



F.O.C.U.S.

TFFA's Annual Conference

This year we are excited to announce that our Annual Training Conference will be held in Dallas.



Join TFFA at the Omni Park West Hotel in Dallas [1599 LBJ Freeway / Phone: 972-869-4300] on September 26-28, 2014 for our Annual Training Conference.

The elegant Omni Dallas Hotel at Park West puts you close to the best attractions of dynamic Dallas. Located near the vibrant Las Colinas Business District, and only 10 minutes from the Dallas/Ft. Worth International Airport, this 12-story luxury hotel invites you to experience elegance with neoclassical distinction.

With the exquisite European-style, a luminous lake and a lush green park frame the Omni Dallas Hotel at Park West.

Table of Contents

- Regional News..... Page 2
- TFFA Awards Page 3
- Apps for Kids Pages 3-4
- Lord, Fill My Cup Page 8
- Stress ReliefPages 9-10
- Tech Tip Page 11
- NFPA Conference Page 12
- Membership Profile Page 13
- Adoption Tax Credit ... Page 15
- De-Clutter Pages 16-18
- Social Skills Pages 18-19
- Chores? Pages 19, 21
- Dyslexia?..... Pages 20-21

The Mission of TFFA:
Motivating, Educating
and Supporting
Foster/Adoptive
Families in Texas

Regional News

Training is VITAL to the quality of care we provide for the children of Texas

- The Region 4 FPA with the help of Texas A&M Commerce and Tyler Junior College will be hosting their annual training conference.

This event will be held on Saturday/May 17, 2014 at Tyler Junior College West Campus at 8:00am to 5:00pm.

Registration begins at 7:30am.
This training is FREE!!

NO CHILDCARE WILL BE PROVIDED. Foster parents and staff will be able to earn up to 8 training hours.

To contact the Region 4 Representative, click [HERE](#)

- Region 5 is again hosting their Annual Training Conference on April 12th for LSW, LPC, TAADAC & LCDD - Eight contact Hours/.8 CEUs

Click [HERE](#) for the Conference Brochure – 2014
Click [HERE](#) for the Award Nomination Form
Click [HERE](#) for the Childcare Form

To contact the Region 5 Representative, click [HERE](#)

Nominate someone for one of the prestigious 2014 TFFA Awards

- Foster Family of the Year
- Single Foster Parent of the Year
- Foster Family of the Year with Therapeutic Needs Licenses
- Foster Family of the Year with Primary Medical Needs Licenses
- CPS Worker of the Year
- Case Manager of the Year with a Private Agency

On-line nominations ONLY.. Click [HERE](#) to nominate someone NOW!



APPS FOR THE KIDS

Cell phones and mobile tablets used to be an adult thing, but now there are plenty of fun apps that can be enjoyed by the whole family. Here are some picks for the best apps you can enjoy with the little ones in your life. Bonus, they are also super budget friendly: All of them are under \$5.

1) The Trip - Little Critter Reading Adventure

Ages 4 and up
\$3.99 for IOS and Android

Story-based “Edutainment”: Mercer Mayer’s books are classics in their own right, but the new interactive app takes the Little Critter family into another dimension. There are two ways to experience the app: Read along like a traditional book or see the fully animated pages with lively voice-overs, brain teasers, and interactive panels. Both are entertaining, but the interactive version truly shows the advantage of reading on a tablet. Plus, the app just got The National Parenting Center 2013 Seal of Approval. Try the app’s Lite version for free before you buy. For more info, visit blog.silverdolphinbooks.com

2) Pajanimals: Light in the Sky

Ages 4 and up
\$3.00 for IOS

Animated Stories: Capturing the learning and adventure of Jim Henson Company’s recent TV show, this app is based on a 2011 episode of the same name. The motley animal crew plays hide-and-go-seek, messes around with building blocks, and, ultimately, discusses how they deal with their fear of the dark - something many young kids feel. The important topic blends excellent animated shorts and responsive action sequences. For more app info, visit n-fusion.com

Continued...

3) Dinosaur Train Jurassic Jr.

