

July 2008 Foster Parent Spotlight Brynn & Matt Miller



Brynn and Matt Miller met through a mutual friend at a party they both attended nine years ago. They became close friends and began dating a year after they met. Brynn and Matt were together for three years prior to getting married four years ago. Brynn is originally from Seattle, WA; however, she grew up here in Waukesha. Matt

was born and raised in Brookfield. Currently the Miller's reside in New Berlin. Matt works for State Central Credit Union where he is a manager of IT and Brynn is a Contract Specialist for Softwareone.

Both Brynn and Matt have always had a love for children. They always knew that they had a desire to become parents. When the couple found out they could not have children of their own they decided to pursue other avenues. Brynn and Matt saw the need for foster parents and decided to go through the licensing process. The couple has been licensed since May of 2007. Brynn and Matt state that they are in this for no other reason than for the children. They want to make a difference in a child's life.

Brynn and Matt's first placement was a quick ten-day stint with an infant boy from Milwaukee County. Currently Brynn and Matt have two Waukesha County placements. They have two little girls ages four and six. Also, the Miller's adopted a 3 month old baby boy this past April. Brynn stated that everyday is new and exciting. She also stated that going from zero children to three children in the course of a six-month period has been challenging but has only made them stronger parents because of it. As a family, the Miller's enjoy playing outside and going to the park. The girls also love to play baseball with Matt in the backyard.

When the girls were initially placed with the Miller's, Brynn noted that they came with a lot of baggage. She stated that the biggest rewards for she and Matt have been watching the girls work through the issues and fears they once had. When the younger girl came into their home, she was unable to walk and the Miller's helped her learn to walk again. This has been a huge reward for the couple. Additionally, being able to teach the girls that they can trust people and that they are there for them and that they are not going anywhere has been another rewarding experience.

One of the most difficult things about foster parenting for Brynn and Matt has dealing with the broken homes and baggage that the children come with. The Miller's found it difficult to work through the children's emotional baggage and get them to learn to trust and feel safe in their home. Brynn and Matt had no prior parenting practice before the two girls entered their home. It has been a challenging yet rewarding experience for Brynn and Matt to learn what parenting styles work for the children and what does not work.

Brynn and Matt would like to tell other foster parents, both current and future, to give the children as much love as you can because many of the children do not receive love in their home life. They also state that it is important to take things one day at a time because you never know what is going to come next. Most importantly, Brynn and Matt say to do as much with the children as you can to make as much of an impact on their life as possible.



Happy 4th of July

Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
262-548-7212

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentors
Nikki Mertens
(12 and under)
262-246-6180

Bette Winkler
(over 12)
262-679-9634

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
262-548-7271

Shari Rather, Foster Care Coordinator
262-548-7267

Michelle Cornwell, Visitation Coordinator
262-548-7370

May 2008 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
51 Children
5 Admitted
1 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:
19 Children
0 Admitted
3 Discharged

Group Homes:
5 Children
0 Admitted
1 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:
12 Children
0 Admitted
0 Discharged

Relative Placements:
57 Children
17 Admitted
5 Discharged

Social Workers:

Steve Handrich
262-548-7262

Peggy Beisser
262-548-7261

Kathe Blum
262-548-7275

Greg Rewolinski
262-548-7270

Margaret Johnson
262-548-7265

Suzanne Arnold
262-548-7348

Elizabeth Russo
262-548-7349

Kim Sampson
262-548-7273

Linda Senger
262-548-7698

Ted Wuerslin
262-548-7269

Jennifer Wygle
262-548-7260

We Need You!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov

262-548-7267

Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov And follow the links to foster care.



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
July 2008



Dealing With The Angry Child U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Handling children's anger can be puzzling, draining, and distressing for adults. In fact, one of the major problems in dealing with anger in children is the angry feelings that are often stirred up in us. It has been said that we as parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators need to remind ourselves that we were not always taught how to deal with anger as a fact of life during dinner without being reminded; "I own childhood." We were led to believe that to be angry was to be bad, and we were often made to feel guilty for expressing anger.

