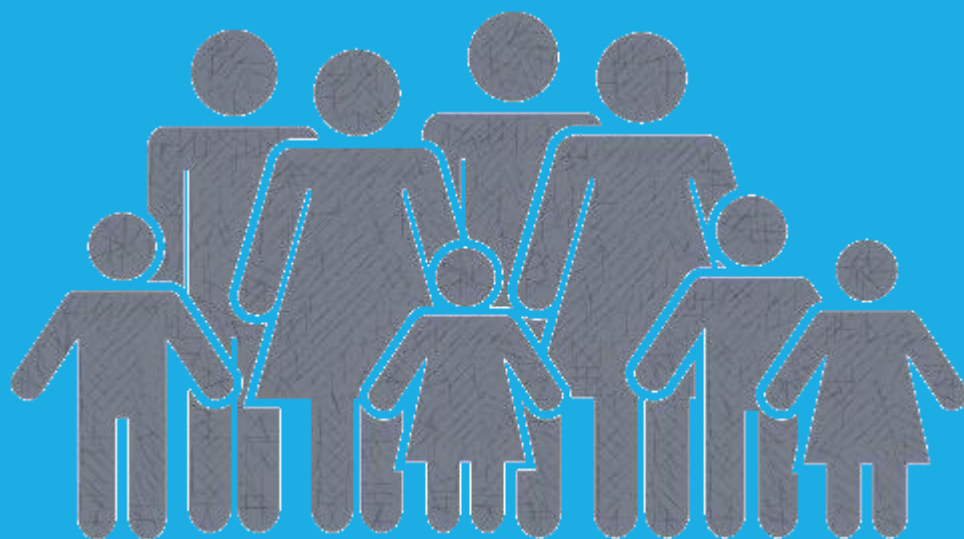


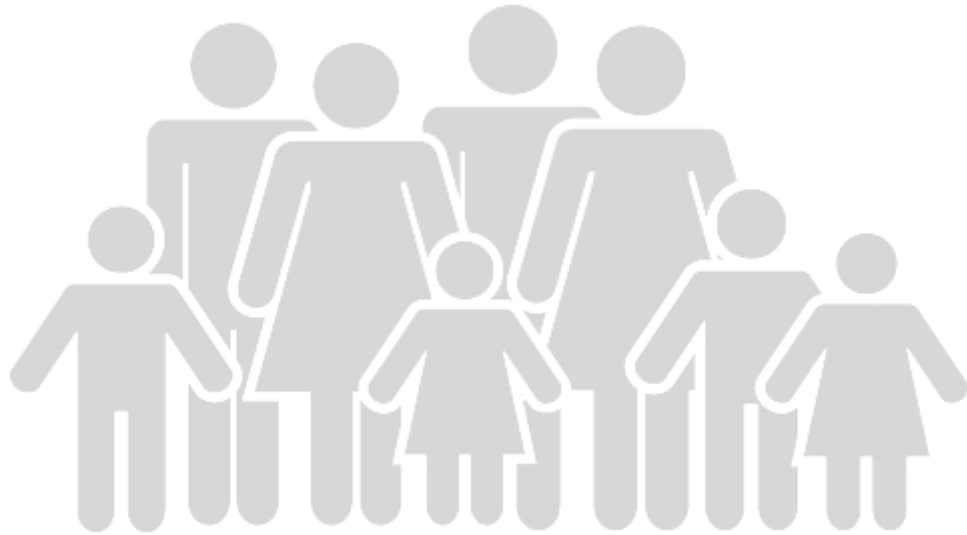
Parents' and Caregivers' Top 10 Respite Questions

by Karen Poitras

Therapeutic Respite Provider and Parenting Coach



Answering Parents' and Caregivers' Top 10 Questions about Therapeutic Respite Care

