

# Fostering Families



NOVEMBER 2020

**We All Have  
Mental Health**

**Warren's  
Care Story**

**The Journey  
To 100  
Schools**

**My Three  
Peaks  
Challenge**

## Caring At Christmas

**Suggestions for approaching  
the festive season**





# Charity World

Registered in England & Wales  
Charity Number - 1161128

## Introducing Charity World

Charity World is a registered charity in England and Wales developing projects and services for children and families on an international scale.

## Our Mission

Charity World supports children and families living in poverty or hardship through our education and fostering projects, and by collaborating with other charities

doing great work. We believe that supporting families and children through care and education is the best way to support development of a happier, healthier society that is self-sustaining and fairer to all.

## About Us

We aim to be recognised throughout the world as the source of support for thousands of children in need.

Charity World's passion for providing opportunities to children who are experiencing

hardship is the drive behind everything we do. With decades of experience of building and running schools in India and fostering and care services in the UK and Europe, our team has a wealth of skills to ensure the development of this successful charity. We take great pride in the fact that our senior management team are volunteers, ensuring that 90% of funds raised goes directly to our service users. We also take a collaborative approach, recognising the fantastic work of existing

charities and supporting them so together we can have maximum impact.

## Fostering Families Magazine

This magazine is one of many projects Charity World has developed. We hope you enjoy this read and hopefully are inspired to support the publication and the wider work Charity World is doing too.



## Editor's Note

**We're into the final stretch** of the year, December is almost here and I honestly couldn't feel less Christ-massy if I tried. The familiar rituals of previous years have been replaced by more restrictions and uncertainty, and the excitement that usually starts to bubble around this time feels muted, almost anti-climactic. Adapting to the new normal is a challenge that we're all learning to rise to. We're taking it in our stride to the best of ability, and we will get there. Of that I have no doubt.

Christmas can be tough for children in care even under normal circumstances; it can be an emotional rollercoaster rather than an emotional anchor. As we chart this weird and unpredictable time together we wanted to bring you practical advice from carers and trainers on how to approach the Christmas season.

We've also got stories from three incredible care leavers who used their experiences in care as a spring-board to drive positive change in others, from scaling the Three Peaks (with a twist) for charity to teaching people around the world how to access their inner confidence. I'm sure you'll agree that their strength of character and overwhelming positivity in face of adversity is nothing short of inspiring.

As always, a big thank you to all our contributors who kindly shared their expertise with us. We are constantly amazed by everyone in the fostering community who goes above and beyond each day to transform the lives of young people. And please remember, Fostering Families wouldn't be what it is without you. We encourage you to join the conversation and we'd love to hear about your success stories, observation and insights. Our inbox is always open, so please drop us a line and say Hi!

From the team here at Fostering Families, we want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Here's to making many happy memories and brighter futures.

**Danielle Brown MBE**

Editor  
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Health&Lifestyle

# HEALTHY EATING WHEN YOU'RE STUCK AT HOME MORE OFTEN

BY DANIELLE BROWN

**I** don't know about you, but I spent the first couple of weeks of lockdown raiding my cupboards out of pure boredom. My routine had changed and I compensated by eating more of what I wanted and less of what I ought to. One treat turned into another and, as the panic buy frenzy continued, my kitchen started to fill with items that satiated my sugar cravings.

As an athlete nutrition is incredibly important to get right. It fuels your body, which allows you to train harder, focus better and keep your energy levels high. Get this just a tiny bit wrong and it could spell disaster on the competition field. The first time I represented the Yorkshire County Team I got so nervous that the thought of eating made me feel sick. Trying to get through a full day on minimal fuel was not the best approach and towards the end I was running on fumes. I won, but my strong start got chipped away by my competitors towards the end. This was a great motivator to learn from my mistakes and make sure I got nutrition right.

Outside of sport healthy eating is just as important. The body still needs fuel, our brain needs feeding and we need to maintain our energy levels. Whether you're working out, spending a day behind a desk, or running around after children it's important that you fuel yourself properly.

We've also heard (and perhaps experienced?) horror stories about children being weighed when they got back to school. This sets a terrible precedent for many, many reasons as it has links to body shaming, which in turn encourages restrictive diets. A far more effective approach is to promote, support and develop a good relationship with our diet so we fuel our body in the right way.

As we teeter on the edge of the unknown once more, here are a few of my tips to getting this right:

## ADVANCE PLANNING

A positive habit that I'm taking with me out of the last lockdown is planning my meals ahead. I've gone from visiting the supermarket almost every day to doing a big weekly shop. It's saved so much time on the 'what are we having for dinner?' dilemmas that cropped up far too frequently and has stopped me from taking shortcuts and reverting to quick fixes that aren't as nutrient dense.



## GROW YOUR OWN

When I was eight years old my grandma set aside a little patch in her garden for me to grow vegetables. There was something spectacularly rewarding about nurturing tiny seeds and watching my hard work grow into fresh produce. The best part, of course, was eating it. Home grown fruit and veggies taste far nicer than the stuff you can buy at the supermarket. It also gave me a bit more of an adventurous streak. I hated courgettes, but because I'd grown them I was willing to give them a try.

A few packets of seeds can keep young people entertained for hours, educate them about where food comes from and allow them to take responsibility for looking after them. You can even join in the fun by growing herbs and certain vegetables in window-ledge planters if you're struggling to access the outdoors. And even though we're heading into winter now there are still a few veggies that thrive in the cold and damp.

## COLOUR GAME

Rainbows are the new in thing. I still see many brightly coloured paintings in

windows, on my daily walk. Our diet should be as colourful as these rainbows, as this makes sure we get the biggest number of nutrients and vitamins. For younger children, keeping tabs of all the different colours and running a mini competition to see who can eat the most colours can be a really fun way of ensuring they get a healthy mix of nutrients.

## COOK TOGETHER

Cooking is often seen as a chore – a task borne of necessity rather than enjoyment, with success hinging on how quickly we can whip something up. I use cooking time as quality time. It's brilliant to get together, talk about our day and complete something as a team. Turning how I saw cooking from an inconvenience to an essential part of the meal process was a strong enough incentive that helped transform this into a positive habit over the long-term.

When the fun of this starts to stagnate it's time to start mixing things up. Cooking foods from different cultures and learning about these, setting the dinner table with handmade menus, or creating healthier versions of restaurant favourites all go down well.



## TRACK IT

We're all motivated by different things and I find that logging what I eat helps me stay on track and ensure that I eat a nicely balanced diet. I use MyNetDiary. They have a fantastic free version of their App that allows you to log what you eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. This breaks my meals down into the different food groups so I understand what I'm eating, it's helped me get my portion size right, and it encourages me to make better choices especially when it comes to snacking.

I've found the App to be an invaluable tool particularly around enabling me to be consistent with my approach to food. There is absolutely nothing wrong with going off track every now and again, providing it doesn't devolve into a bad habit that quickly becomes the norm. Returning to the App can help turn these little blips around and get back in the healthy eating lane. At the beginning of lockdown I splashed out on chocolate, cookies and pizza – my go to comfort foods. After a few days my App wasn't looking too healthy, which encouraged me to make better food choices.

Apps are brilliant if used correctly – the purpose is to develop a positive relationship with food. This isn't about obsessing over calories, but helping you get a better balance if this is an area that you struggle with. ♦



# my three peaks Challenge

BY GETHIN JONES

**My name is Gethin Jones.** I have a company called Unlocking Potential ([www.unlockingthepotential.co.uk](http://www.unlockingthepotential.co.uk)). I am an inspirational speaker, trainer and coach who works with prisons, charities and local authorities. I am also care experienced, prison experienced, substance misuse experienced, and most importantly human being experienced.

Today I am not going to focus on what I do for a living. Instead I am going to share my story of how I completed the three peaks challenge (Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon) with a twist. The twist was that I did a headstand at the top of each peak, which means that **I stood on my head on the highest peak** in Scotland, England and Wales within 24 hours.



## Health&Lifestyle

**I decided to do this challenge** as a fundraiser for Flying Solo ([www.flyingsolo.org.uk](http://www.flyingsolo.org.uk)). This is a charity that supports Portsmouth care leavers, and is close to my heart as I too am a Portsmouth care leaver. The charity is run by care leavers to support care leavers so that they have the support they deserve once the corporate parent responsibility ends at 25 years of age.

I am a 49-year-old man who still likes a challenge. Little did I know what this challenge was going to entail. I have a great set of friends and a group of us decided that we would do this together. We all did it for different reasons and mine was to raise £1,000 for Flying Solo.

We all knew that this challenge was going to be tough, so we committed to a strict training schedule. The three months prior to the challenge I went from training 3 times a week to 7 days a week. This would include pounding the streets in my new running trainers, bike rides, step machine, 10-mile hikes and a weekly circuit that we all attended. Let's put some more detail in that... The runs increased to 7 miles a time, the bike rides were 25 miles and on the hikes I had a 10kg weight in my rucksack.

Three weeks before the event I picked up an injury in my knee. I was really worried that my challenge was over. I booked in a session with a physio who was able to do some amazing work on my knee and said I was fit enough to still attempt the challenge.

We were booked in with a company that would provide us with a lead climber to keep pace, a van and two drivers to get us between all 3 peaks. I remember clearly getting on the flight from the south of England to Scotland, I was filled with trepidation and excitement. I had climbed all three mountains separately and I knew that this was going to be the biggest endurance test I had ever given myself.

The evening before I created a playlist on my Spotify. I downloaded all of the biggest power songs that could help me to get the rhythm I needed at the start of each climb. I knew from experience that the first hour is always the toughest. Your mind and body screams at you to stop and it is at this time you need to dig deep.

**P**reparations were now complete, and I will now share with you a full account of the challenge ahead of me:

It was 7am on a brisk morning in the Scottish Highlands. We were all together, pumped, and ready to start. That first hour was as tough as I thought it was going to be. I dug deep and before I knew it, we were nearing the top of the mountain. It was only at this time I started to take in the scenery as up until then I had been concentrating on the next step. The view was spectacular, the clouds were low, and we were above them. You could see other mountain peaks poking above the clouds, it was truly breathtaking. We only stopped around every 45 minutes to take on water and to either take off or put on a layer

of clothing. The pace we climbed at was insane and even in that cold temperature (-5 degrees) I only had on a thin top and I was sweating profusely.

As we reached the top we had snow and ice beneath our feet. I was soon elated to see that the summit was within reach. The feeling at this point was immense and we had a few minutes to have a picture of my headstand and do a video (you can see these on my Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter pages).

In no time at all we were on our way down. This may sound easy but it can be tougher than going up. Going down puts extra pressure on your knees and causes pain. You also have to keep a good pace and have to be very careful where you place your feet as the rocks are wet and slippery.

Before long we were at the bottom and we were then told we completed this mountain (up and down) in 4hrs 2 minutes. This was an amazing time,

considering the last time I climbed Ben Nevis it took me over 7 hours. We were on the clock and had no time to celebrate. We had a quick coffee and a hot filled roll, and then it was in the van ready for the 6hr drive to Scafell Pike in Cumbria.

The journey between the mountains was no limo drive. There were 9 of us, 1 lead and 2 drivers with all of our clothing, equipment and food. We were hot and sweaty so you can imagine what it was like in that bus. We tried to get as comfortable as possible as we knew that we needed to be rested ready for climb number two.

We made it to Cumbria just as the sun was setting. I was about to climb my first mountain in the dark. I had climbed this before and it took over 6 hours. I knew it was a steep climb and we would have to cross a large stream and there was a lot of moisture and moss on the rocks.

I again powered up my music and away

I have a great set of friends and a group of us decided that we would do this together. We all did it for different reasons and mine was to raise £1,000 for Flying Solo.



tivated them and being in the front they picked up their own pace as they were leading not chasing.