It will be easier to deal with children's anger if we get rid of this notion. Our goal is not to repress or destroy angry feelings in children — or in ourselves — but rather to accept the feelings and to help channel and direct them to constructive ends.

Parents and teachers must allow children to feel all their feelings. Adult skills can then be directed toward showing children acceptable ways of expressing their feelings. Strong feelings cannot be denied, and angry outbursts should not always be viewed as a sign of serious problems; they should be recognized and treated with respect.

To respond effectively to overly aggressive behavior in children we need to have some ideas about what may have triggered an outburst. Anger may be a defense to avoid painful feelings; it may be associated with failure, low self-esteem, and feelings of isolation; or it may be related to anxiety about situations over which the child has no control.

Angry defiance may also be associated with feelings of dependency, and anger may be associated with sadness and depression. In childhood, anger and sadness are very close to one another, and it is important to remember that much of what an adult experiences as sadness is expressed by a child as anger.

Before we look at specific ways to manage aggressive and angry outbursts, several points should be highlighted:

We should distinguish between anger and aggression. Anger is a temporary emotional state caused by frustration; aggression is often an attempt to hurt a person or to destroy property.

Anger and aggression do not have to be dirty words. In other words, in looking at aggressive behavior in children, we must be careful to distinguish between behavior that indicates emotional problems and behavior that is normal.

In dealing with angry children, our actions should be motivated by the need to protect and to reach, not by a desire to punish. Parents and teachers should show a child that they accept his or her feelings, while suggesting other ways to express the feelings. An adult might say, for example, "Let me tell you what some children would do in a situation like this..." It is not enough to tell children what behaviors we find unacceptable. We must teach them acceptable ways of coping. Also, ways must be found to communicate what we expect of them. Contrary to popular opinion, punishment is not the most effective way to communicate what we expect of them.

Responding to the Angry Child

Some of the following suggestions for dealing with the angry child were taken from *The Aggressive Child* by Fritz Redl and David Wineman. They should be considered helpful ideas and not be seen as a "bag of tricks."

Catch the child being good. Tell the child what behaviors please you. Respond to positive efforts and reinforce good behavior. An observing and sensitive parent will find countless opportunities during the day to make such comments as "I like the way you came into dinner without being reminded"; "I appreciate your hanging up your clothes even though you were in a hurry to get out to play"; "You were really patient while I was on the phone"; "I'm glad you shared your snack with your sister"; "I like the way you're able to think of others"; and "Thank you for telling the truth about what happened." Similarly, teachers can positively reinforce good behavior with statements like "I know it was difficult for you to wait your turn, and I'm pleased that you could do it"; "Thanks for sitting in your seat quietly"; "You were thoughtful in offering to help Jonny with his spelling"; "You worked hard on that project, and I admire your effort."

Deliberately ignore inappropriate behavior that can be tolerated. This doesn't mean that you should ignore the child, just the behavior. The "ignoring" has to be planned and consistent. Even though this behavior may be tolerated, the child must recognize that it is inappropriate.

Provide physical outlets and other alternative. It is important for children to have opportunities for physical education and movement, both at home and at school.

Manipulate the surroundings. Aggressive behavior can be encouraged by placing children in tough, tempting situations. We should try to plan the surroundings so that certain things are less apt to happen. Stop a "problem" activity and substitute, temporarily, a more desirable one. Sometimes rules and regulations, as well as physical space may be too confining.

Use closeness and touching. Move physically closer to the child to curb his or her angry impulse. Young children are often calmed by having an adult come close by and express interest in the child's activities. Children naturally try to involve adults in what they are doing, and the adult is often annoyed at being bothered. Very young children (and children who are emotionally deprived) seem to need much more adult involvement in their interests. A child about to use a toy or tool in a destructive way is sometimes easily stopped by an adult who expresses interest in having it shown to him. An outburst from an older child struggling with a difficult reading selection can be prevented by a caring adult who moves near the child to say, "Show me which words are giving you trouble."