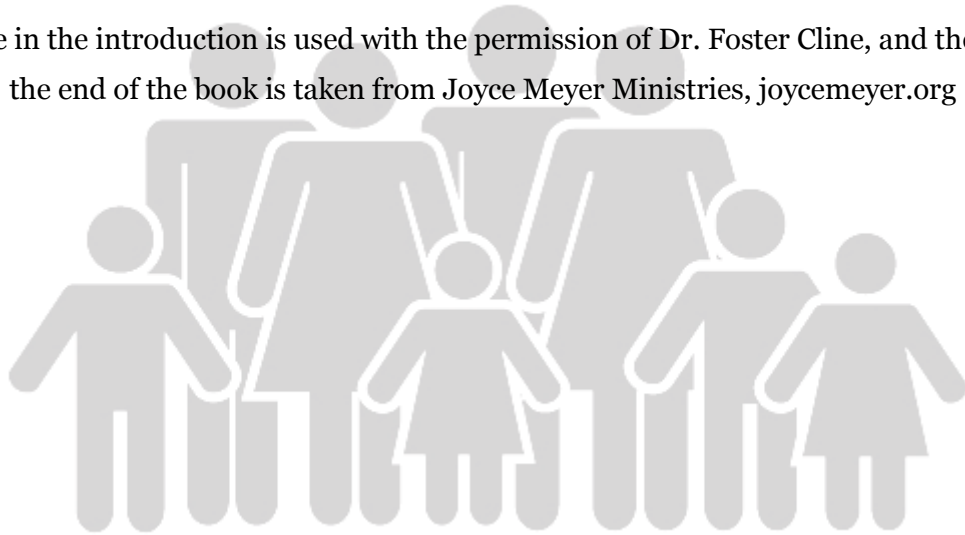


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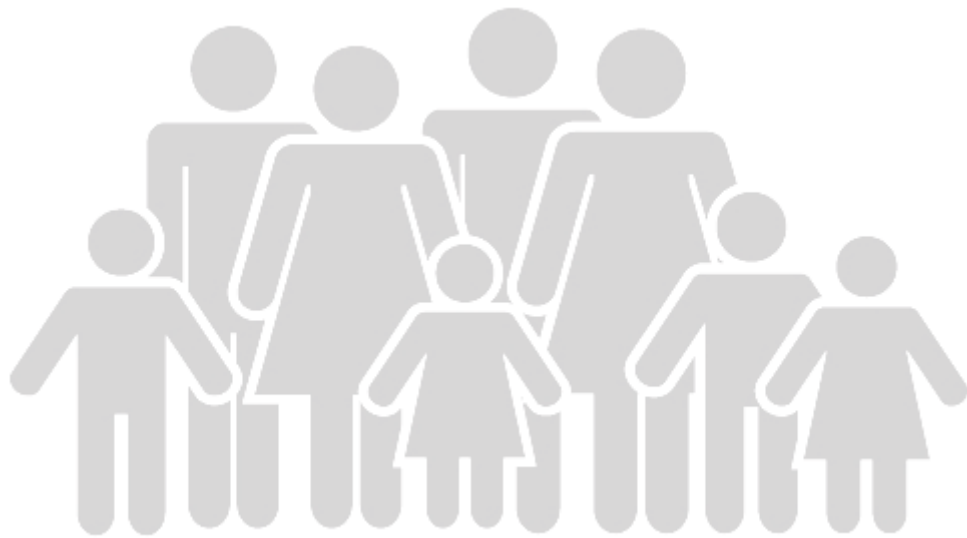
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To all the amazing parents and caregivers raising children suffering from the effects of Reactive Attachment Disorder, and those who join in the battle as respite providers



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Are you ready for respite?

Res·pite

/ˈrespət, rēˈspīt/
noun

1. a short period of rest or relief from something difficult or unpleasant

Synonyms: rest, break, breathing space, interval, intermission, interlude, recess, lull, pause, time out

Introduction

As parents and caregivers of a child with Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), you need respite to go from *surviving* to *thriving*. Raising a child with an emotional and/or behavioural disorder from early life trauma is exhausting. You need to stay in top shape both emotionally and physically and have your heart full in order to fill up and heal your child.

Parents and caregivers can feel overwhelmed by the thought of respite – when is it needed? Am I being selfish to need a break from my own child? Will my child lose the progress they have made? What will others think of me?