Ages 4 and up
\$1.99 for IOS

Logic Problems: Made by PBS Kids, Dinosaur Train Jurassic Jr. is a cute way to teach math and puzzle skills. Built around a prehistoric amusement park, the game splits three skill challenges testing counting, measuring, and spatial reasoning. Dinosaur Train Jurassic Jr. works because it doesn't feel like learning. The brief, fast-paced games, and the playful baby dinosaur voice-over make it a fun diversion. For more info, visit pbskids.org.

4) Fish Out of Water - Half-Brick

Ages 7 and up
\$.99 for IOS

Arcade Strategy: Like an aquatic Angry Birds, Fish Out of Water is a fun, addictive way to learn about physics. The goal: Flick a fish across the surface and have it skip as many times as possible. The twist: Each fish has a different weight, balance, and bounce, so each toss requires strategy and thought. The colorful characters, varied levels, and non-competitive atmosphere make Fish Out of Water a solid family choice. For many info, visit fishoutofwatergame.com

5) Step-by-Story - Callillou Imagination Camping

Ages 4 and up
\$.99 for IOS

Interactive Storytelling: Winter of the 2012 Family Choice Award, Caillillou allows you to create stories out of different, easy-to-understand pieces. Each story element is a little visual square you can slide into the narrative whose subject varies from astronauts and butterflies to superheroes and sleep. You can also randomize the story for an often-hilarious add libs-like experience. For more app information, visit fingerpaintplay.com

Love Kids BIG

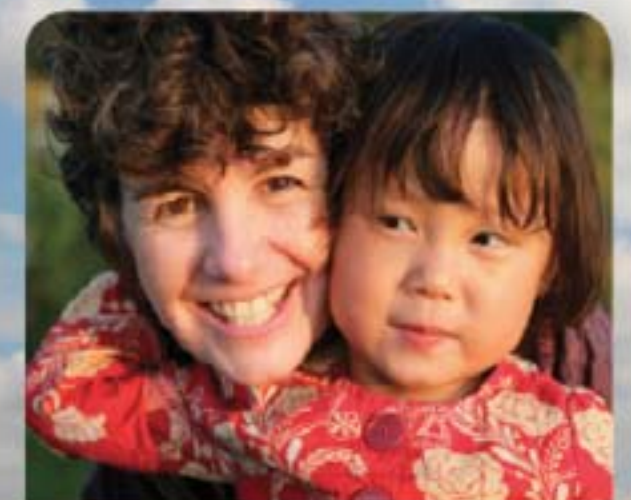


In Texas we do things in a BIG way!
Join us in September 26-28 for our
Annual Training Conference
'Love Kids BIG'

The Office of Consumer Affairs acts as a neutral party in reviewing complaints regarding case-specific activities of the program areas of the TDFPS. If you believe you were not treated fairly or incorrectly, you have a right to complain and to be treated with dignity.

The Office of Consumer Affairs also handles inquiries about open cases with DFPS. Contact Phone number - 1-800-720-7777 during regular business week regarding your inquiry or complaint.

Thank you, foster parents



On behalf of the Foster Care Clinic at Children's Medical Center, we want to thank our Texas foster parents for nurturing, encouraging and nourishing the spirits of our children in foster care!

Helping Children Heal
Children's is dedicated to serving children in foster care and meeting their special health and medical needs.

The Foster Care Clinic at Children's provides comprehensive health care services to children who are in the custody of Child Protective Services (CPS) and living in kinship, foster, adoptive or group homes.

Services include medical homes, mental health support and pre-adoption assessments, in addition to psychosocial support, education and advocacy in coordination with CPS.

To find out more and schedule an appointment, visit childrens.com

Children's Medical Center Dallas
ARCH Center
1935 Medical District Drive
Dallas, Texas 75235
214-456-6500

Children's Medical Center at Legacy
7601 Preston Road
Plano, Texas 75024
469-303-4300





Kent Farr - Communication Chair
E-mail: communication@tffa.org

Steve Gundling - Region 6 FP Rep
E-mail: sgundling@sbcglobal.net

Daphne Hunter - Region 3 FP Representative
E-mail: tcfpaupdates@yahoo.com

Terri Jagers - Recruitment & Retention Chair
E-mail: tjaggs@aol.com

Melissa Leopold - Conference Chair & Region 8 FP Rep E-mail: melissa.leopold@yahoo.com