Be ready to show affection. Sometimes all that is needed for an angry child to regain control is a sudden hug or other impulsive show of affection. Children with serious emotional problems, however, may have trouble accepting affection.

Ease tension through humor. Kidding the child out of a temper tantrum or outburst offers the child an opportunity to "save face." However, it is important to distinguish between face-saving humor and sarcasm, teasing, or ridicule.

Appeal directly to the child. Tell him or her how you feel and ask for consideration. For example, a parent or a teacher may gain a child's cooperation by saying, "I know that noise you're making doesn't usually bother me, but today I've got a headache, so could you find something else you'd enjoy doing?"

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Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and Family Division

I hope everyone is having a nice summer! As many of you know, we are piloting the Foundation Training for all new foster parents. The State and the Statewide Child Welfare Training Partnerships with input from various counties developed this training. Foundation training builds on the Pre-Placement training that foster parents were required to attend and gives foster parents an opportunity to implement some of the techniques taught. I like this model since foster parents can try some of the techniques taught in class and can provide immediate feedback to the trainer. One of the challenges of this training is to ensure all our foster parents complete the training within the first two years of licensure. We had our first training recently and about 15 foster parents attended. We are please with the number of foster parents but over 51 still need to attend. There is room for foster parents who have not signed up. The classes are held on Tuesday evenings from 6:15 to 9:15 pm at the Human Services Center in the Brookfield Room. Please contact Shari Rather at 262-548-7267 if you have specific questions or need more information. Since this is a pilot project, we would like to give feedback to the State and Training Partnership on its effectiveness and value. Your feedback is very important so please share any comments, suggestions, or ideas with Shari .We will make sure this information is passed along to everyone.

We are finalizing our plans to reimburse foster parents for non-medical transportation. We hope this change will be more efficient and be beneficial to you while reducing the workload for staff. Our target date is July 1, 2008. Lisa Roberts, Permanency Unit Supervisor will be communicating with everyone and providing details on how this will affect you and how this will occur. If you have any specific questions please feel free to contact your social worker.

Our Annual Foster Parent Appreciation Event is July 31, 2008. The event will take place at Fox Brook Park in Brookfield from 1:30 to 8:00 pm. A Picnic Dinner will be served around 5:45 pm. We plan to have many activities including swimming, pedal boats, arts and crafts, volleyball, bocce ball, face painting and music. This will be a great opportunity for socializing and for you to meet one another. Brittany Graser (Shari's social worker intern) has been working very hard on planning this event and collecting some very nice door prizes. I would like to thank Jack Safro Toyota for sponsoring this event for the past three years and Brittany and Shari to putting this event together. I look forward to seeing everyone!

Please have a safe and Happy Fourth of July!!!!

How to Handle the Heat

Source: American Red Cross

Would you recognize heat illness if you saw it? In its most sever form, it can cause shock, brain damage—even death. Here's what to do:

Heat Cramps: Signs: The person is perspiring heavily and may be lightheaded or weak, with muscle cramps. **What to do?** Have the person rest with feet elevated 8—12 inches. Cool the victim by removing clothing, sponging the skin with water and fanning them. Give the person something to sip—ideally, an electrolyte beverage such as Gatorade, but any fluid is better than none.

Heat Exhaustion: Signs: The person may be irrational or unconscious, with skin that is cool and moist, pale or red. Pupils are larger than normal and the person may be experiencing headache, extreme thirst, nausea, vomiting. Weakness or dizziness. **What to do?** Use the same measures as above, and monitor for signs of shock, including bluish lips and fingernails and decreasing alertness.

Heatstroke: Signs: The person is confused or unconscious, and is flushed, with hot, dry skin, small pupils, a rapid, weak pulse and shallow breathing. **What to do?** Move the person to the coolest place available and call your local emergency number immediately. Try to cool the victim while waiting for help.

For all three: If the person's condition worsens or does not improve, call your local emergency number **right away**.