Here are the answers to the top 10 most frequently asked questions about therapeutic respite care.

Enjoy!

With love,

Karen Poitras

Therapeutic Respite Provider and Therapeutic Parenting Coach

Next Generation Attachment | www.nextgenerationattachment.org

“Parents are the center of a child’s universe. When parents forget to take care of themselves, falter and wear out, the family wears out. And the children go nowhere.” (Foster W. Cline, 1996)

1. What is therapeutic respite care?

Therapeutic respite care is designed to be a healing respite. Children with an emotional and/or behavioural disorder need specialized healing care in order to overcome their past adversities and/or trauma.

Therapeutic respite care is a safe place/environment where your child is given the opportunity to work on their life skills while continuing toward healing. This time provides you as parents and caregivers the chance to catch your breath without worrying about your child losing any progress they have previously made.

2. When is respite to be used?

Respite may be used at several different times:

- as a scheduled break for the family, parents and healthy siblings
- when your child is acting out physically and aggressively
- when your child is stuck in a pattern of negative behaviours
- or when your child's company will alter the family's ability to have fun (gatherings, parties, outings, etc.).

3. How often should respite be used?

Respite should be scheduled regularly for an afternoon or evening each week, as well as one weekend each month. This provides you and any other children or family members in the home time to rest & chill out and plan some family activities that may have been ignored for a while (i.e. sleeping in, going on an outing, having a movie night, etc.).

Respite may also be used when another child or family member has an appointment or sporting activity and your child with Reactive Attachment Disorder will stay healthier be safer with a respite provider.

4. How long should respite last?

Respite can last from anywhere from a few hours to ten days*.

- Regular respite should be scheduled for a few hours a week or for a weekend.
- Respite when your child is acting out aggressively or is 'stuck' works best if the placement lasts until your child is able to shift out of the behavior and show

with their actions that they are ready to come home (up to ten days).

- Respite when your child is sabotaging family fun works best when the placement lasts until the end of your planned activity.

**If parents or caregivers are completely exhausted and already drowning they might want to consider long-term respite, where a respite provider takes over the bonding and parental responsibilities for several weeks or months while parents rest and heal.*

5. What qualifies a respite provider?

Respite must be provided by someone that you trust to take care of your child, and who will respect and honour the decisions you have made for your child's and family's wellbeing.

Former teachers, early childhood educators, police officers, retired military personnel, and special needs workers are often a good place to start looking for help. When choosing a respite provider look for someone who:

- Has firm limits, consistent commitment to your child's healing, and a backbone
- Is respectfully in control of themselves and all situations at all times
- Will not be conned or manipulated by your child
- Will communicate openly and freely with you
- Will not allow use of TV, cell phones, electronics, or connection to the Internet
- Will not engage in frivolous conversation with your child.

Close family members are often not the best choice for this position as they need to be grandparents, Aunts, and Uncles to your family and provide support in that way.

Once you have someone who will fit your family's needs, arrange for them to be trained in providing therapeutic respite care for a child with RAD!

See 'Are you ready for respite?' at the end of the book.

6. What is the respite provider expected to do?

Respite providers and parents must communicate with each other before and after each respite placement to ensure that everyone is working together for the best care of your child and your family. If there is a disagreement about treatment, *the parents are always right!* You know your child best.

A respite provider provides a safe, therapeutic environment for the child, with established boundaries and limits. The respite provider must expect high levels of respect from your child, as well as show the same levels of respect to all others as an example to your child.

Activities, food, playtime, etc. will NOT compete with what your child has at home with their family. Respite providers help children reach toward their parents and motivate them to want to be with you, feeling your love and being filled up at home.

7. What are parents expected to do?

Parents need to attend to their own self-care and spend the time relaxing while their child is in respite!

Spend time with your healthy children, giving them some much-needed Mom and Dad time. Plan an outing or activity that you would not normally be able to do when your child with Reactive Attachment Disorder is home.