I heard someone shout "there's the summit." I was gobsmacked as I couldn't believe we were at the top. It was pitch black and we couldn't see a thing. We were in the clouds and it was cold and wet. We all put our head torches down and got a picture and video of me doing headstand number two.

We then headed down and this journey was far more treacherous than Ben Nevis. It was really wet and slippery. Some of the guys slipped on the way down but thankfully no one was hurt. I was at the front when we reached the bottom and was the first to hear that we had climbed Scafell Pike (up and down) in 3 hours 10 minutes. You could have knocked me over, I was buzzing and at that point I was grateful for all those hours of training I had completed.

We quickly had a hot coffee and some porridge and then it was back in the lovely sweet-smelling comfortable van (I wish lol). The drive to Snowdon was 5 hours and we would be getting there around 2.30 in the morning. On the way I was checking my fundraising and I was now up to £1,750. The feeling of knowing how much I was raising was giving me the motivation to continue. I was also receiving regular messages from my partner, family, friends and supporters. Even though it was dark and cold I did not feel alone.





**W**e reached Snowdon in good time and the whole team were buzzing as we knew that we had what it takes to get to the top and finish on time. This time I didn't use my playlist as I stayed close to the team. There was lots of chat and banter. The weather was completely different from Scafell Pike; the skies were clear and the night sky and stars were amazing.

The climb gets tough in some places and there was some scrambling. This was not easy in the dark, but it was a great experience. I felt like an intrepid explorer. The final part of the climb was steep, and it was such a feeling to know that I was about to do my final upward step. The elation that I felt when I reached the top was something that I have never experienced before and when I completed my final headstand I was filled with pride. I knew I had achieved my goal for the charity, 3 headstands in 24 hours on the highest peaks in England, Scotland and Wales.

It was now time to get down in a time that would mean that we would complete the challenge within 24 hours. I had done my research and out of everyone that attempts the 3 peaks only 40% make it within 24hrs. My enthusiasm to get down was about to impact me in a way I didn't expect.

I was literally taking my second step on the way down and my injured knee twisted, and the pain was piercing. I could not put any pressure on it and I had to lead with my left. Before long I was way behind and was unable to keep up with the team. I did not want to let the team down and I pushed hard. Before long I started to get pain in my left knee due to the extra strain it was taking.

Out of the darkness came one of the team, Pawel Janik came to join me. Pawel explained that the time would stop once the first 5 got to the bottom. Pawel told me not to worry as I would not im-

pact the team. This made me both happy and sad. I was happy that the team would still succeed but gutted that I would not make it in time. Pawel gave me some pain killers and he left me while I pushed on.

The extra impact on my left knee was starting to take its toll. I had to keep it in one position and all my weight was on the left side of my knee. As I hobbled down, I saw a light in the distance. When I got there, it was another teammate called Dan Chandler. Dan said he did not want me to finish alone and he would stay with me. This was so touching and having him by my side helped me increase my speed.

The speed meant that we started to catch up with the rest of the team. Before I knew it, I could see two other team members Mark Legg and Freddie Hoare, and there were now four of us. I was not going to finish on my own and we were on track to finish within the 24hrs.

As we went onto the final track, we saw that the rest of the team were waiting. I was so happy as I knew we started together, and we were going to finish together. My teammates asked if I could make it to the end and my response was, "yes, I have half a knee left." This made them laugh.

Out of the darkness came the finish line. We were going to do it and as I crossed the line, I let out a huge YES and punched the air. We had done all 3 peaks in 23hrs 34minutes. While walking back to the van the sun rose, and I reflected on this challenge, why I had done it and those we support.

My life as a child in care was filled with mountains. Many times I felt lost and alone. It always seemed that at times of need, strangers came out of the dark to support me. My experiences as a child built an inner strength, courage and resilience and it was this that got me through. When I got to the van, I had a huge smile on my face as I knew that I was now in a position where I can help other care leavers see their inner strength courage and resilience.

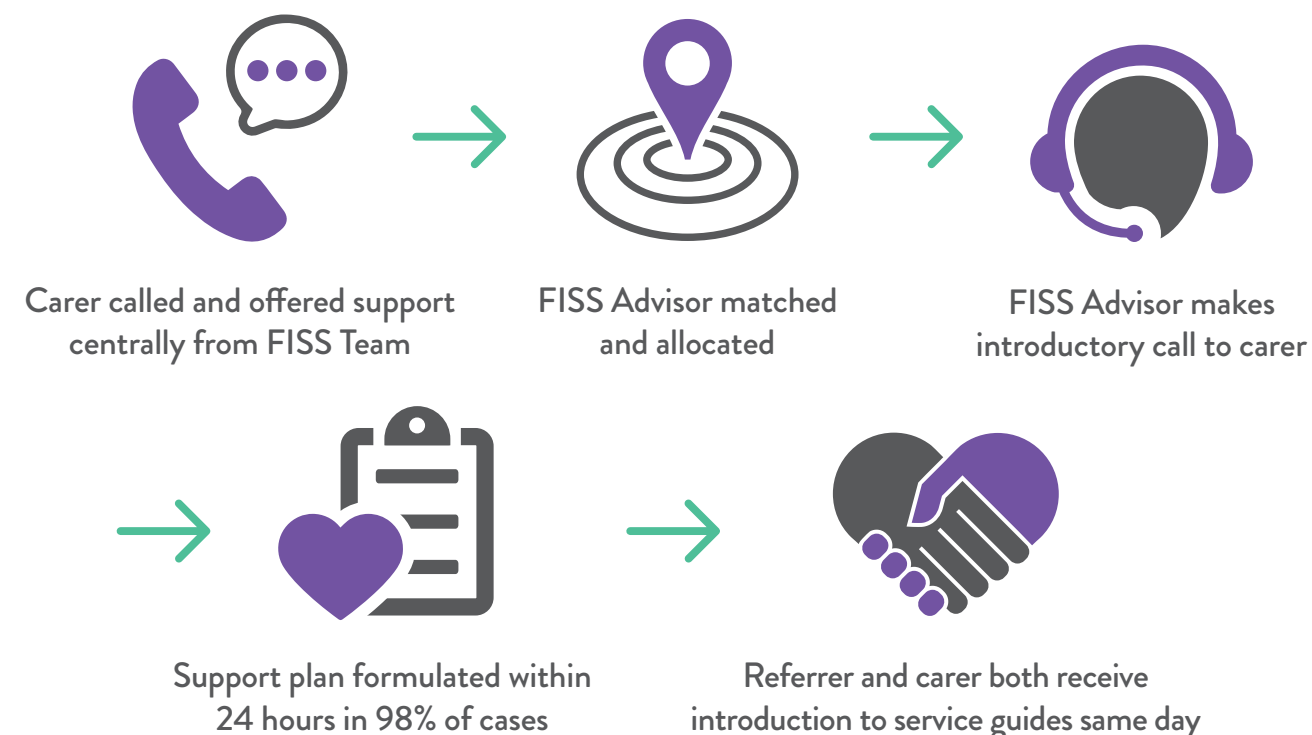
Thank you for reading this and if you feel inspired you can donate to my Crowdfunder using this link. If this no longer works you can donate directly on the Flying Solo website. If you enjoyed this article please look out for the next edition as I will be sharing more of my personal story and what I deliver through [www.unlockingthepotential.co.uk](http://www.unlockingthepotential.co.uk) ♦

# FISS

## FOSTER CARERS INDEPENDENT SUPPORT SERVICE

## REFERRALS ALLOCATED WITHIN 24 HRS

FISS provides face-to-face support to foster carers facing allegations or standards of care concerns. Did you know that FISS is able to allocate an advisor to support your carer within 24 hours of referral in 98% of cases? Even throughout the challenges of the lockdown period, FISS has been able to get the support to your carers at the time that they need it most. Here is a reminder of our process:



### Referring to FISS is so simple

Simply just [click here](#). Or to get in touch via email: [FISS@fostertalk.org](mailto:FISS@fostertalk.org) or call us on: 0121 758 5013 (Opt 1)

**FOSTERTALK**  
SUPPORTING THOSE WHO CARE

PART OF THE MARTIN JAMES FOUNDATION



# We All Have Mental Health: Let's Look After It

By DANIELLE BROWN



**M**ental health is usually spoken about when things go wrong. The focus is on the issues and struggles people face, yet we ALL have mental health just like we all have physical health.

There is a far better understanding when it comes to our physical health. We know that exercising and eating the right things are good for us and proactively improves our general wellbeing. The approach to mental health is much more reactive – it's about responding to issues as and when they arise. And this really isn't the best answer. Prevention is always better than cure.

So how can we better look after our mental health?

Self-awareness is the cornerstone of success. Understanding our emotions and how they impact our thoughts and behaviours allow us to figure out what is working and what is not. This awareness enable us to take it to the next level and start managing our emotions, actively taking steps to choose the response we want in given situations.

Another essential pillar is building our self-confidence and esteem. When we believe in our abilities and value

our self-worth we become unstoppable. Our esteem and confidence levels have a profound influence on the decisions we make and the actions we take. It fuels motivation, drives persistence and enables us to adapt to change better - and it takes a lot of work to keep on top of. Our confidence levels fluctuate constantly, so it's something we need to actively work on to ensure it stays high.

And looking after our mental health is about our happiness levels. Happiness is often seen as an end goal - work hard then you'll be successful, and once you're successful then you'll be happy. Happiness is not a by-product of success, but a fundamental part of it. When we are happy we are much more likely to perform better, and when we deliver better results we become more successful. Happiness isn't about short bursts of elation when

we achieve something good, but the long-term contentment we get from cultivating a positive mindset.

There are lots of steps we can take to become more mentally healthy, and here are my top four:

## 1. Check in with yourself

How we feel changes on a daily basis so checking in with yourself regularly and giving yourself a few moments to reflect on how you feel really helps. Ask yourself how you are, examine why you feel that way, and explore whether there is anything you can do to maintain or improve it. I like keeping a journal. Getting my thoughts down on paper helps me clarify them, stops me from blowing things out of proportion and enables me to see patterns. If I notice particular emotions or behaviours being triggered over a period of time then I can start figuring out why and do something about it.

## 2. Exercise everyday

When we exercise it releases endorphins – this is a 'feel good' chemical which improves our mood. Exercise has been linked to an increase in self-confidence and esteem, helps us sleep better, gets us to feel more positively about ourselves and life in general, reduces stress, anxiety and depression, along with a whole lot more. And I mean a whole lot more. Every important life skill that you could possibly need can be practised, developed and improved through sport.

## 3. Talk about it

It's okay to not be okay. We all have ups and downs and talking about how we feel (both the good stuff and the bad) is really healthy. Sharing the burden with

other people prevents us feeling isolated and alone. Sometimes it can be difficult to make sense of our emotions. They can be chaotic and messy, and trying to unravel them is hard. Starting conversations around this might feel a little awkward at first, but gently persisting with this can lead to some incredibly positive breakthroughs and it might encourage others to open up too.

## 4. Surround Yourself With Positivity

A negative person has vampiric like qualities, sucking the energy out of us. They have such a draining effect that it's can be quite difficult to hold on to your own positivity. Limit your time around people like this and set firm boundaries. This doesn't mean surrounding yourself with people who agree with you all the time, but the people who act like rechargeable batteries. ♦





# ‘OH, I WISH IT COULD BE CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY’

## CHRISTMAS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CHILD IN CARE

BY JIM FERRAN

**L**emn Sissay OBE, the official poet of the 2012 Olympics speaks of Christmas; “Christmas divides the world into two sorts of people. One group gathers around the domestic hearth: all jocularity and teasing, memories and traditions. The other group is, as in the Victorian cliché, outside the window looking in. They have never felt the warmth of the homely festive glow.”