May 21, 2008

For the 3rd time since Neighborhood Safety Network was created in 2004, Consumer Product Safety Commission is warning all members about the serious risk of child drownings in pools and spas. With pool season unofficially opening during Memorial Day Weekend, we unfortunately are reporting that there has been an increase in drownings. On average, 283 children younger than 5 drown in pools and spas each year (and these tragic incidents mostly involve 1-2 year olds). This is up from a yearly average of 267 in previous years.

Today at a national news conference, I joined forces with Florida Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Safe Kids USA parent advocate Nancy Baker, and American Red Cross Chief Public Affairs Officer Suzy DeFrancis in an effort to reduce the number of drownings and injuries this summer.

Parents, caregivers, and pool owners are encouraged to make safety a top priority at the pool and spa. Please take a moment to download and share with others our new "Partners in Drowning Prevention" poster: www.cpsc.gov/nsn/poolsafety2.pdf. New CPSC data also shows that between 1999 and 2007 there were 74 reported incidents involving entrapment, resulting in 9 deaths and 63 injuries. Six of the deaths occurred in pools and three occurred in spas and all of the deaths except for one involved children 14 or younger. These entrapment incidents involve being trapped by the force of suction at the drain and can occur because of a broken or missing outlet cover. Drowning occurs more commonly when children get access to the pool during a short lapse in adult supervision. To reduce the risk of drowning, pool owners should adopt several layers of protection, including physical barriers, such as a fence completely surrounding the pool with self-closing, self-latching gates to prevent unsupervised access by young children. If the house forms a side of the barrier, use alarms on doors leading to the pool area and/or a power safety cover over the pool. Parents should use these tips to help prevent drowning deaths:

- **Since every second counts, always look for a missing child in the pool first. Precious time is often wasted looking for missing children anywhere but in the pool.**
- **Don't leave toys and floats in the pool that can attract young children and cause them to fall in the water when they reach for the items.**
- **Inspect pools and spas for missing or broken drain covers.**
- **Do not allow children in a pool or spa with missing/broken covers. Inserting an arm or leg into the opening can result in powerful suction and total body submersion/drowning.**
- **For above-ground and inflatable pools with ladders, remove or secure the ladder when the pool is not in use. It is important to always be prepared for an emergency by having rescue equipment and a phone near the pool. Parents should learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).**

Thank you,
Nancy Nord
Acting Chairman
US Consumer Product Safety Commission



Dealing With The Angry Child—Continued

Explain situations. Help the child understand the cause of a stressed situation. We often fail to realize how easily young children can begin to react properly once they understand the cause of their frustration.

Removal from the scene. Occasionally a child may lose control so completely that he has to be removed from the scene to prevent him from hurting himself or others. This may also "save face" for the child. Removal from the scene should not be viewed by the child as punishment but as a means of saying, "You can't do that." In such situations, an adult cannot afford to lose his or her temper and unfriendly remarks by other children should not be tolerated.

Encourage children to see their strengths as well as their weaknesses. Help them to see that they can reach their goals.

Use promises and rewards. Promises of future pleasure can be used both to start and to stop behavior. This approach should not be compared with bribery. We must know what the child likes—what brings him pleasure — and we must deliver on our promises.

Say "NO!" Limits should be clearly explained and enforced. Children should be free to function within those limits.

Tell the child that you accept his or her angry feelings, but offer other suggestions for expressing them. Teach children to put their angry feelings into words, rather than fists.

Build a positive self-image. Encourage children to see themselves as valued and valuable people.

Use punishment cautiously. There is a fine line between punishment that is hostile toward a child and punishment that is educational.

Model appropriate behavior. Parents and teachers should be aware of the powerful influence of their actions on a child's or group's behavior.

Teach children to express themselves verbally. Talking helps a child have control and thus reduces acting out behavior. Encourage the child to say, for example, "I don't like your taking my pencil. I don't feel like sharing just now."

The Role of Discipline

Good discipline includes creating an atmosphere of quiet firmness, clarity, and conscientiousness, while using reasoning. Bad discipline involves punishment which is unduly harsh and inappropriate, and it is often associated with verbal ridicule and attacks on the child's integrity.