Phone #: Cell 361 798 6266

Rhonda Loth -President
E-mail: RNLOTH@gmail.com

Kellie Pittman - 2nd VP
E-mail: gr82bfamily@suddenlink.net

Sharon Medford - Secretary
E-mail: sharonmedford@yahoo.com

Dorothy Place - Membership Chair & Region 7 FP Rep
E-mail: dplace5749@yahoo.com

Nancy Placencia -Region 10 FP Rep
E-mail: ngrplace@aol.com

Becky Sanford - Region 2 FP Rep
E-mail: BeckySanford@aol.com

Connie Scarborough -Region 1 FP Rep
E-mail: lubbockfoster@aol.com

Marlene Steiner -Educ/Training Chair & Events Chair E-mail: sparlene@me.com

Dwight Steiner - Treasurer
E-mail: sparlene@juno.com

Jennifer Studdard - 1st VP & Scholarship Chair
E-mail: jstuddard72@gmail.com

Carolyn Walker - Editor
E-mail: texasfosterfamilyassn@gmail.com

Charlie Walker - Parliamentarian
E-mail: cwalker@itsallGods.com

Mike Williams -Finance & Region 5 FP Rep
E-mail: mwms628@gmail.com

Maud Wright -Region 4 FP Rep
E-mail: maudpwright@aol.com

Non Voting Members

Terri Parsons - State Office Representative
E-mail: terri.parsons@dfps.state.tx.us

Debra Pohlman - Program Administrator Rep
E-mail: debra.pohlman@dfps.state.tx.us

Sheryl Russell -Region 1 FAD /CVS Representative
E-mail: sheryl.russell@dfps.state.tx.us

Ann Ruten - Region 7 FAD Representative
E-mail: ella.ruten@dfps.state.tx.us

Donald Shuffield - Arrow Child & Family Services
E-mail: Donald.Shuffield@arrow.org or docshuf@yahoo.com

Kristi Stephens - Region 4 FAD Representative
E-mail: kristi.stephens@dfps.state.tx.us

Miriam Stephenson - Region 5 FAD Representative
E-mail: miriam.stephenson@dfps.state.tx.us

Sherri Tucker - Buckner Children & Family
E-mail: stucker@buckner.org

Barbara Wells - Region 3 FAD Representative
E-mail: barbara.wells@dfps.state.tx.us

Noel Wilkins - Grace Manor Representative
E-mail: noel@gracemanor.us

Natalie Witherspoon - Region 3 CVS Representative
E-mail: natalie.witherspoon@dfps.state.tx.us

At the 2014 Training Conference the TFFA membership will elect a new 1st Vice President, Parliamentarian, and the foster parents from EVEN numbered regions. If you are interested in serving on the TFFA Board of Directors in any of these positions, the required Resume form is posted on our website...[HERE](#)
If you have questions about any of these positions and what is required to fill the position contact us [HERE](#).

2012-2013 TFFA Board of Directors

President - [Rhonda Loth](#)
E-mail: RNLOTH@gmail.com
Phone:(830) 685-3363 Address: 41 Shady Oak Lane /Fredericksburg 78624

Executive Director - [Roy Block](#)
E-mail: royblocktsfpi@aol.com
Phone: (210) 394-7933 Address: 26326 Cedro / San Antonio, 78260

Voting Members

Patricia Arroyo - Region 11 FP Representative
E-mail: friskyfrankie@yahoo.com

Irene Clements - Public Policy Chair & Legislative Chair
E-mail: irene-clements@att.net