Lemn was a child in the care system.

I have no personal experience of his story, but I can relate.

It was Christmas day 1988. A bitterly cold day and I remember it well.

It is etched in my memory box, I cannot shake it off.

It visits me every Christmas day as an unwelcome visitor.

I was on an afternoon shift as a police officer in a busy area of northwest London.

I took the call at 1627hrs, to a domestic disturbance.

Unfortunately, this is a regular call during the holiday period as not everyone is safe, secure or happy. I arrived first and it was the crying and wailing that I first heard. I entered the property and saw a scene that will stay with me forever.

A hysterical woman was sobbing holding a screaming small child, whilst two other children sat silently ashen faced on a settee. A man was dead sat at a table, I won't go into details, but this woman had snapped and killed a very abusive and violent man who had harmed her for years.

All three children were under 9 years of age.

The two older ones were old enough to understand what had happened but no idea of what was happening.

The day was a blur after that, but I recall carrying the two older children out, wrapped in a duvet, to a waiting colleague who took them to the station.

Hours later, I went back to the station and I saw the 3 children sat in our TV room watching Disney videos, being looked after by 2 colleagues.

I was made aware a while afterwards that they were taken into the care of the local authority and their small lives were changed forever.

Why do I tell you, the reader, this?

I was able to process what I'd seen and I understood the





## CHRISTMAS, OR OTHER HOLIDAYS, CAN BE CHALLENGING FOR THEM AND BRING AROUND A CATHARSIS OF UNCONTROLLABLE EMOTIONS. WHERE WE MAY SEE HAPPINESS AND FAMILY HARMONY, TO THEM IT MAY BE A DAY THAT CAUSES GREAT DISTRESS.

processes that would quickly be put in place, yes it was unsettling as a husband and new father BUT I could make sense of it. I won't forget it, but I can control it.

Unfortunately, those 3 children will never forget that and that is their proverbial ghost of Christmas past that would, I had no doubt, become their Christmas present and future.

Children in care have experienced loss, trauma, deceit, harm, abuse, fear, anxiety and sorrow. Some are in care because their parents are temporarily unable to cope, whilst for others, their parents or people they should be able to trust, were the source of their feelings.

Their memory boxes are definitely not going to be as ordered as those of us who can make sense of the world we live in.

Christmas, or other holidays, can be challenging for them and bring around a catharsis of uncontrollable emotions. Where we may see happiness and family harmony, to them it may be a day that causes great distress.

As a carer this can be unsettling and indeed, subconsciously, we may feel that the child does not appreciate what we are trying to do.

You will all recall from the attachment theory training you have attended how the brain of a child in care operates, and how the early years trauma, conscious or unconscious, will impact upon them.

Strangely enough, Charles Dickens highlighted this in his book 'A Christmas Carol'. His lead character, Ebenezer Scrooge, a seemingly miserable, anti-social and cruel man, had himself suffered great trauma as

a child at Christmas and, when confronted by those memories, told the ghost of Christmas past,

"Leave me! Take me back! Haunt me no longer!"

We can all recall how his childhood trauma impacted upon his ability to build and maintain relationships.

Maybe Mr Dickens had a real insight into the other world that many people survive in every day.

I recently reached out to our first ever foster child, let's call him C, to find out what it felt like for him when he was with us for 2 Christmases. C was candid and insightful and told me,

".....Overpowering, too many rules, be here at this time, eat at this time, everyone knew what was expected but I didn't".

C opened up about why he threw his present from his birth family in the bin as he felt embarrassed by their 'cheap gift' when we had bought him a brand new mountain bike. He told me

"Do you know how I felt seeing that from me ma and da? I remember the year me ma was off her head on heroin and threw a £1 bag of Haribo at me and said 'Merry Christmas' yet you bought me a boss bike, it hurt a lot"

I recall his behaviour was erratic and challenging during the holiday period and his drug use increased considerably culminating with him not joining us for our meal.

He told me "It's hard to fit in when it's not your family, I felt part of it, but it was all too much."

I hadn't considered that what I saw as 'generosity'

could be interpreted as something else. I was trying to fill a wide emotional chasm with platitudes and Polyfills.

I have to be honest, I struggled a bit as to why he was not joining in. After all we were making it 'special for him'.

Then I remembered that maybe those 3 children I had helped in 1988 probably struggled a lot on Christmas day too.

Lemn Sissay gives us a window into his experiences regarding Christmas in care:

"I felt rootless; an unwanted parcel. And Christmas, as for any kid in care, was the hardest time: when the festive lights served only to expose what was missing, and would never be there. It feels an incredibly risky time. I used to fold myself into myself. All the memories were of Christmases that hadn't been good."

Powerful narrative that could maybe explain why the child in our care does not want to be involved in all the activity we take so casually as 'fun'.

So, what can we as carers do to make sure that the child in our care is okay with Christmas?

**Talk about Christmas:** In particular, explain what your Christmases look and feel like. Make sure you let them tell you about their Christmas if they feel able or want to. If they have something they like to do, or a memory that is positive then encourage them to recreate it. I'm sure many of us can remember the first time we spent Christmas with another family, everyone has different ways of doing it. It may be something as simple as helping them make a card or purchasing a present for their family.

**Expect emotions to surface:** It is likely that this time of year will be emotional. Remember they are away from their families and siblings so they will feel sad. Your Christmas and how your family celebrate it could make the child feel like an outsider. In fact, many children in care will go missing during this time to try to be with their families.

Keep some sort of a routine: Children thrive on routine and maintaining this will help children to cope. If a routine cannot be maintained, organise and arrange a Christmas calendar ahead of each activity to help the young people to prepare. Talk through any worries and coping strategies for those circumstances with which you know young people struggle. It's always important to ask them what they may like to do and who they would like to see.

**Visitors can be overwhelming:** Think about the fact that some children in care may be wary of strangers and the very presence of them can be unsettling or bring back hidden trauma. Try to give them some information about who is visiting and who they are etc. as this often can help them feel less anxious. I recall C being fascinated by my son's Russian partner and the fact she could speak so many languages and that both she and my son lived in Russia. They both took time out to tell him things about the country and the people and he was fully engaged.

**'Make Merry' in moderation:** many children may

have witnessed adults with an unhealthy attitude to alcohol. Reassure them that alcohol can be something that people take to relax and that in moderation it is, for many, an integral part of socialising.

**Make time for them to see their family:** Obviously, this will be at the direction of your supervising SW, but contact is important for the child at Christmas. Be there to support them after the visit and maybe just give them time to refocus and then talk through the contact.

**Get them involved:** Think about the impact of letting the child pick the turkey or help with that dreaded 'Big Shop'. Remember we are hoping to create positive memories and prepare the child for moving onto the next part of their life.

**Food discipline:** Many children in care can have an unhealthy relationship to food, so be very mindful of the access to food and also try not to overwhelm them with the amount of food that we have and often waste.

**Make sense of it all:** When it's all over sit down and talk through the experience with the child and listen to their feedback as it's often healthy to see how we do things from the perspective of another. In addition, if it's a long-term placement then make sure they see their feedback being put in place next year.

This is not a tick list, as I dislike them with a passion, BUT hopefully it will help you plan ahead for what can be a very challenging and difficult time.

I witnessed first-hand many Christmas tragedies in my 30-year police career. My family support me and give me some emotional 'wiggle room' and allow me to 'have a moment'. That support, and the existence of a safety net if I need it, is what gets me through the holiday period. I am aware now with hindsight that I did not process my own past traumas as best as I could have, which is why having a support bubble is so important.

This year may be more challenging for many of us regardless of our 'normality' so try to adjust our narrative around the child and indeed our own families.

I'll leave you all with the advice that we as carers should take from A Christmas Carol. A child may have ghosts from a Christmas past that are haunting their Christmas present BUT we can make sure that the child can work towards developing a real Christmas future. ♦

### Acknowledgements:

1. Roy Wood and Wizzard. I wish it could be Christmas every day. Sony/ATV music publishing
  2. Lemn Sissay OBE [lemn@thechristmasdinner.org.uk](mailto:lemn@thechristmasdinner.org.uk)
  3. A Christmas carol: Charles Dickens. First published 1843 by Chapman & Hall
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# BOBBY'S STORY

BY SUE AND DAVE BODDISON

**B**obby was placed with our family just before his fifth birthday. His mother had asked social services to take him as she couldn't manage his behaviour.

Bobby attended a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Each day he would be sent home before lunchtime as the staff found him too difficult to handle. Bobby's mother refused to take him home so he was put up for adoption. Very soon he was matched with an adoptive family.

Bobby was introduced to the adoptive family and started to have visits with them. It was all going very well until the adoptive family went to school to meet his teacher. The teacher told the family that Bobby was going to be a juvenile delinquent, so they pulled out. Bobby was devastated. He felt that no one wanted him.

In the meantime, social services had been working with Bobby's mum and three younger siblings. The decision was made to remove the three younger children from mum's care. We were asked to take one of his sisters and the other two children were put in another foster placement together.

Time went on and social services started to look for a long-term foster placement where all four of the children could be placed together. Despite their best efforts no placement could be found. We felt that Bobby couldn't take another rejection so we decide to buy a house large enough accommodate our own three children, Bobby, and his three siblings. Suddenly we went from being approved to foster

one child short-term to having seven children.

Bobby was still unable to manage a full day at school so we decided to put him and his siblings in the same local school as our children. We made an appointment to see the head teacher and explained about Bobby's difficulties. We suggested that Sue would sit in the library at school each day and if Bobby started causing any problems in class she would take him for a walk until he calmed down. Sue would then return him to class. The head teacher agreed to give him a chance.

Sue and Bobby went on many walks in all kinds of weather. Gradually over time the walks became less and less frequent. If Bobby started to misbehave Sue would walk past the classroom just to remind him she was there.

Eventually Bobby began to control his own behaviour. During this time, he was also diagnosed with ADHD, severe dyslexia and post-traumatic stress disorder. He was supported by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for many years.

Bobby remained in mainstream school and did very well. From there he went on to college and was offered a place at university where he gained a degree in IT. When Bobby left university he found himself a full-time job as an IT Consultant and he now lives independently.

Bobby and his siblings are doing well, and are all still very close to our family. It is sad to think that this lovely young man could have been written off at the age of five if we hadn't thought outside the box. ♦

*\*Bobby's name has been changed*





Experiences From Foster Carers

# Caring At Christmas

By LORNNA ASHTON



## Ho Ho Ho...

**I**t's heading to that time of the year! And after this year, I think a ho ho ho is in order.

December is a funny time of year. The weather changes, the heating kicks in, you do the school-run in the dark and return home in the dark, and gloves are just as important as your car keys. Life seems to take place more indoors than out (like the majority of this year, really) and this shines a light on family time more than ever.

December is a beacon of festive family moments. It's the only time of year you well up over TV adverts, give loose change to charity without hesitation because the coin tub has tinsel on it, and rewatch the same movies that you've seen year on year simply because it's Christmas.

December is the month where eating mince pies at 10am is acceptable and having mulled wine to keep you warm is nothing to be concerned about. It's about stocking up on Quality Street and leaving all the wrappers in the box to confuse the rest of the family – as well as trying to convince yourself that you haven't eaten 60% of the tub in 11 minutes.



## Experiences From Foster Carers



It's about getting the kids to decorate the tree and waiting for them to go to bed to rearrange it, so it looks less cramped on the bottom two branches. It's about thinking up imaginative ideas for that dreadful Elf on the Shelf that will make the kids laugh, but won't take 2 hours to clean up in the morning. And then there's the deep clean of the kids' rooms, sneaking in in stealth mode and decluttering the 12 bits of a jigsaw that needs 36 pieces to make a whole picture, 72 dried up felt tips, last year's novelty cracker prizes, hardened slime, pebbles from the beach, and conkers from the park – at least, I think they're conkers.

