is a fun, relaxed event that combines the enjoyment of watching a film with the pleasures of a picnic. This event recreated the outdoor feel of a picnic, by setting up individual blankets and baskets, and then projecting the movie on a projector screen. It’s a great way to spent time in a cozy setting while enjoying food, entertainment, and each other’s company. Families were provided with two family games and a book.



Movie Nights are a fantastic way to strengthen family bonds:

- It provides a common activity and creates shared memories to give family members something to talk about and reminisce over.
- It offers dedicated time where everyone is focused on being together without the usual distractions.
- Movies often evoke emotions, whether its laughter, sadness, or excitement. Experiencing these emotions together can help family members connect and create a sense of unity.

REACH families had a great time at Movie & Picnic Night and shared the following feedback:

- “We were able to do another family friendly activity for younger & older kids.”
- “Great time to bond with family. We hardly get out anymore.”
- “We enjoy being around other families with foster/adopt kids. My daughter feels like she's part of a club like scouts.”



Support Groups and Events

October

- 7 APT Module 7: Birth Family**
6:00pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM
- 8 Parent Café**
6:30pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM
- 14 APT Module 8:
Normative Adoption
Issues/Stuck Spots**
6:00pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM
- 21 APT Module 9: Self-Care
and Supports**
6:00pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM
- 22 Support Group**
6:00pm – 7:30pm – In person
- 23 Support Group in Spanish**
9:30am – 11:30am – ZOOM

November

- 12 Parent Café**
6:30pm – 8:00pm – ZOOM
- 20 Support Group in Spanish**
9:30am – 11:30am – ZOOM
- 26 Support Group**
6:00pm – 7:30pm – In person

December

- 10 Parent Café**
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm – ZOOM
- 17 Support Group**
6:00pm – 8:00pm – In person
- 18 Support Group in Spanish**
9:30am – 11:30am – ZOOM

Bakersfield College Foster & Kinship Care Program

Bakersfield College Foster and Kinship Care Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge. For a complete list of classes, visit the FKCE website at <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/community/fkce/training-schedules.html>

Register for classes by calling the registration line 661.319.1836 or BC Program Manager at 661.395.4737

REACH Support Groups for Parents

REACH Parent Support Group 6:00pm – 8:00pm – In Person

Designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, new and experienced resource and adoptive parents, as well as legal guardianship parents. Training hours provided. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. To register, email Carrie Ontiveros at contiveros@aspiranet.org.

Parent Café 6:30pm – 8:00pm via Zoom

Based on the Five Protective Factors, Parent Cafe provides an opportunity for parents to explore their strengths and learn from each other's experiences. Training hours provided. Parent Café is offered on the second Tuesday of each month, 6:30pm – 8:00pm via Zoom. To register for Parent Café, email Carrie Ontiveros at contiveros@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you.

REACH Parent Support Group in Spanish 9:30am – 11:30am via Zoom

Este grupo está diseñado para adultos que piensan en la adopción, padres que esperan colocación adoptiva, y padres de niños adoptados. Horas de entrenamiento impartidas. Los enlaces de Zoom y los recordatorios se enviarán mensualmente. El Grupo de Apoyo para Padres de REACH en Español se ven en el cuarto miércoles del mes. Para registrarse, comuníquese con Carrie Ontiveros en contiveros@aspiranet.org y se le envió por correo electrónico un enlace a la reunión.

Bakersfield Aspiranet

4900 California, Tower A, Suite 410A
Bakersfield, CA 93309
Phone: (661) 323-1233
Fax: (661) 323-8090

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Stockton, CA
PERMIT NO. 451



REACH and Kern County Adoption Support Services

Resource: We provide 1) telephone support and referral to local services 2) referral to local adoption related community trainings 3) linkage to local therapists with experience working with adoptive families 4) lending library and website access 5) quarterly newsletter which includes book reviews, and relevant adoption related information.

Education: Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to adoption. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and the impact of adoption on all members of the adoption constellation (adoptive parents, adoptees and birth family).

Advocacy: We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive families. We assist adoptive parents with advocating for the assistance needed in working with educational, legislative and community partners to best meet their children's needs.

Crisis Intervention/Case Management: Participants are eligible to receive short-term therapeutic services, free of charge, by master's level social workers who are trained and experienced in adoption-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed.

Hope: We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage and Hope (RICH) to guide our work with adoptive families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive families through access to our services.