Child's Ten Commandments to Foster Parents

1. Please don't expect perfection whenever I make a bed, draw a picture or throw a ball. You might be the first person to ever show me how to do these things.
2. My eyes have not seen the world as yours have. Please let me explore safely. Don't restrict me unnecessarily.
3. Housework will always be there. I'm only little for such a short time. Please take time to explain things to me about this wonderful world, and do so willingly. I might not have ever had anyone show me this much attention, and I like it.
4. My feelings are tender. I may have seen and experienced things you cannot imagine. Please be sensitive to my needs. Don't nag me all day long. (You wouldn't want to be nagged for your inquisitiveness or imperfections!) Treat me as you would like to be treated. Then I can learn how to treat others in a positive way.
5. I am a special gift from God. Please treasure me, holding me accountable for my actions, giving me guidelines to live by and disciplining me in a loving manner. These are things I might not have ever had and they are important for me to learn.
6. I need your encouragement and your praise to grow. Please go easy on the criticism. Remember, you can criticize the things I do without criticizing me.
7. Please give me the freedom to make some of the decisions concerning myself. Permit me to fail so that I can learn from my mistakes. Then someday, I'll be prepared to make the kind of decisions life requires of me and I will remember where I learned the way to make good decisions.
8. Please don't do things over for me. Somehow that makes me feel that my efforts didn't quite measure up to your expectations. I know it's hard, but please don't try to compare me with the other kids in the house.
9. Please don't be afraid to leave for a weekend together. Kids need vacations from parents, just as parents need vacations from kids. Besides, it's a great way to show us kids that your marriage is very special and I might not have ever seen a healthy marriage.
10. Please take me to worship regularly, setting a good example for me to follow. Also, be prepared for my questions about God. I might not have ever heard these truths.

TFFA is partially funded by the Department of Family & Protective Services



If you often feel stressed out (your health and your job are primary culprits!), you're not the only one. A recent American Psychological Association Stress in America study found that Boomers (people aged 48 to 66) and Matures (people aged 67 and older) say that their stress levels are higher than they consider healthy. And while Millennials (those aged 18 to 33) experience the most stress overall, 33% of Boomers and 29% of Matures say their stress has increased in the last year.

What can you do to ease your mind and body? Deep breathing, meditation, and exercise are always helpful, but sometimes you just don't have the time

or energy.

That's why we've found these fun tricks, all backed by the latest research, to get you feeling calm and centered and stress-free.

1. **Laugh**
A big belly laugh can have all kinds of positive effects on your body. According to the Mayo Clinic, "A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure." In other words, it releases tension and

ups blood flow to the heart and other vital organs. What else can it do? Lower blood pressure, and may even positively influence blood sugar levels.

2. **Eat an Orange**
Common wisdom has always said that vitamin C boosts the immune system and wards off cold viruses, but it turns out Vitamin C can reduce stress, too. Researchers have found that a boost of vitamin C taken when you're feeling stressed can lower blood pressure and calm the body. So the next time you feel anxious come on, reach for that orange, or grab some C-rich blueberries or strawberries.

3. Go Outside

Turns out what you choose to surround yourself with makes a huge difference in your stress level. A recent study from the University of Edinburgh found that people who surround themselves with more green space - tree-lined streets, a walk in the park - are significantly less stressed than their urban counterparts. And it doesn't mean you have to spend hours outdoors. A 2010 study in the journal *Environmental Science & Technology* found that just five minutes outside in the fresh air doing a mild activity like walking could boost your mood.

Need more reasons to get outside?

Researchers at the University of Michigan found that your memory attention span could improve by 20% after an hour in nature. So take a walk outside, sit in the park, and enjoy.

4. Rub On Rose Oil

A recent study from Srinakharinwirot University in Thailand found that people who absorbed rose oil through their skin (as an experiment control, they wore masks so they couldn't smell the scent), had lower breathing rates and blood pressure, and they felt more relaxed than those in a control group. Click [HERE](#) to learn how to make your own rose oil. Rose oil not your favorite scent? Try another natural de-stressor, ylang-ylang oil.

5. Walk Into Another room

It might sound a little nutty, but according to a study at the University of Notre Dame, just shifting your

environment a little can change what you're thinking about and help you forget stress. According to the study, when you walk into a new room, your brain views it as a new event, and essentially resets itself, forgetting what was happening before. This works great for getting rid of those tension-filled thoughts. It also explains why you can never remember where you left your keys!!

Yes, You CAN Watch TV Online Legally & For Free

By *Chris Hoffman*

Whether you're thinking of cutting the cord or just want to watch TV on your own schedule instead of the television network's, there are more legal ways to watch TV online than ever. Even better, many of these legal options are free. Most of these websites will expose you to commercials - someone has to pay for the free TV - but you'll end up watching commercials if you pay to watch TV the traditional way, anyway.