**I**t's a truly joyous time of year and, if you've fostered for a while, you'll also know that it's the most thought-provoking and emotional time of the year too. It's when lasting memories are made for the child(ren) and yourself. However, if you haven't fostered for a long time or had a Christmas with a foster child before, now is a good time to think about your approach. As an adult and (new) parent, we instinctively want to fulfil all the dreams of Christmas by ensuring every moment is filled with love, laughter and traditions. For a foster child, it's so different and so difficult.

Foster children of all ages go through every conceivable emotion as soon as we get

***Take time for you. Raising children is rewarding but emotionally tough. Christmas can be challenging so do what you need to do to refocus, stay calm and plough on.***

to the 1st of December. From elation and excitement, to dread, fear and anxiety. It's such an emotional time of the year and, as a foster parent, you'll be floored at the array of emotions you'll see in them - as well as those you feel yourself. It's natural to want to fuss and give them the best Christmas ever, and why not; they truly deserve it. But... stop! Slow down.

Christmas provokes heightened feelings for all of us, even as well-adjusted adults who have been assessed to look after children. We can feel overwhelmed at Christmas, so can you imagine how overawed a child might feel? Children in care often haven't had a good Christmas experience and, even if they have, they haven't experienced your Christmas, your festive carry-ons and your family customs. This time of year brings back memories of mum and dad, or brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. These memories can suddenly make them

### TIPS:

**1. Talk to them** about Christmas day, opening gifts, what you usually do, and how they can get involved.

**2. We always say that it's okay if they don't like a gift.** There isn't anything we can't take back and we aren't offended if we have to exchange it later.

**3. Keep your receipts.** You'll be returning items, and you might as well make a day of it!

**4. Check if they want to purchase gifts** for anyone prior to Christmas - you, their mum, their girlfriend etc. and see if they need help.

**5. Christmas cards are an ideal way** to get younger children to practise their writing.

**6. Santa letters are maybe a first for some,** so this is a magical moment. Keep them safe for when they're older too!

**7. Don't try and fill every day** with a magical moment. The emotional overload of Christmas is too much for some children so slow down and have a movie day.

**8. Wrapping gifts together** is a moment that holds so much worth. Stick on the Christmas Carols and get them involved.

**9. On Christmas day** give them time to call their family, and give them the hugs or the space they need. Suggest after dinner, so if they are upset you'll have more time to help them overcome their feelings.

**10. December** is also an ideal month to reinforce that family time is more valuable and precious than spending hundreds of pounds on gifts, as money does not equate to love.

feel overloaded with sentiment, regardless of how settled they are. Christmas is a reminder that they aren't with 'their' family!

Although some may feel relieved not to be where they once were, this often comes with guilt, anguish and a sense of loss. They may feel guilty for missing their family, when their new family are trying so hard to give them the best Christmas ever. And if they're not missing their family, they might question where their loyalty lies. We often see anguish because, for many, they'll realise that this is what Christmas should have been like when they were growing up. And some may grieve because their parents, siblings or other family members aren't with them.

Whether they're 5 or 15, children in care often haven't had a Christmas like the one you're giving them. They realise this very quickly, and these feelings can be well and truly overwhelming.

It is without doubt a bittersweet time, but it can also be such an uplifting time for you all. The child(ren) may be experiencing new feelings that they can't explain; not because it's bad, but because it's different. They may also feel an abundance of happiness and safety that they may not have experienced before. It could be the Christmas they've dreamed of for many years!

I would urge you to talk to the children about their past Christmas's and what they did on Christmas day. Explain what you do so they know what to expect. Get them involved, let them choose a new bauble for the tree, or dare them to try a mince pie, get matching PJs, and if they're old enough get them involved with the elf ideas for the younger children (if you have any). Maybe start a new tradition together, and whatever their age get them an advent calendar!

**S**ome children find it hard to open gifts in front of you as they don't know how to receive a present and this can cause anxiety. Surprises sometimes causes stress also. We always ask them to write a list and encourage them to, "put everything and anything that your wildest hearts desires, from a holiday in the Bahamas to a scented lip gloss!" This reassures them they will get something from their list, but they won't know what so it's not too much of a surprise that they're nervous, and yet there's enough of an element of surprise to put the fun back into Christmas. When opening gifts, they may want to go first, they may want to go last, or just open theirs in the corner. It's entirely up to you and how you approach this, but just be prepared for a whirlwind of emotion.

From my experience, I find getting children involved in the run up to Christmas is the best way to help them manage their worry and the tempestuous overflow of emotions. From the smallest suggestions, like what crackers we should have on the table, to choosing a Christmas day outfit. It's the mundane things that are somehow everything, and it creates so many memories for you all. But most importantly, it helps the child to feel a sense of belonging, or reinforces that they play an integral part in your family home and December hasn't altered anything.

December is not a race to the 25th, so take it slowly. Talk to the child(ren) about the ideas you have, the gifts they want, and the Christmas day that you and your family normally have. It's also good to have down days and just rest up. It's great picking a tree and decorating it, but it's also nice to be in PJs by 6pm on a Thursday.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a healthy, happy and family-filled New Year. ♦



# Warren's Care

Experiences From  
Care Leavers



# Story

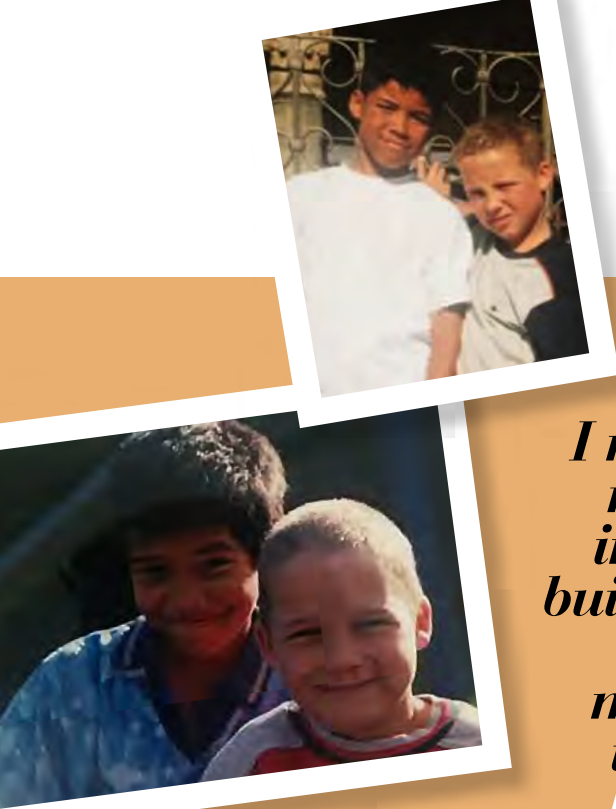


**THEY SAY IF YOU CAN SPEAK,** you can influence and if you can influence, you can change people's lives. So, here's my story.

My name is **Warren**. I'm 31 years old and I'm a care leaver. I'm a father, fiancé, international speaker, and I've travelled the world helping people. I teach people how to become confident and how to be the person they really are – their confident self. This wouldn't be possible without my care story.

I grew up in Oxford, and when people think of Oxford they tend to think of cathedrals and universities. My side of Oxford was very different. It was known for criminality, drugs and violence. Not many people make it out of the estate that I grew up in. My mum had me when she was 17-years-old and I'm the eldest of four. I have a younger brother, Matthew, who is four years younger than me and two sisters, Chloe and Lucy, who are five and eight years younger than me.





## Experiences From Care Leavers

*I reprogrammed and reconditioned my mindset. I had to reparent my inner child who was hurt. I had to build trust for that inner child. I had to give that inner child a different meaning to life. I had to allow that inner child to just be, not try to be anyone else but just be.*



**I** remember not really having a normal childhood. Before foster care, my mum was addicted to drugs so her focus wasn't really on parenting. There was a lot of violence in my household and my mum's boyfriend beat her up in front of us. I'll never forget that image, of seeing my mum with blood all over her face. It still stays with me. I remember being terrified as a kid and always being afraid of what was going to happen next. We constantly had police knocking at our door or our house being raided, and it got to a place where my mum was put into submission with drugs.

She lost herself to crack cocaine. I remember going to school and coming home to find crack pipes everywhere. I would break them because I thought if I broke them then she wouldn't take drugs. But the more I did it, the more pipes I would see and it became a vicious cycle. The drugs really started to take over to the point where my mum just put her hands up and said to social services that she couldn't do this anymore. She put us in care. I was 8-years-old.

My whole family got split up. My sisters went first. I'll never forget the day that I had to say goodbye to them, not knowing when I was going to see them again. Watching them cry through the window as they were driving away was just heartbreaking. Then a week later it was mine and my brother's turn. I never wanted to be separated from my mum. That was the worst outcome I could think of.

The first home we went to was a temporary foster home and I didn't feel comfortable there. They didn't really understand us. I was scared and I just wanted my mum. I felt angry at social services because I wanted my family to be together. I didn't understand why they'd split us up and I was hurt. Shortly after, about a week or two, we went to our second foster home and they were going to

be our long-term foster parents. We got our hopes up and we were excited about having solid foundations and knowing where we were going to be for the long-term. After we had been there for a while, I went to school one day and then the taxi driver who normally took us home said we weren't going to go back to that foster home. We were moved into our last foster home.

Our last foster parents were a relation to my brother's dad's side of the family, so that was really good because it was someone we knew. We had a really good and very strict upbringing. My foster parent, Louise, was a Muslim and I went from having no boundaries at all to having lots.

I wasn't allowed out on the street, I wasn't allowed to speak to girls, I wasn't allowed to eat pork so it was very strict.

I remember my experience in foster care - I just wanted to be normal. I hated that people knew I was in care. I hated that social workers would not treat me the same or, I felt that they weren't treating me the same, and I would get rewarded for the simplest things such as doing homework or things that normal kids wouldn't get rewarded for. I remember just wanting to fit in and be normal and remove that tag of being a foster kid.

When I was 13-years-old my mum put herself into rehab and she went through the process of getting clean and was on the road of recovery. She went to court and won and finally got us back together again as a family.

This was all my dreams in one - I was going to live back with my family again. When I moved back into my mum's it was amazing. I can't even explain to you how amazing it felt to be one family again. But what I realised was that the trauma that I went through as a child and my experience in foster care had affected me and I still had a lot of self-sabotaging beliefs that I wasn't good enough, that I wasn't normal. I kept trying to be someone who I wasn't to impress other people and this went on until I was 20. I didn't love myself, I didn't care about myself and I ended up going through depression.

**W**hen I went through depression I was adamant that I wanted to find a holistic way of overcoming it and I wanted to understand the psychology of why I was depressed so I started studying NLP - Neuro Linguistic Programming. I reprogrammed and reconditioned my mindset. I had to reparent my inner child who was hurt. I had to build trust for that inner child. I had to give that inner child a different meaning to life. I had to allow that inner child to just be, not try to be anyone else but just be. When I worked on myself and my psychology that's when I realised that it doesn't matter what we go through in life, it's our story. What matters is how we see our story.

I used to be ashamed of being in foster care, but now I'm proud because my story can help others. My story makes me a teacher. And that's what I did. I created a business as a confidence coach and I teach people all around the world how to be themselves. How to be confident, how to have a voice, how to own their story and not be a slave to their story. I have coached thousands of people and helped them change their lives.

I created a movement during Covid called the 'Got This' Movement. Once we have a positive mindset we can create a positive life - it's as simple as that. I have made it my mission to impact as many people as I can by helping them commit to bettering their lives. The 'Got This' Movement is a platform where people buy a t-shirt and with that t-shirt they set themselves a goal. We also aim to support mental health on a wider scale in the process and 5% of every t-shirt we sell goes to a mental health charity, and we choose a different one every month.

