Picking on Sores and Other Self-Inflicted Injury

Dr. Rick Delaney, noted author and contributor to FosterParentCollege.com, is our guest columnist for this month. For his column we have taken an adaptation from an article in his book, Small Feats on the topic of self harm. Dr. Delaney explores behavior problem as a form of communication from the child.

Now we turn to a situation that typifies problem behaviors. Today we will learn about a child who is causing self harm. Self-destructive, self-mutilating behavior is not unheard of among troubled foster and adopted youngsters. There are plenty of adolescents who may tattoo, burn, and/or carve themselves. Younger children will pick at sores, head bang, and bite themselves.

A foster family reported to me that their foster daughter had involved classmates in extracting some of her permanent teeth on the school playground. Out of view of the playground monitor, this nine-year-old stoically wrapped string around a molar and asked other children to help yank it out by tying the other end of the string to an outside door knob and slamming the door. It was three tooth extractions later before the monitor finally found out about the minor, unscheduled dental surgery. The other children reported that the “patient” did not scream out in pain or show any visible signs of stress.

Possible Meanings:

This child may need to be examined for thought disorder, mental retardation, or pervasive developmental disorder. Oddly, this behavior may be a form of self-stimulation. It may also indicate the young girl has little awareness of bodily sensations. It could suggest that she is able to dissociate and to therefore be unaware of the pain. Lastly, there is always the possibility that the child has found abnormal ways of seeking attention from those around her.

Additional Resources:

Visit FosterParentCollege.com to view our course on Self Harm. This course explores five types of self-destructive behavior with children.

Childhood Anxiety Disorders — Foster Parent Review

Foster Parent College’s course Childhood Anxiety Disorders is very informal but informative. Participants in the panel discussion were very clear on what their concerns for their children were and Dr. Jim Kagan was clear, concise, and thorough in his responses. He gave many different options for coping with anxiety disorders in a language that all could understand. Dr. Kagan also spoke very clearly on the types of therapy and medication that might help kids with anxiety disorders. I liked the fact that he explained what the child might feel while on medication, how the various therapies might help, and that he always urged the assistance of a professional to help families. Also, I was surprised to learn that anxiety disorders are often inherited and that attachment disorder is part of the anxiety disorder spectrum.

I think this is a good course for foster parents because we often get kids who come from a rough background and often are dealing with this type of disorder. Dr. Kagan gave the participants realistic advice and complimented them on how they were handling their kids and what they had already done before the course.

Mary Jane Fulp
Foster Parent – Works as a Foster Parent Service Coordinator is a foster parent and is a former special education teacher.
**Everyday Heroes – Peggy and Kevin Perkins**

As Peggy Perkins grew up in Germany, every adult around helped raise the children. When she joined the U.S. Army, she got used to planning and organizing, doing things right and making sure she and everyone around her followed a schedule.

She met Kevin, who was also in the Army, and they got married and had kids. All of her training kicked in: She kept the children on track, but she also took care of the rest of the neighborhood kids in Grand Island, Nebraska.

“I cooked for all of them after school, and I wouldn’t let them eat until they answered three Jeopardy questions,” she says with a laugh. “They all graduated, and after they left, I said, ‘I’m not done being a mom.’”

One night, Peggy and Kevin were watching Television when they were surprised to see that the Mid-Plains Center Foster Care Program needed adults willing to be foster parents.

That was in 2000, and since then, Kevin and Peggy — who have been married for almost 27 years — have cared for dozens of foster children, many of them teen girls, through emergency placement and therapeutic foster parent programs, not to mention guardianship of as many as they can fit in their house.

How do they stay sane? Perhaps a sense of humor and creativity help most. “It’s been an absolute hoot,” she says. “It’s a laugh every day.”

Every night, Peggy, Kevin and the kids meet over dinner. Even though most of the teens have jobs to pay for auto insurance, Peggy still tries to get them in the same room at the same time. “The kids just love it. I make everybody sit down and eat supper together, and it’s not just to eat the food; it’s to share the day,” she says.

She and Kevin strive to lead by example, letting the kids know they’re on their side but that everyone needs to abide by the house rules. “I can’t believe everyone doesn’t have a foster kid,” she says. “Every day, it’s just such a great reward. I see Kevin and me doing foster parenting for a long time to come.”

*by Suzi Steffen*

We commend Peggy and Kevin Perkins for their hard work and dedication, opening their homes and lives to improve those of others. They serve as a shining example for foster and adoptive parents everywhere. In recognition of their efforts, Peggy and Kevin Perkins will receive an “Everyday Heroes” certificate of excellence and will each be awarded one free class of their choosing from FOSTERPARENTCOLLEGE.COM.

**Care-Free Cooking – Asian Grilled Chicken Breasts Recipe**

A simple and quick recipe that is perfect for a summer grill out. Serves 6.

**Ingredients:**
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 6 skinless, boneless chicken breasts

**Directions:**
1. Mix the oil, soy sauce, garlic, ginger, mustard, salt and pepper, and brush on the chicken breasts. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or overnight.
2. Preheat the grill.
3. Grill the breasts for 5 to 6 minutes on each side, depending on the thickness. Let the chicken rest on a plate for 1 or 2 minutes before serving.

Find additional resources for foster care and adoption at www.FosterParentCollege.com
Word Find Fun – Hang this page on your fridge for your children’s enjoyment.

Word Key:
Sparkler, Balloon, Freedom, Fireworks, Parade, Fun, Watermelon, Barbecue, Swim, Laugh, Independence, Silly, Baseball, Tag, Sun, Friends, Family, Firecracker, Safety

Kids Krafts – Bike Decorations

Decorating your bike is lots of fun, especially when you get friends and neighbor kids and brothers and sisters to decorate theirs, too, and then you put on your own Fabulous Fourth of July Bike Parade!

You can stick with the classic red, white and blue color scheme, or use your favorite colors to make your bike one-of-a-kind. Come to think of it, parades are fun any day the sun is shining, so have all the parades you want!

What you will need:
- Assorted Colored Crepe Paper Streamers
- Tape
- Scissors

Creative Youth

Dreams

Dreams are wonderful and full of joys. Dreams are spacious and full of coy. Dreams are weird and full of boys. Dreams, Dreams, Dreams, Dreams. How many do we have. Do we know why we are glad? How many dreams do we dream. Why are we sometimes sad? Our dreams are realms of pictures we see. Why are we sometimes mad? Dreams are our thoughts and wishes we must have! And dreams are one day our future dreams. Dreams are what one day our future will sing.

by Caitlin, Foster Child

Find additional resources for foster care and adoption at www.FosterParentCollege.com