HitBliss: is a new service. It's a sort of store you can purchase TV shows and movies from, just like Apple's iTunes. However, you can also watch targeted ads and receive credit you can put towards watching streaming TV shows and movies. Watching two minutes of ads gives you roughly enough credit to pay for a TV show episode, so HitBliss appears to have fewer advertisements than traditional TV.

HULU: is well known as a popular way to watch recent TV shows. Unlike services like Netflix, Hulu offers recent TV episodes from currently airing seasons. You'll have to pay for a Hulu Plus subscription to watch some shows - and other seasons of shows - but Hulu Plus also offers a week-long free trial where you can watch TV online - everything is free.

Television Network & Show Websites: Every TV network has its own website, and many networks offer recent episodes for free streaming. For example, you can find recent episodes of *The Office* on NBC's website for *The Office*. *The Daily Show* and *Colbert Report* offer full shows on their own websites, too.

This can be a bit complicated, and individual episodes can be hard to find as shows are scattered across websites and networks, but you'll often find recent episodes for many shows on their official website.

Netflix/Amazon Free Trials: are popular ways of watching TV shows online, but they're not free. However, it's easy to forget that Netflix and Amazon all offer free trials you can enjoy for 30 days. On Amazon, you'll need to opt into the free trial of Amazon Prime to get access to the free-with-Prime Amazon Instant Video catalog.

At the end of the 30-day period, you can cancel your subscription if you don't want to pay for the service.

Crackle: Sony's Crackle offers a limited catalog of TV shows (and movies) for completely free streaming. Crackle offers a mobile app. There are limitations to Crackle, but check them out.

YouTube: is a common destination for people looking for free TV shows online. You can find lots of free TV shows on YouTube. But let's be honest - most free TV shows on YouTube are put up by users and not officially sanctioned. However, sometimes TV networks put up free TV show episodes on YouTube.



Launching Tomorrow's Dreams Today

NFPA/FSFAPA
National Education
Conference

JUNE 5-8, 2014
Caribe Royale
Orlando

For more information, click [HERE](#).

TFFA is partially funded by the Department of Family & Protective Services

Has your mailing address changed?

Have you changed your Email address?

Please update your MEMBERSHIP profile NOW.. click [HERE](#)





Kids in Foster Care Find Their Groove:
Central Texas Nonprofit Promotes
Personal Empowerment Through
Creative, Musical Expression

"Music takes us out of the actual and whispers to us dim secrets that startle our wonder as to who we are, and for what, whence, and whereto." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Kids in a New Groove (KING), a central Texas non-profit that provides free music mentorship for youth in foster care, views creative expression through music as a positive form of empowerment and personal growth for children in foster care KING provides free, private music lessons at each child's home or placement, helping youth who have been displaced from their homes feel grounded and capable of achieving their goals. KING students also have the ability to earn their very own brand new musical instrument at no cost to the foster parent or family.

Along with instruction in any instrument of the student's choice (including voice), the organization's instructions provide foster youth with invaluable mentorship that instills in them relationship-building skills and an appreciation for personal perseverance and the rewards it brings. Expressing themselves through music allows foster kids the chance to be heard, to gain confidence in themselves, and to view the world as a safe place abound with opportunity.

Lessons take place in the student's home or group residency on a weekly or biweekly basis and last 30 to 60 minutes per session. KING currently provides lessons to around 70 students in Austin, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, and areas surrounding each community. Most of KING's youth participants are at least 6 years of age, but they have particular success with teen and pre-teen students and welcome students up to the age of 18. Foster youth who are new to the program are provided with a loaner instrument for use during sessions until they meet their personal music musicianship goals and are then awarded with an instrument of their own.

Throughout their time with KING, participants have opportunities to perform for an audience in an annual recital and are even granted recording time in a studio. Recently, several KING students played opening performances at Music for the Soul, a concert benefitting the nonprofit that featured headliner *Michael Franti and Spearhead*.

If you are interested in signing up a child in your care for lessons or know any foster youth who would be willing to commit to a personal journey with KING, please visit their website at kidsinaneewgroove.org and check out the "NEW Student Intake" page accessible from the left hand sidebar. Feel free to explore the other sections of their web page to learn more about *Kids in a New Groove* and how you can get involved in spreading the mission of empowerment for youth in foster care through personal growth and creative expression.