The whole idea behind the movement is to help people realise that whatever you've been through in your life, you've got this. The I got this, you got this, we got this attitude. If you're reading this story and you can relate to what I've gone through in my life I want you to realise that you've got this. That nothing happens by coincidence. Everything happens for a reason and remember to never, ever be ashamed of your story. I am proud of being in care because I can help children who are suffering, who feel like they are no one, who feel like they don't belong.

I am a voice for them. I am a proud care leaver. ♦  
Want to learn more? Check out Warren's Got This Movement on his website: [www.gotthismovement.com](http://www.gotthismovement.com)



## Experiences From Care Leavers

# Reflecting On My Time In Care

### CHARLES' TIME IN CARE

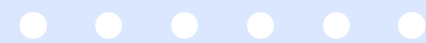
**T**he first time I was fostered was when I was a baby. My parents were young and finding it challenging to balance work and studying at university, so I ended up being fostered by a lady my mum was doing her nursing training with. They became good strong friends, and she ended up becoming my godmother. I was fostered by them for less than a year because my godmother became pregnant, which created more and more pressure.

I had to move from there and I was sent to Ghana to live with my father's family until just before my sixth birthday. I came back to the UK and stayed with my parents for the next four or so years, but there were a lot of different issues and it didn't work out. So I went into a children's home for a short time, and then to a set of foster parents whilst Social Services looked for a long-term placement for me. I stayed with this family for about a year, but it wasn't the happiest experience. Their youngest son was five or six years older than me and he bullied me because I was younger, and he had a problem because I was of a different race. It was difficult and I was moved from there into a couple of other children's home for a year or so.

Eventually I was sent to a Jamaican family who are the foster parents I ended up settling with and I stayed with them until I was 19. I felt comfortable here, there was a lot of love, and they buffered me from a lot of the pressures that social services can put on young people. As an example, I got a paper round and then I got a job in a supermarket when I was at school. Because I was getting a little bit of money Social Services felt I should pay something towards my keep. My foster parents didn't agree with this, so we came up with an agreement not to tell them. This helped me see that my foster parents were in my corner and they were very supportive of me. They gave me the space to do what I wanted, within reason, but I wasn't really a child that caused problems. I was quite responsible. I felt that I had to be independent because I was the only one that had my back, so I had to look after myself. I left my foster placement at the age of 19 and went into shared accommodation sourced by Social Services.

When I reflect on my time in the care system, whilst I feel that I had a lot of love and support from my foster parents, I still think it would have been better if I had received some kind of mentorship. It would have helped me see that I

**Charles Oduro** is the founder of Amsu Recruitment, a company that specialises in matching disabled professionals with tech companies in the finance sector. He's a coach and mentor, and is currently writing a personal development book to help people identify their purpose and how to use your value to your advantage. Charles credits his time in care as influencing his decision to help others.



had options and I could direct my life in the way that I wanted it to go. When I looked at my friends circle I noticed their parents suggesting options, trajectories and directions they could go in, and I didn't have that. I often think that it would have been great if someone sat me down and helped me realise that once you leave the care system you are going to be on your own, and get you to start thinking about the quality of life you want to have and how you can achieve this.

When I left the care sector at the age of 21 one of the biggest challenges I had was finance, and without finance your options are limited. I knew a lot of young people from children's homes and we kept in touch because they were the closest thing I had to a family. Some of them were criminals and they weren't necessarily the best people to be around, but at 19 I didn't really see it like that. Some of the choices I made were influenced by being around these people. When you don't have any direction, you are just going to follow – and sometimes that leads to trouble.

As an adult, I recognise the experiences we have when we are younger shape who we become. I believe that everything happens for a reason. There's always value and wisdom in an experience, and it's about making the choice to find that wisdom. I don't now look at my experience as a youngster as negatively as I did back then, and I feel it's my mission to help other people overcome obstacles and barriers that they don't need to experience if they have the right guidance.



### HOW WE CAN MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

**AS SOON AS THE YOUNG PERSON** comes into care I think that programmes should be put in place to help them to overcome the emotional challenges they are experiencing. I think that a lot of work should be done around self-worth and self-value. Young people should know that they have choices, and should be taught that a life of mediocrity is not acceptable. I think that if programmes of empowerment are put in place you are going to see very different results, and more positive, constructive contributions made to society by young people in care.

I also feel that the way Social Services and the whole support structure engage with young people needs to be looked at. I had a number of different social workers, and one of the things I felt could have been better was relationship building. It felt like they were just doing a job to pay the bills. When you're young you respond to emotional connection, and if you don't have that with a young person it's very difficult to positively influence them. One of the things that I saw with social workers is that there's no connection a lot of the time.

When the child is in care, they need a loving environment – that's what they would get from their family. I understand and appreciate that when people are looking after you that they are not your family, they are doing a job, and there are certain rules and regulations – there's a line that you can't cross – but within that line there are still ways to connect on a deeper level.

### IMPROVING THINGS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT RACES, ETHNICITIES AND BACKGROUNDS

**O**ne of the key things is people sharing their stories and different groups interacting. The more we get to know each other and connect with each other we stop seeing the whole race thing, but we must give ourselves the opportunity to do this and it starts with engagement. This has to be done from an authentic place. It can't be done because the rules say we have to do it, because if we just do things based on rules all we're doing is acting. It's about mixing, sharing stories, and spending time together. In the care system, when issues of race come up they should be addressed in a pragmatic way, but it's important to help people see and understand each other's perspectives. So if programmes were put in place to achieve that outcome I think that's a good place to start.

With my second set of foster parents, part of the issue with the race thing was that my foster brother was 16. When I ended up in that household I think that part of the reason he expressed racism to me was because he didn't want me there. This wasn't necessarily because of my race, but because things were changing for him and he had no control over that. He was the youngest and he wasn't always listened to, and he directed his anger towards me. I think that when foster carers are choosing whether they want to be carers it would be helpful for them to look at their personal ecosystem and how having someone in their household is going to impact the different legs of their family set up. ♦



# What TO Watch

Stuck for something to watch on TV? Here are some great TV shows and films that we feel would be interesting to Social Workers, Care Givers and those who are involved in Fostering & Adoption.

In each issue we will share some highlights of programmes and films we have watched and found funny, educational, enlightening, frightening, heartbreaking and heart-warming.



## THE SOCIAL DILEMMA NETFLIX

That social media can be addictive and creepy isn't a revelation to anyone who uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like. But in Jeff Orlowski's documentary "The Social Dilemma," conscientious defectors from these companies explain that the perniciousness of social networking platforms is a feature, not a bug.

They claim that the manipulation of human behaviour for profit is coded into these companies with Machiavellian precision: Infinite scrolling and push notifications keep users constantly engaged; personalized recommendations use data not just to predict but also to influence our actions, turning users into easy prey for advertisers and propagandists.

As in his documentaries about climate change, "Chasing Ice" and "Chasing Coral," Orlowski takes a reality that can seem too colossal and abstract for a layperson to grasp, let alone care about, and scales it down to a human level. In "The Social Dilemma," he recasts one of the oldest tropes of the horror genre — Dr. Frankenstein, the scientist who went too far — for the digital age.

"The Social Dilemma" is remarkably effective in sounding the alarm about the incursion of data mining and manipulative technology into our social lives and beyond. Orlowski's film is itself not spared by the phenomenon it scrutinizes. The movie is streaming on Netflix, where it'll become another node in the service's data-based algorithm.

*Extract of review by Devika Girish at 'The New York Times'*



"The Social Dilemma" is remarkably effective in sounding the alarm about the incursion of data mining and manipulative technology into our social lives and beyond.





## Training, Development & Legislation



Three girls had their wretched stories told: and it was just pitiful to watch the descent of teenagers Amber and Ruby Bowen and Holly Winshaw into their hells

### THREE GIRLS NETFLIX

All I can say about Three Girls is that if it is this tough for a stranger to watch their lives being retold on TV, then I cannot imagine the traumas those girls and their families went through.

I have rarely had to watch anything as emotionally charged, and which is also so upsettingly well grounded in reality. You can't tell yourself to relax because it's just a

lot of silly Hollywood special effects, like Alien or something. This was real horror. You have to confront what is unfolding in front of the screen; and confront it you should (the next two episodes are on tonight and tomorrow, and this one too is on iPlayer).

The Rochdale sexual abuse cases – the so-called “grooming” scandal – are some of the most horrifying of our times. The scale, as with the Jimmy Savile affair, is still difficult to comprehend even as the facts have become so familiar; but each

victim has their own unique tale.

Here, three girls had their wretched stories told: and it was just pitiful to watch the descent of teenagers Amber and Ruby Bowen (played by Ria Zmitrowicz and Liv Hill) and Holly Winshaw (Molly Windsor) into their hells, dragged into a vortex of pain by men who, in every sense, dehumanised them. Maxine Peake, as sexual health/social worker Sara Rowbottom, was superb as the only person around who would help them. *Extract of review by Sean O'Grady at The Independent*

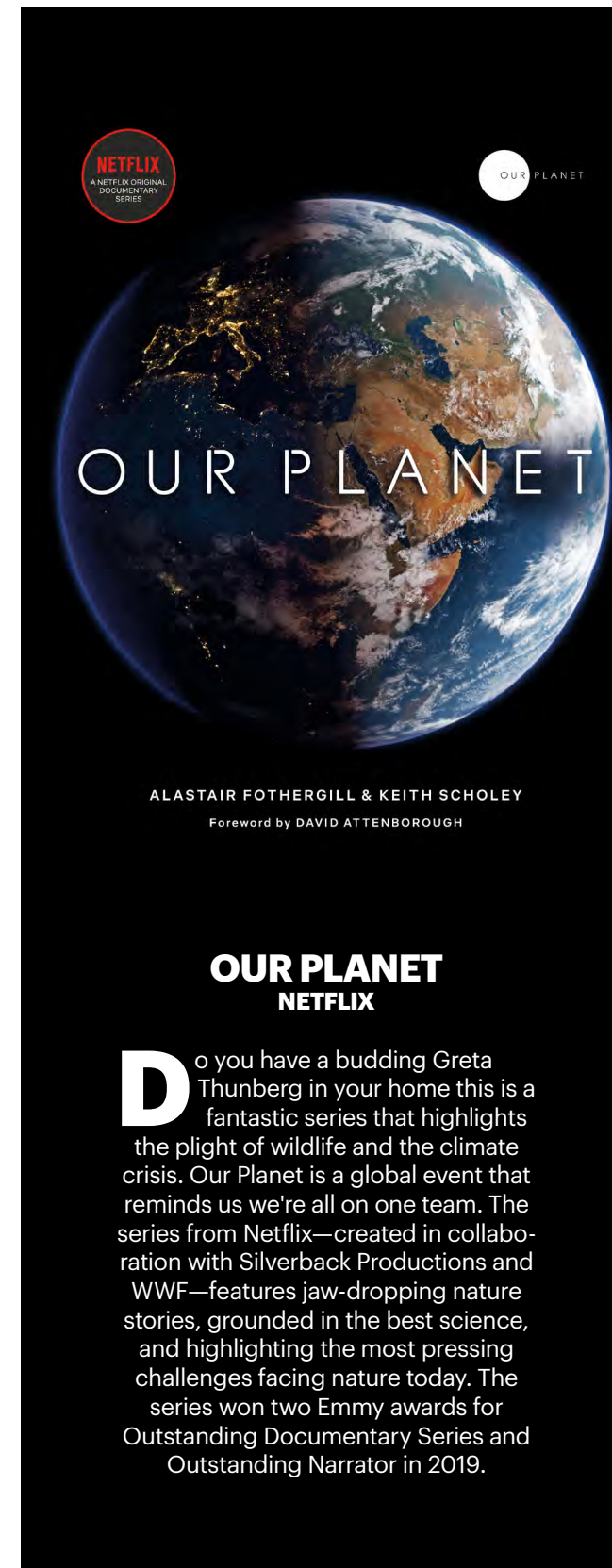


### THE BEGINNING OF LIFE NETFLIX

Exquisitely shot and hopeful-without-being-sugary, the film focuses on the day-to-day lives of babies and parents and on the opportunities for learning in even the most mundane activities.