Some great ideas to help you get relaxed and rested up:

- Sleep in and and/or take a nap
- Get a massage or go to a spa
- Meet friends or family for lunch or dinner
- Go shopping for fun things (not groceries!)
- Go out on a date or out for supper with your significant other.

8. What will the child do in respite?

While your child is in respite for a scheduled break they will work on chores and quiet, structured activities. They may spend some time making something for Mom or earning money to pay off debts they may have.

When your child is in respite for acting out aggressively or for being stuck in negative behaviours they will be encouraged to work through what happened and come up with a plan for restitution. If they have caused damages at home they may need to earn some money by doing a few simple chores while in respite to begin paying for repairs.

If your child is in respite for sabotaging family fun they will sit quietly or do a few chores for the respite provider, while waiting until you are done with your outing.

9. How is the placement drop-off and pick-up handled?

Drop-off

Dropping your child off at respite can often be hard for parents. You may feel saddened and frustrated, and begin to doubt that what you are doing is in your child's and your own best interests.

Communicate with the respite provider before the placement on your child's most recent conduct and what has been happening lately with your child and the family as a whole.

If you have questions at the time of drop-off, the best thing to do is to email or message the respite provider after leaving to discuss it. Remember to keep it short – you want your respite provider focused on supervising your child!

The following guidelines help to make an easier drop off:

- DO NOT share any information with your child (i.e. length of stay, where they or you are going, what is happening, etc.). Providing your child with this information gives them the chance to manipulate or sabotage the situation and/or get overly anxious about it.
- Drop-off should last between one and two minutes. Greet your respite provider, hug your child, say good bye, and leave. The shorter the better!

Pick-up

When picking up your child from respite ensure that you have 10 – 15 minutes to spend reconnecting with them. They have been separated from you and need some heart-to-heart connection once you are reunited – even if you have been gone for only a couple of hours.

The following guidelines help to ensure a successful reunification/pick up:

- Quickly Greet the respite provider
- Hug and greet your child with love and a smile
- Spend 5 – 10 minutes having snuggle time with your child and asking them what the worst and best part of respite was, and then tell them a funny story or sing to them – no lectures or information given about your time away!
- Set up a time with the respite provider when you can connect and discuss how the respite placement went when your child is not present.

If your child has a restitution or act of kindness they need to do for you, having them do it while still with the respite provider typically promotes a smoother transition.

10. How can parents get the most out of respite care?

There are several things that you as parents can do to optimise your time and the use of respite care.

Self-care and respite combine to keep you from burning out from exhaustion and emotional overload while loving and caring for your child. Keeping your reserves full is critical for the amount of help and love your child needs in order to heal.

Remember respite is a huge and very valuable part of the healing process for your child with Reactive Attachment Disorder.

Respite has several goals:

- Allowing parents to enjoy some normal adult time and relationships
- Giving parents, siblings, and other family members a much-needed and much-deserved break
- Lifting the parents' burden while helping the child continue toward healing
- Motivating the child to appreciate and reach toward their parents.

Respite can be optimized by:

- Viewing both scheduled respite and when your child is acting out respite, as positive; it is a step forward in your child's healing process.
- Spending the time while your child is in respite doing something refreshing that will fill you up. Do something truly relaxing for yourself. Take the time to just breathe.
- Taking regular respite breaks; respite will take your family from *surviving* to *thriving*!
- Allowing your respite provider to take control of the situation and provide appropriate care for your child and then putting it out of your mind for a few hours or days.
- Not calling or messaging your respite provider for constant or sporadic updates and information while your child is in respite. Doing this will not allow you to fully relax and concentrate on your other children/family members or the outing you are on.

“I believe that the greatest gift you can give your family and the world is a healthy YOU.” -- Joyce Meyers

Are you ready for respite?

For information on therapeutic respite services and how to get training for a respite provider in your area, visit Next Generation Attachment at www.nextgenerationattachment.org.

Questions? Comments? Let me know!

Karen Poitras at karen@nextgenerationattachment.org



Go for it! Take the time to regain your smiles, go on dates, sleep in, spend bonding time with your healthy children, take a vacation, rest, relax, and rejuvenate!!