TFFA is partially funded by the Department of Family & Protective Services

The Texas Foster Family Association



Dear Adoption Tax Credit Working Group Member:

Thank you for your membership in this critical working group and for your help spreading the word about the need for continued advocacy for a permanent, refundable adoption tax credit. This second session of the 113th Congress will be a crucial time period for the preservation and improvement of the adoption tax credit. While it might appear that tax reform is not on the top of the Congressional agenda, the

reality is that it could move at any time - and move quickly. To ensure that the adoption tax credit is protected we must be sure that every Member of Congress fully understands its impact on children. It is also important to realize that because it is not refundable, the current adoption tax credit is not benefitting all adoptive families. Educating Members of Congress about this shortfall will enable more children to find the loving homes they need and deserve.

Every other week for 100 days beginning February 12th, the Executive Committee of the Adoption Tax Credit Working Group will send a call-to-action ALERT that TFFA will post on our website. This ALERT is a call-to-action for you to mobilize your grass roots - your clients, supporters, families and constituents - to encourage widespread bipartisan support for a permanent, refundable adoption tax credit. Each ALERT will include: key messages for the week, a highlighted FAQ to post on your website or feature as part of your e-mail communications, and a call-to-action for the week. TFFA will post these ALERT messages and ask that you send them out to your networks via social media, list servers and other outlets the following week (preferably on Tuesdays).

It is our hope that all the individuals and organizations that receive these alerts from you will use the information provided to spring into action on behalf of the children who still need our help. Our collective goal would be for these efforts to result in 30 new cosponsors of the Senate and House adoption tax credit bills within these 100 days. To be successful, we need you as member organizations of the national Adoption Tax Credit Working Group to activate the thousands of people who you touch each day to help in this important outreach effort.

Throughout the campaign please e-mail me to let me know about your outreach and any feedback you may be receiving from families and advocates in your network. In the meantime if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to e-mail me at shari@ccainstitute.org or call 202-544-8500. As the Secretariat of the working group, CCAI is pleased to assist you.

Thanks again!
Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of The Adoption Tax Credit Working Group's Executive Committee:
American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, Adopt America Network, Christian Alliance for Orphans, Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (Secretariat), Dave Thomas' Foundation for Adoption, Donaldson Adoption Institute, Joint Council on International Children's Services, National Council for Adoption, North American Council on Adoptable Children,
• RESOLVE The National Infertility Association, ShowHope, and Voice for Adoption.

these 6 clutter - causing mistakes



Some clutter is overwhelming. Some clutter is sentimental. That's where the experts come in.

'Do you use it, do you need it or do you enjoy it?' asks professional organizer Kim Cosentino. 'If the answer's no, then it's clutter.'

If it were only that simple, getting rid of clutter would be a lot easier. But sometimes, our emotions or perceptions get in the way. Let our team of professional organizers clear the most common obstacles between you and your love-hate relationship with clutter.

mistake #1

I can't get rid of this. It was my grandmother's!

Many of us hold onto things we don't need because of an emotional connection. Often we want to hold on to a memory, a time in our life or a person. Or we feel guilty or hesitate to get rid of gifts or hand-me-downs.

Solution: Take a picture...

And write a short story about the meaning to share with family, friends and future generations. Then get the item into the hands of someone who needs and wants it, recommends professional organizer Monica Friel, who owns [Chaos to Order](#).

mistake #2

But I know it's worth something...

Sadly, most of your clutter isn't worth that much. 'There's [often] no value to these things we used to value,' said Cosentino, owner of [The De-Clutter Box](#). Take, for example, that fine china you or your family members received as wedding gifts or those big china cabinets. Neither held its value. 'If you watch the Food Network, they're all using white square plates,' she says, 'and china cabinets, you can't even give them away.'

Solution: Get real

Have it appraised and try to sell it on eBay. Otherwise, donate the items to a friend, relative or charity.

mistake #3

I don't have time...

Cosentino says all the to-dos in our heads or on one big list can feel overwhelming, so we don't think we have time to clear the clutter.