As an adult, just watching a baby who is on the verge of crawling is exhausting. Again and again, he'll try to rock and wiggle his way forward, tapping into a seemingly endless supply of determination. Give a toddler a spoon and she'll drop it from her high chair over and over, testing to make sure it clatters each time and watching for her mom to pick it up and hand it back. “There's this inborn drive for mastery,” said Jack Shonkoff, the director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. These moments are crucial for development, and parents and the other children and adults who make up a child's world have an enormous role in creating an environment where children have both the freedom and support to learn.

*Extract of review by Emily Deruy at The Atlantic*



### OUR PLANET NETFLIX

Do you have a budding Greta Thunberg in your home this is a fantastic series that highlights the plight of wildlife and the climate crisis. Our Planet is a global event that reminds us we're all on one team. The series from Netflix—created in collaboration with Silverback Productions and WWF—features jaw-dropping nature stories, grounded in the best science, and highlighting the most pressing challenges facing nature today. The series won two Emmy awards for Outstanding Documentary Series and Outstanding Narrator in 2019.



### PANDEMIC NETFLIX

This series was produced before our current pandemic and gives a very good insight into the reality that we are living now, the risks for the future and what we need to do as a species to survive.

#### Audience Comments:

*Timely, fact based, smart, fast paced, and absolutely terrifyingly accurate.* Angela M

*COVID-19 just made this amazing documentary a whole lot more relevant. Moving and inspirational.* Joseph M

*Its relevancy cannot be surpassed. Very good explanatory power for those who may not be so informed.* Jennifer G ♦





Training, Development & Legislation

# EVEN SMALL STEPS TAKE US FORWARD

By DANIELLE BROWN

# W

**Whatever situation** we find ourselves in we can always draw out positives. Sometimes these are easy to spot and other times it can be super tough to pinpoint tiny wins.

Positivity is an important cornerstone to success, health and happiness. It allows us to respond to challenges much more effectively. It inspires us to take action rather than cautiously avoiding it, and it helps us stay motivated when we need to dig in deep and keep pushing forwards.

COVID-19 has been hard on all of us, and it's probably fair to say that we are all experiencing a rollercoaster of emotions as the global pandemic shows no time of stopping any time soon. We can't escape the daily statistics or the gloomy headlines, but for a moment I want us to stop focusing on this and start thinking about the ways we have grown.

Yes, this year has been tough but I am also finding that there are so many different aspects of it that I'm grateful for. I didn't realise how much rushing around takes out of me. It's given me time to breathe, to recharge and strike a better work life balance. It's allowed me to be more purposeful, focus my attention on areas I'm passionate about, and I'm spending more time on looking after my body too. I'm managing to squeeze in more exercise sessions and I'm making better choices when it comes to food preparation rather than seeking out quick fixes after a long day out on the road.

Social distancing has also highlighted how many amazing people I have in my support network – and the lengths that people go to connect and make sure that I am staying well. Keeping positive isn't something we can always do in isolation and having the ability to turn to others, especially on the days when things feel too much, is extremely important. And one of the biggest lessons I've learned is to find the joy in everyday life. To take things one day at a time and appreciate the simple things.

These are all things that I'm determined to take with me in a life post COVID-19. We don't know when this will be or what this will look like, but my mission is to try and come out the other side as a better version of myself. I know I have developed some really positive habits and I want to ensure that these don't fall to the wayside once the chaos resumes.

**LISTING JUST ONE POSITIVE THING PER DAY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A WINNING MINDSET, KEEPING YOU IN THE HERE AND NOW AND GIVE YOU THE TOOLS TO TACKLE THAT ROCKY PATH AHEAD.**

In sport a strategy that gets drilled into us is 'control the controllable'. This is one of my go to tools that I fall back on when I need to respond to challenges. There are so many unknowns at the moment and things we cannot control – we have absolutely no control over the virus, or when it's going to end. It can be tough to feel in control when so much is out of our control, but one thing that we can control is our response.

Choose to focus on everything we have lost, or choose to focus on what we have left.

For me, practicing gratitude is very helpful. Shifting my mindset away from the negative and focusing my attention on all the good things that happen to me has been revolutionary. And by good, I'm not just talking about the HUGE wins. It's about appreciating all the positive stuff, no matter how small. This shifts our perspective and allows us to redefine what we consider success to be. At the end of each day I write down the things that I am grateful for, even when my day hasn't gone to plan. Drawing out small blessings, tiny wins and progress makes a HUGE impact.

**G**ratitude is something that I have prioritised for many years and it was fantastic to help manage the stress that life as an elite athlete inevitably brings. I'm finding it especially important now. It's allowing me to feel more in control of my response, it's enabling me to see opportunities rather than obstacles and take important lessons from this situation. Running through all these positives is also helpful when the negatives start to give space to my insecurities and I question my abilities.

I expect this situation to get better. It's impossible to know when this will be and thinking in terms of days and weeks can murder our motivation. If the mountain in front of us looks too hard to climb this can feel off-putting, subtly shifting our behaviour down an unproductive track. To successfully break through barriers and navigate challenges we need to focus on the here and now. We need to take the positives and learning opportunities from every situation, which focuses our attention on the actions and abilities that will help us move forward.

Remember that even small steps take us forward. Listing just one positive thing per day can contribute to a winning mindset, keeping you in the here and now and give you the tools to tackle that rocky path ahead.

So, what positives are you going to be taking out of this year?

And how are you going to make sure you keep to them? ♦

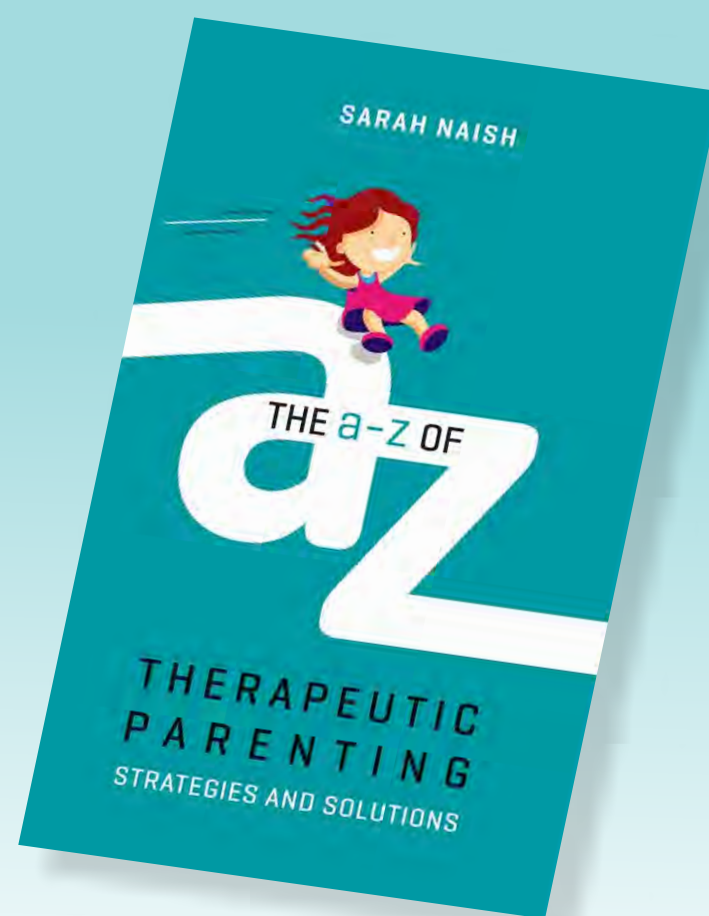


THANK YOU TO ALL THE COMMENTERS ON THE WORLD FOSTERING ORGANISATION FACEBOOK PAGE FOR RECOMMENDING BOOKS YOU THINK FOSTER CARERS MAY WANT TO CONSIDER.

Note all descriptions are lifted from the respective online selling descriptions

Training, Development & Legislation

# BOOK CORNER

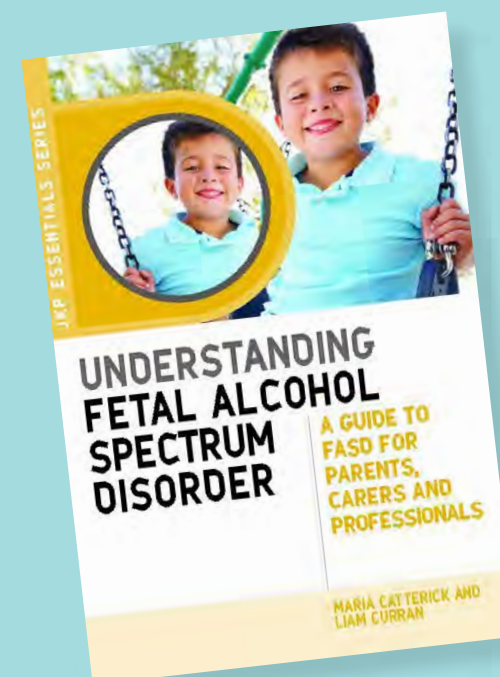


## THE A-Z OF THERAPEUTIC PARENTING

**Therapeutic** parenting is a deeply nurturing parenting style, and is especially effective for children with attachment difficulties, or who experienced childhood trauma. This book provides everything you need to know in order to be able to effectively therapeutically parent.

Providing a model of intervention, The A-Z Of Therapeutic Parenting gives parents or caregivers an easy to follow process to use when responding to issues with their children. The following A-Z covers 60 common problems parents face, from acting aggressively to difficulties with sleep, with advice on what might trigger these issues, and how to respond.

Easy to navigate and written in a straightforward style, this book is a 'must have' for all therapeutic parents.



## UNDERSTANDING FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

**Understanding** Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a useful introduction to the most common non-genetic learning disability, which is caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

Written by two FASD experts, it describes how alcohol can harm the foetus and disrupt development, and explains how FASD affects individuals at different stages of their lives. With the aid of simple, illustrative diagrams, photographs and charts, it shows how you can identify FASD and gives guidance on how mothers at risk can be helped. It also provides advice for parents or carers on how children, young people and adults with FASD can be best supported.

Accessible and informative, this is the essential guide to FASD for social workers, family placement teams, child protection workers, foster carers, adoptive parents, midwives and teachers.

## DENNIS DUCKLING

**This charming** illustrated book is ideal for very young children (aged 2-5 years old) who are leaving their birth families for the first time to be looked after by foster carers.

Dennis and his sister need someone to look after them, someone to help wash their feathers and feed them. A grown-up duck called Annie comes to talk with them.

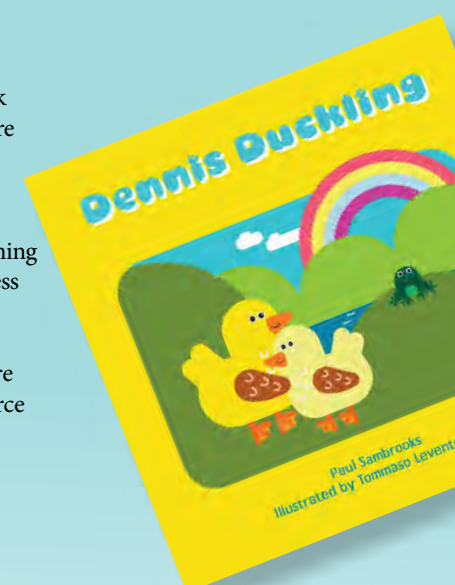
I'm scared! says Dennis. Who will look after us?