As one fourth-grade teacher put it: "One of the most important goals we strive for as parents, educators, and mental health professionals is to help children develop respect for themselves and others." While arriving at this goal takes years of patient practice, it is a vital process in which parents, teachers, and all caring adults can play a crucial and exciting role. In order to accomplish this, we must see children as worthy human beings and be sincere in dealing with them.

**Pre-Placement Training
for Prospective Foster Parents**

July 10, 2008	6-9 PM
July 17, 2008	6-9 PM
August 7, 2008	6-9 PM
August 21, 2008	6-9 PM

All Classes are held in the Brookfield Room G137 in the Human Services Center located at 500 Riverview Avenue.

Please enter the building at door 6. Call Shari Rather at (262)548-7267 to register.

The Value of Consistency

By Jo Ann Wentzel

If I could give only one word of advise to parents that word would be consistency. A consistent parent gives the child a gift of always knowing what to expect. Neither the rules, nor the consequences change daily.

I had foster kids who called this "nagging," but they knew what they could or could not do and what would happen if they made the wrong choice.. They would come in the door and before they know we knew they had been up to, they were discussing the consequences. They knew them in advance. I knew I had hit a home run with a message when the kids started to finish the sentence. No kid, upon learning they were in trouble, could claim ignorance because I heard them repeat that very rule.

They claim the average attention span for teens being talked to is about 30 seconds, so that is the time you have to get messages across. If that is the case, a complete message needs to be broken down into small, short bits, and repeated often.

Teens dislike sermons so these short bursts are best. But more important than length is what you say. Being consistent means telling them the exact same thing in the exact same way. It is kind of like when you hear an advertising jingle for a product on TV. You begin to remember the exact words; the phrase goes together without even thinking about it. Have you noticed the new trend in advertisements? The first few weeks or months, you get the complete ad with every gruesome detail. Later on, just the punch line, so to speak, is the entire ad, but in your mind, you have already filled in the blanks. It is the same with these little messages.

Consistency would mean nothing to kids if it were only reserved for what and how we say it. You must follow through in practice. This means a parent should be very sure what policies they want to implement.

Consistency implies no change without good reason. I have been a foster parent in organizations where every day saw policy changes. As foster parents, we are confused. Now consider a foster child who has never had stability. Suddenly the pattern is repeating itself and he does not know what the rules are anymore. Most foster kids came from families that were very inconsistent. For the first years of parenting, these parents were often so lenient, set few rules and never expected kids to pay consequences for their actions. Suddenly, they decide it is time to be firm and go so far the other direction as to almost be abusive. They certainly are not realistic. It takes months before they admit this approach is not working and midstream they change directions once again. Their kids are confused, and by this time probably dizzy.

Another scenario is the parents who say if you do this, you will be punished in this way. When the kids do (let's say use drugs), the punishment for that is grounding for a month. Unfortunately, the kids are driving them crazy being inside and whining all the time so they let them out in two weeks. These kids have learned not to believe what you say. They figure they should not worry about rules or consequences since you will weaken or they can get around you. It is always better to keep grounding to a minimum that you can live with but be consistent. I must admit this does not always work since I had one young man who was grounded for two weeks every time he got drunk. He would pay his consequences without complaining, then immediately go out and do it again. It eventually took treatment to help the situation, but, we did not back down. This young man has since attached himself to our family and for all intents and purposes, he is our son. We all lived through it. I also in some rare instances allowed kids to work their way out of grounding for both our sanity's sake. But the work was in addition to regular chores, time-consuming, and hard.

Consistency is important in scheduling for the same reasons as in rules. These kids never knew if they would eat or when, what time they would finally go to bed, if they would actually see this parent that day, etc. We tried to keep it a reasonable schedule in our foster home. It is difficult, but not impossible. Crisis and a tremendous workload makes it a challenge, but keep to a schedule as best you can if you want calm kids. A factor in the lives they led which may have added to their problems was nothing was predictable. They might complain to you, but they may tend to thrive on set times for everything. I am talking within reason here.