Solution: Use your calendar properly

Instead of compiling a never-ending to-do list, spread the activities on your calendar throughout one week or more. Scheduling task will make you feel better, Cosentino said. 'Then you don't have this huge overwhelming list,' she says, 'and it doesn't have to all be done today.' Then, schedule time to de-clutter or organize.

mistake #4

I get distracted.

According to Friel, clutter represents unfinished tasks or unmade decisions. With technology today, 'we're so used to quick hits,' Friel said, 'and our need for instant gratification can make it harder to stay focused on clearing our clutter.'

For example, we start a project, but then our phone rings, or we get distracted by a mess elsewhere and we don't finish the first project. Or worse yet, we start several organizing projects at the same time, without finishing any.

Solution: Stay the course

If you start a de-cluttering project, turn off your phone, tell your family you need some uninterrupted time, and finish it. Or, start small and finish one facet of the project. If your mess feels overwhelming, do one thing at a time, Friel recommends. 'Give it 30 minutes and you'll be amazed how you can put a dent in it,' she said. 'Then put another 30 minutes on your calendar. If you get into it, stay longer.'

mistake #5

If I put it away, I'll forget about it. Seeing my bills and mail helps me remember what I need to do.

Not so fast, professional organizers say. If you keep a pile of bills and mail on the counter, all you see is the top sheet of paper.

Solution: Use files and set electronic reminders

'Papers are easier to see in a file,' said Friel, who also recommends reducing your amount of mail, which can reduce your clutter. Place bills in a 'bills-to-pay' file and set a reminder on your phone or calendar. In regards to other mail, reducing the amount you receive can help reduce your clutter. Sites such as [CatalogChoice.org](#) and [41pounds.org](#) allow you to choose the mail you do or do not want to receive for a small donation or fee.

mistake #6

Buying these cute containers will help me get organized

We know it's tempting, but if you buy containers early, you may not know the type or size needed. Then, if those containers go unused, you just unknowingly create more clutter.

Solution: Wait until you've tackled the mess and know what containers you need.

If you wait until you finish organizing, you'll know exactly how many, what type and what size containers you'll need.

Tips for Helping Your Child Build Social Skills

As young children, we develop what are known as 'scripts,' or abstract descriptions of a series of actions or events that are necessary to achieve an objective. Typical scripts a child may have include:

The format for a birthday party (i.e., you arrive, play games with others, eat cake and/or ice cream)

Going shopping (i.e., you arrive at store, pick out items to buy, pay at the cash register)

Eating at a restaurant (i.e., you order from menu, eat, pay)

Depending on the nature and severity of your child's learning disability, he or she may need additional support from you to develop strong social skills - skills that are critical for building and maintaining friendships. Guiding your child through various social scripts will enable him or her to navigate such situations with greater ease and less apprehension, especially when he/she is interacting with other children.

Putting Scripts Into Practice

When push comes to shove, nothing is better than real life experiences! Allow your son/daughter to spend time with friends and peers. Trial and error is sometimes the only way a person can truly learn.

Enroll your child in activities outside his/her known social circle if your child feels unpopular in his/her regular setting. Allowing a child to start anew will give him/her opportunities to confidently practice new social skills

Engage your child in conversation whenever possible. Eat family dinners together at the kitchen or dining room table instead of in front of the television. As the parent, make the promise to not answer the phone during family meal times so you can better focus on conversation with your child.

General Tips to Share With Your Child

1. Be aware of the personal space of others and learn not to invade it.
2. Practice making and maintaining eye contact during conversations.
3. Pay attention during conversations. Don't let your mind wander or daydream.
4. Learn how (and when) to begin and end a conversation politely.
5. Try not to monopolize the discussion. Remember, a dialogue is at least two-sided, so allow the other person (or people) to speak their mind (or minds).
6. Engage in self-monitoring - that is, adapt your behavior to reflect the social situation at hand. At school, be attentive and responsive.
7. Think twice before speaking to avoid inappropriate comments.
8. Patience is a virtue. Allow others to finish speaking before you begin to talk. You wouldn't want someone to interrupt your train of thought, would you?
9. Always be courteous - say please and thank you.

Remind your child that practice makes perfect. The more you socialize the more confident you will become in social situations. And, make an effort to praise your child when he or she is being socially proper and is clearly striving to make a change in behavior.

