

Self-Care for Adopters and Carers

Parenting and caring for children who have suffered trauma is a different experience to parenting birth children. Trauma and neglect has a profound impact on the development of a child's brain and this can manifest in feelings of anxiety, dysregulated behaviour and difficulties with developing attachments to their caregivers. This can be exhausting for adoptive parents and carers and can create added stress, making it difficult to experience the joy of parenting.



Blocked Care

A child who has suffered early childhood trauma may project their bad feelings onto their caregivers, either through language or behaviour. This can have an effect on their carer, who may experience these feelings as their own or may be triggered into reliving their own traumatic memories and it may feel personal. This will release stress hormones in the parent/carer's own brain, triggering survival or self-defence mode due to the feeling of rejection. This is known as "Blocked Care." The parent or carer will become unable to respond empathically to the child as the stress of caring becomes too much.

Caring for Yourself

When caring for or parenting a child, it is important to remember to save some time to take care of yourself. Taking time to relax, have fun and reconnect with yourself and others will give you the chance to express your emotions in a safe way and to interpret your own feelings and reactions to reduce the feelings of shame and hurt. Some tips on reducing stress include:

- Reconnect and socialise with friends and family, remember, though, that they may not understand how adoptive parenting or foster caring is different from their own experiences.
- Join a support group with other adopters and foster carers from providers such as the [National Association of Therapeutic Parents](#).
- Regular exercise to help burn up stress hormones.
- Take some time to be reflective with yoga or meditation.

Mindfulness

When dealing with the negative emotions of blocked care, it can be easy to respond to a situation in the heat of the moment. Mindfulness is a technique to help bring our attention back to the here and now and paying attention to our thoughts and feelings with compassion and without judgement. Through mindfulness, we are able to acknowledge and identify our thoughts and feelings as they come flooding in, but don't let them take over. We recognise those feelings and move on from them. Visit the [NHS website](#) for more tips on mindfulness.

If you'd like to know more about blocked care and support for adopters and foster carers, please visit the Fostering and Adoption Portal at <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/fanotts>

Abbie Patrick

Social Work Support Officer – Support After Adoption