Dennis is sad because he has to leave his

mum and dad as they can no longer look after him. He goes to live on a river where he makes new friends and is cared for by grown-up ducks.

Through Dennis's story, this colourful picture book explains what may be happening to young children and helps them to express some of the emotions they may be feeling about upsetting and confusing events.

The simple text and open story ensure that Dennis Duckling is a flexible resource that can be used with children in a range of settings and circumstances.



## A MOTHER FOR CHOCO

**Family is about** love no matter how different parents and children may be, adopted or not.

Choco wishes he had a mother, but who could she be? He sets off to find her, asking all kinds of animals, but he doesn't meet anyone who looks just like him. He doesn't even think of asking Mrs. Bear if she's his mother - but then she starts to do just the things a mommy might do. And when she brings him home, he meets her other children-a piglet, a hippo, and an alligator - and learns that families can come in all shapes and sizes and still fit together.

Keiko Kasza's twist on the "Are you my mother?" theme has become one of the most highly recommended stories about adoption for children.



## THE HUGE BAG OF WORRIES

**Wherever** Jenny goes, her worries follow her - in a big blue bag. They are with her all the time - at school, at home, when she is watching TV and even in the bathroom! Jenny decides they have to go, but who will help her get rid of them?

A funny and reassuring look at dealing with worries and anxiety, to be used as a springboard into important conversations with your child. ♦





# What's Going On The Journey to 100 SCHOOLS

By TIM MCARDLE

**At Charity World we have set ourselves an ambitious goal. To adopt 100 schools across India and other areas of deprivation in the world. We believe that education is the path to climbing out of poverty, and creating a happier, healthier and fairer society.**

**I** sit here in the centre of the school grounds, on a chair with the yellow dusty earth beneath me, looking at the dilapidated buildings; the barred glassless windows, the broken floors, the bare wires hanging from the ceilings where lights should be and the walls crumbling inside and out. Flies land on my leg causing me to shake it from time to time as if afflicted by momentary spasms. The sun beats down, but it is the cold season. It is morning and 23 degrees Celsius already. Soon it will be 28. Locals consider it cold, for in the high season it can reach double what it is now.

I can't imagine anyone being able to work in those temperatures except, perhaps for those working in the fields, they don't have the privilege to be able to pick and choose where and when they work. Life is tough, the demands relentless. Some of those fighting daily to provide for themselves and their families will have children at this school. They will, like most parents, wish for better for their offspring. The reality for the majority of these parents is that their hope will be forlorn, for these people are the 'untouchables', illegal though it is to use that term. These are the people that society doesn't touch, and these are the children who cannot themselves change their reality or indeed the reality of their children to come.

The flies keep landing on my legs and it's getting hotter. I should have worn trousers! The heat versus the flies. Apparently, you can

only choose one as your most major irritant.

I'm interrupted as one child is brave enough to come up and ask, in English, "What is your name?" And then shyly runs off, delighted at the information obtained and eager to tell the others. Amar, who was sitting with me, calls them back. The group excitedly run towards us. Amar talks to the children in Hindi which I don't speak, but I can work out that he is asking them what they want to be when they grow up. Many say they want to be a doctor, some want to be police, a number want to be teachers. No one says 'working in the fields picking crops.....'

In this remote village I actually have 4G phone connectivity. And here, in this one example, we see the enigma that is India. A modern and sophisticated phone infrastructure for people, some of whom don't even have electricity, let alone a mobile phone. Sadly, a massive proportion of Indian society is similarly impoverished whilst a significant chunk sit comfortably, some definitely too comfortably. Maybe you have to live outside of the country to really understand its reality. Amar, having grown up in this village and subsequently lived for over 20 years in the UK, is able to see, if he didn't already, the faults within the country of his birth.

I take a moment to withdraw from the sun, leaving Amar still talking to the children. Picking up the final words about "hard work" I enter a dark classroom and my eyes adjust to the gloomy room with no lights, which contrasts so starkly with the streaming sun outside. I see a pile of textbooks, perhaps you could call it a small mountain, precariously sitting on a table. I skim through two of them. One is two years old and the other appears to be at least 5 to 10. They are well used, obviously second hand, probably read first in their clean new state by privileged children who have more rights to hope to be a doctor! I open one of the books and, three pages in, find the Indian constitution. I am ignorant of this, perhaps I shouldn't be, but I am after all at a school, and every day we learn.

The constitution was adopted in 1949 following India's independence from Britain. I let out a small ironic laugh in reading it for the first time. The main principles are 'Justice', 'Liberty', 'Equality' and 'Fraternity'. This is not the India I see. For all its economic development, space programme, statues, appearance on the world stage and proud posturing, it is extremely hard on its

people. If it wasn't so hot, I'd call it cold! The fight to survive is so ingrained, that many don't recognise that they can fight for others too. The caste system burns as strongly as the flames that fill the skies with lingering smog. New generations are repeatedly indoctrinated into their position in society and how they should perceive others.

So here we are, at a school, working from the bottom up. Seeing if those who dream of being doctors can one day indeed be saving lives. If we can educate and empower those here, maybe we will have pressed the start button.

Maybe they too can make an extraordinary jump like Amar, or maybe one day it won't have to be so extraordinary. Maybe they will give back later too. Maybe they can supersede expectations, change perceptions, start a motion, break a cycle. Maybe real change will take a hundred years but every change requires a starting point.

If we can change 1 school, 10 schools, 100 schools, then hopefully we give that first push to that first movement to snowball / mudball into real and sustained change.

**C**harity World's passion for providing opportunities to children who are experiencing hardship is the drive behind everything we do. We started the Fostering Families magazine to make sure that the voices of all involved in the care sector are heard and connect sector thinking. We want

children in care to access the brightest possible future by supporting all those who provide a valuable service to young people at the most difficult times in their lives.

But have you heard of some of our other projects?

Tim's experiences come from a visit to the Ajaib School in 2018 as part of the 100 Schools Project.

At Charity World we have set ourselves an ambitious goal. To adopt 100 schools across India and other areas of deprivation in the world. We believe that education is the path to climbing out of poverty, and creating a happier, healthier and fairer society. For many children in remote villages in India, access to education is difficult. Our founder, Amar Dhull, comes from such an area and the opportunities he was given in education laid solid foundations for his path to considerable personal and professional success.

When Amar returned to his village in Rohtak he found the school lacked all the basic infrastructure that children deserve. It had little in the way of furniture and books, and had no toilets or running water. Something needed to be done and Amar decided to set up the 100 Schools Project, with Tim's support.

Amar's school in Rohtak was the first one to be adopted, and it created a blueprint for 99 more. In January 2016 we opened a second school, and currently support over 100 children in full-time education. As well as providing a quality education, we ensure that the schools we adopt have a good infrastructure, which includes repairing existing buildings, as well as building new classrooms, toilets, libraries, sports facilities and providing all the necessary teaching equipment. ♦

You can find more about the 100 Schools Project on our website: [www.charityworld.com](http://www.charityworld.com)





## What's Going On

# CHRISTMAS ROCKY ROAD

**One of the best things** about Rocky Road is that you can throw all sorts of ingredients in, adapting the recipe to whatever you have in your cupboards. You also don't have to be too exact with measurements either. It's the perfect activity to do with children, allowing them to get creative and come up with their own Christmassy combo, with the added bonus of following a nice and easy no-bake recipe.

The ingredients below can be adapted to suit all tastes and allergies – simply replace with another ingredient.

### INGREDIENTS

**100g butter**, cubed

**200g Christmas biscuits**  
(e.g. shortbread, chocolate chip, ginger)

**90g nuts**  
(e.g. walnuts, hazel nuts, brazil nuts)

**90g mixed dried fruit**  
(e.g. sultanas, mixed peel, glace cherries, crystallised ginger)

**90g sweets**  
(e.g. candy canes, fruit jellies, marshmallows)

**300g milk or plain chocolate**  
(or a mixture of both)

**4 tbsp golden syrup**  
Christmas sprinkles or sweets and extra chocolate to decorate

### METHOD

1

Line a 24cm tin with baking paper.

2

Break the biscuits into smallish pieces – they don't want to be too small as your Rocky Road won't have any crunch, but if they are too chunky it will fall apart. Carefully chop some of the larger nuts, pieces of dried fruit and sweets into smaller pieces too.

3

Mix the biscuits, nuts, dried fruits and sweets in a bowl until they are well combined.

4

Melt the chocolate, butter and golden syrup in a pan over a very low heat and stir regularly.

#### PRO TIP:

Don't worry if the chocolate mixture starts to separate. Once its mixed in with the other ingredients you can't tell the difference.

5

Pour the chocolate mixture over the biscuit mixture and mix well so the chocolate covers everything. Tip the mixture into the tin, pressing down firmly with a spatula. You want the tin to be evenly coated.

6

Drizzle melted chocolate and sprinkles over the top and chill for an hour until it's completely set. ♦



What's Going On

# Spotlight

## ALISTAIR PATRICK-HESELTON

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Shining a light on role models in our community. This issue we have been joined by Paralympic footballer Alistair Patrick-Heselton, who shares his top tips on staying motivated, keeping healthy and handling stress.

### ABOUT ALISTAIR

Alistair was signed by QPR to play in their reserve team aged seventeen, but a life changing car accident in 2006 left him in a coma for three months. Alistair was told by doctors that he might not walk again and his football career was over. It took Alistair a long time and a lot of hard work to regain his health – and he was determined to play again. He took up disability football, competing in the seven-a-side cerebral palsy category. Alistair represented Great Britain at the London 2012 Paralympic Games, scoring against Argentina.



### WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST SPORTING ACHIEVEMENT?

Being inducted in the National Football Museum **Hall of Fame (2017)** and receiving **the Football For All Award**.

### WHO INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE YOUR GOALS, AND WHY?

My biggest influence was my family. In particular **my Mum and Dad** as they showed me the importance of putting my happiness first.

### HOW DO YOU STAY MOTIVATED THROUGH TOUGH TIMES?

I appreciate that times can and will be tough. If you can just hang on to **the rollercoaster** it always goes back to the top. When you are there cherish the highs, but prepare and brace for the inevitable lows.

### WHAT'S YOUR GO TO HEALTHY FOOD CHOICE?

**Pasta and chicken.** I have always had a soft spot for bread though. Remember hydration is vital so drink lots of water.

### CAN YOU SHARE YOUR TOP FITNESS TIPS?

No matter what, **try and be consistent...** it's the habit that keeps us going and it becomes something we miss when not there. Before we know it, it's our way of life making us who we are.

### HOW DO YOU HANDLE STRESS AND PRESSURE?

I tend to **sleep it off**. Resting is when our bodies and brains do all their repair.

### WHAT DO YOU DO TO UNWIND?

When it's not exercise (that sounds sad lol) I just chill **listening to music**. I'm getting a taste for some slow Jazz as it just lets me relax.

### WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

I've got two pieces:

**Be better than you were yesterday... everyday! And if you can trust yourself then you know how to live.**



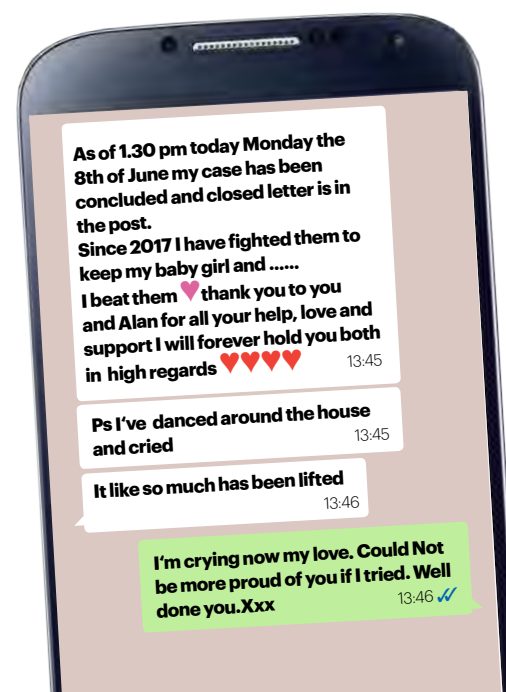




# Proudest Moment as a Foster Carer

## Sally

I only foster P&C now, and receiving this message from one of our mums made my world complete!



## Abby

Helping a child develop enough from being what we were told would be a slim to nil chance of adoption being on the cards to him leaving us with his forever family two years later as a very well-rounded little boy. 6 years on and he is thriving

## Serena

My young lady missed over 60% of her primary education, has diagnosis of FASD, ADHD and mild learning difficulties, and suffers with extreme anxiety. We had to move her to a new school part way through Year 10 due to severe bullying. She came out with GCSEs this summer ranging from 5 through to 7!!! That's over 10 subjects. No one in her family has ever achieved anything like this. Proud doesn't even cover it!

## Alison

**From having very poor school attendance and on the verge of being excluded to having 100 percent attendance, Head of Year 10 and 11 awards and being voted Prom Queen!**

## Marion

*I am proud of every single one of my foster children. Past, present and future. They all have different strengths from learning to adapt to a new way of life, learning to live with strangers, learning to read, the list can go on and on. I am proud of my foster daughter, for simply being able to get up in the morning. Not in a lazy way, just in a way of proving she can survive. I am proud of my foster son for starting school and accepting us during lockdown.*



## Leisa

**When my foster child won first place at an inter county dance award. The girl who started shaking if you as much as looked at her when she got here came alive when dancing.**



## Amy

My 7-year-old autistic foster child was excluded from learning Christmas songs as he doesn't like assembly. I spoke with the school who then sent the song sheet home for us to learn and he loved it. The proudest moment was when I saw him sat at the front in the Christmas assembly performance singing his heart out along with all of the actions - even more so than the other children. It was the first time he sat through a whole assembly

## Joanna

**There are so many!  
When, at 8-years-old, our foster child who is severely autistic mastered toileting and no longer needed to wear a pull up day and night  
Each time he learnt to speak a new word  
When he learned to ride his bike without stabilizers  
When he learnt to use a knife and fork and not his fingers  
When he learnt to write his name  
When he ordered his first meal in a restaurant without help**

## Carmel

**Lots of proud moments!!! But when my young person got an award for highest GCSE results of a child in care in the area. She went on to do a masters in law**

## Zoë

**Before lockdown my 7-year-old foster son had a reading level of age 4. In the last month he has been reading chapter books. I haven't forced him to read - he has decided to pick the books and read them himself. I think the fact he wasn't feeling under pressure to have to read all the time has made him love reading as well as the fact he got to choose the books himself.**





Disability

# ‘Mutual Benefits’: Why Are There So Few Disabled Foster Carers?

BY PETER UNWIN



**I**n recent years, foster agencies across the state and independent sectors have struggled to recruit foster carers. The average age of UK foster carers is now in the mid-50s and young people are not coming forward to replace carers who retire, mainly because of the need for guaranteed levels of income and housing realities which mean they often do not have spare rooms. Fostering has reached out to people from ethnic minorities and to people of different sexualities, but it has not reached out to disabled people, many of whom are already successful parents.

The University of Worcester, in partnership with Shaping Our Lives Service User and Disabled People Network and the Foster Care Co-operative were funded by the National Lottery to carry out a piece of research into the potential of disabled people as foster carers. This project was part of a raft of projects managed by DRILL (Disabled Research on Independent Living and Learning) and took place across England over the last two years.

An initial survey to 600+ fostering agencies returned only a handful of responses, suggesting that the potential of disabled carers was not at the top of anyone's recruitment priorities. Undeterred, the research team followed up the positive responses and found four agencies willing to participate. Two were in the statutory sector, one private and one of charitable status. Unfortunately, the charity pulled out of the project after a year, a management takeover determining that the project was not of sufficient merit to warrant further staff time. Sadly, this type of attitude is what has partly contributed to the continuing absence of disabled people in the fostering workforce.

Each pilot site filled in a questionnaire about disability awareness, leading to a customised training package delivered by Becki Meakin, a visually impaired person who is the General Manager of Shaping Our Lives. At the same time, disabled members of the research steering group carried out an audit of the foster organisations' websites to see whether they were 'disability-friendly', making recommendations about wording, font size and the absence of disabled role models. Advice was also given about accessibility to premises because an agency that a wheelchair user cannot access via the front door or a disabled toilet used as junk store do not give out the message that disabled people are part of their world.



Most websites nowadays openly encourage applicants who are from a diverse range of backgrounds but do not even mention that disabled people can be foster carers (check out your own agency website and let management know if this is the case). Phrases like you must be 'fully fit and healthy' and medical assessments that do not take a holistic view of a person's potential also give out the wrong message – how many of you current foster carers reading this article are 'fully fit'? What does that phrase really mean and how might it be changed to reflect playing to a disabled person's strengths? The disabled champions - Jon, Linda and Alison who you will see on the research report's accompanying video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WWJry7Pr4k&t> - all talk about how they play a full role in fostering, even if they can't do a 100-yard sprint or climb trees in the park. Whether a single carer or caring with a partner, these exceptional individuals are first-class foster carers, supported by agencies who embrace disability for its strengths. Jon, Linda and Alison are exceptional people, but disabled fostering applicants should not have to be exceptional in that they may have persevered despite been turned down two or three times by agencies, usually without interview. All disabled people who can demonstrate an ability to care safely for a child should be given equal opportunity to succeed in the fostering world and their resiliencies and insights valued as strengths. As with any foster care approval, matching is the key to success and if we had more foster carers to choose from then matching would be more of a reality than it currently is, the nationwide shortages of carers meaning that children may be placed a long way from home and sometimes split up from siblings.

The research also found that staff were sometimes uncomfortable when discussing working with disabled adults, their personal and working lives not having included such contacts. They were often unaware of the detail of the Equality Act 2010 and unaware of financial and practical support available outside of their agencies' own resources, such as 'Access to Work', a government initiative designed to help disabled people into employment.

The University of Worcester and Shaping Our Lives are developing an online training package to continue the work of the 'Mutual Benefits' research project and hope that this will further help bring about the much-needed culture change in respect of disabled people's inclusion within foster care. The 'Mutual Benefit's Report is available at <http://www.drilluk.org.uk/mutual-benefits-the-potential-of-disabled-people-as-foster-carers/>. ♦

*Peter Unwin will be pleased to hear from any foster carers or staff with views on this topic - [p.unwin@worc.ac.uk](mailto:p.unwin@worc.ac.uk)*

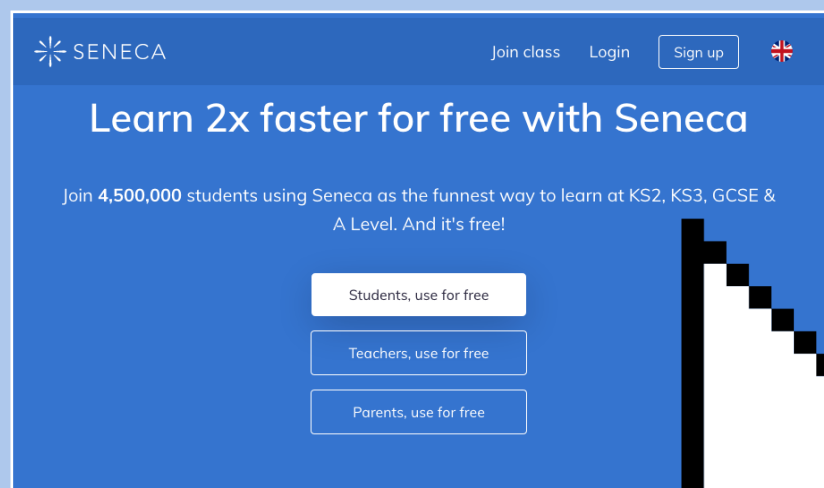


## Education

# Does Your Child Need More Help At Home?

A Great Online Resource For All Ages

**TAMSYN**, Age 14



### **\*\*But I don't like revising!!\*\***

Yep... neither do I. In fact, I hate it with such a passion that I sit there for hours staring at a notepad and BBC Bitesize. And I know what you're all thinking...

"Just do it quickly and then it'll be done."

Yes parents... We know!!

Despite that reality we procrastinate anyway, because it really isn't what we'd rather do with our time.

Now, that was me before being introduced to Seneca. (Warning: this is about to sound very much like an ad haha).

Seneca is a free online revision website that you can log into absolutely anywhere and has courses on pretty much every subject, ranging from primary school work all the way to GCSEs and A levels. It gives you every topic and subtopic that'll come up in your exams and teaches them to you using information bubbles and sections of YouTube videos, before giving you a couple questions to affirm you understand.

Now this is absolutely PERFECT for me since I struggle to learn just looking through a Power-Point, or a website full of writing. I also don't like those little mini exam quizzes you can do. It just doesn't work for me, and I can imagine it's difficult for lots of others too. Well, Seneca gives you a mix of the two simultaneously.

You're probably wondering, 'but how does that stop you procrastinating?'. Well, I honestly don't know. I think because it works so well and I learn so much from it that it gives me motivation to learn more since I'm guaranteed to take something away from it. You can also track your progress through each course you do and it's quite satisfying when you finish one and think "Wow. I'm going ACE this test."

So, people out there incapable of revising... I hear you! But seriously, whether you're a school child or an adult with children give this a go/recommend it!

Hopefully it'll work for you as much as it does for me :)

You can access this learning resource through the website: **www.senecalearning.com** ♦

# Charity World

Registered in England & Wales  
Charity Number - 1161128



## ONE HUNDRED SCHOOLS

The 100 Schools project is an ambitious endeavour that started with one school and created a blueprint for 99 more

### **Education**

The Charity World Education Project provides schooling to street children and families living in slums or poor rural regions in India. These families have no financial means to afford good quality education. By supporting

schools and sponsoring children in full-time education we break the cycle of poverty that many have lived in for generations.

### **One Hundred Schools**

We have embarked on an ambitious journey to adopt 100 schools across India. We will finance and ensure that these schools have a good infrastructure

and quality education in line with any good school. This includes repairing existing buildings, building new classrooms, toilets, libraries, sports facilities and providing all the necessary teaching equipment. All schools under this project will be supported on a long-term basis. Our first adopted school is the Ajaib School, which opened in 2015. This is a rural school in Rohtak, the village where Amar

Dhull, the Founder of Charity World was born and grew up. It lacked the basic infrastructure that children deserve, furniture, books, and had no toilets or running water. Our second school opened in January 2016, and between them they currently support 100 children in full-time education. We are in the final stages of opening our next schools in Noida, Delhi and Gurgaon.





## We hope you enjoyed reading this latest edition of Fostering Families magazine.

We'd love to hear what you thought about the magazine and what other topics you'd like us to cover. We also want you to be part of our next edition. Our mission is to make sure that every voice from the fostering sector is heard and we'd like to share your experiences, pictures, stories, recipes, poems, or even a thank you note to someone.

Please send your ideas to [info@charityworld.com](mailto:info@charityworld.com)

# Fostering Families



charityworld



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