For more on social skills and self-esteem, check out "[Resources to Help Build Your Child's Self Esteem.](#)"

What Are Chores For?

How you approach chores will affect what your child learns about them.

Shari Steelsmith, author of our [Go To Your Room](#), shares this advice: I'm one of those parents who have to remind myself periodically that the children are getting older now and are capable of helping out more around the house. It's usually easier to do certain tasks myself, but still, I want my kids to learn to do household jobs and to contribute to the family. I asked my son (age 11) to load the dishwasher this morning. At lunchtime I opened it to find glasses rolling around on their sides on the top shelf. Although I remembered to ask him to do the job, I had neglected to teach him how to do it properly or demonstrate standards. I called him over and showed him piece by piece, how I loaded the dishwasher. Better late than never.



Tools—Parent educator, Elizabeth Crary, author of the very useful [Pick Up Your Socks . . . and Other Skills Growing Children Need!](#) reflects on the importance of children doing chores. She lists four reasons parents wish children to do them:

Continued on Page 21

Trouble Finding or Saying the Right Word?

It Could Be Dyslexia

At a Glance

Everyone has trouble coming up with the right word now and then, feeling as if it's "on the tip of the tongue."

Frequent issues with word retrieval can be a sign of dyslexia.

Anxiety can sometimes make it harder for people to say the right word.

Imagine you're watching television and suddenly you recognize the face of your friend's favorite actor. You call her up immediately. "Hey, Sally, turn on your TV. It's... it's... you know the guy... that actor you love... from the thing...."

Suddenly you're at a loss for words, even though you know who the actor is. You're experiencing a momentary problem with what experts call word retrieval or word finding.

Everyone experiences this now and then. But with dyslexia, it can happen often and with all types of words. A child with [dyslexia](#) can have trouble remembering, recalling and getting out different sound combinations. The word she wants to say may be "on the tip of her tongue," but she can't access the exact sound combination to produce the word.

Your child may say a wrong word that sounds similar to the right one (such as "distinct" instead of "extinct") or she may talk around it. This same kind of mental hiccup can also occur during writing.

Anxiety sometimes makes matters worse for kids with dyslexia. Your child's word-retrieval issues can increase under pressure. Students with dyslexia may find word retrieval less challenging when they have more time to respond and aren't put on the spot.

If your child frequently struggles to find the right word, you can explain what word retrieval is and why she has trouble with it. Awareness of a problem may help your child stay calm, making the words easier to access.

Your child's teacher, reading specialist or speech therapist should also be able to share strategies to minimize these experiences. If your child has dyslexia and has an [individualized education program \(IEP\)](#) at school, she may be entitled to extra time on tests and to complete tasks.

It's important to note that persistent problems with word finding are not unique to dyslexia. Word-retrieval issues can also occur in people who've had a stroke or brain injury. Children with [ADHD](#), kids whom stutter and those with other specific language issues can also struggle with word retrieval and word finding.

As you look for the best ways to help your child at school and at home, consider pursuing classroom [accommodations](#) as well as discussing your child's feelings with her as she's experiencing them.

Key Takeaways

Dyslexia isn't the only issue associated with word-retrieval problems.

Helping your child learn how to stay calm can make the words easier to access.

Extra time to complete tests and other tasks can help with word retrieval.

First, Share the Workload.

Housework is never-ending. If everyone pitches in, no one person is overly burdened. This is a matter of simple fairness. Some parents believe that if children are more involved in running a household, they will make fewer messes. To learn housekeeping skills. Crary says the easiest time to learn household skills is as a child. Kids can learn to make beds, do dishes, and vacuum the same way they learn to read, ride bikes, and swim. Further, when children acquire the habit of doing such chores and making beds or doing dishes, those habits and skills will accompany them into adulthood.

To Contribute to the family. Many parents believe that all family members ought to contribute to the family as well as receive from it. How each person contributes varies with age and ability. The most common way children can contribute is by doing household chores.

To learn responsibility. Requiring children to contribute to the family by doing chores is an excellent way to begin to learn and practice responsibility.

You'll find more practical tips you can use right now in [Pick Up Your Socks . . . and Other Skills Growing Children Need!](#) by Elizabeth Crary, M.S.

