

Fostering in Summer

**A Therapeutic Guide for
Foster Parents**

Welcome to our fostering in summer handbook

We all like to hope that summer will involve a lot of relaxing, having fun and making memories.

But it can also bring challenges for some foster families.

With normal school routines gone and spending more time at home, it can cause children who have experienced trauma to feel unsettled or overwhelmed.

If summer feels harder than expected, you're not doing anything wrong.

Read on throughout this guide for our therapeutic guidance and tips to make summer as enjoyable for everyone!



Why summer can be tricky

Once we look a little deeper and start thinking therapeutically, changes in children's behaviour in summer starts to make sense.

Some things that might cause dysregulation during the summer include:

- **Loss of routine** → can create anxiety and uncertainty
- **Unstructured time** → can feel unsafe or overwhelming
- **More transitions** (trips, visitors, new places) → can be dysregulating
- **Sensory overload** (noise, heat, busy environments) → can increase stress



Keeping a sense of routine

You don't need a strict schedule in summer, it is time to relax after all, but having some predictable parts of the day can make a big difference to young people who have experienced trauma.

Some practical tips to help foster a sense of routine include:

- Keep consistent wake-up and bedtime routines
- Try to keep mealtimes predictable
- Use a simple daily plan (even written on paper)
- Give warnings before changes, like "we're heading out in about half an hour"



Managing Big Feelings

With longer days and fewer distractions, emotions can come up more often. It's completely normal for emotions to show up more often during the summer.

For children who have experienced trauma, big feelings can come quickly and feel overwhelming.

What helps manage big feelings:

- Stay close and calm (Your calm helps regulate their nervous system)
- Name feelings ("I wonder if that felt frustrating?")
- Offer connection before correction (focus on helping them feel safe first)
- Repair after tricky moments ("That was hard earlier, wasn't it?")



Summer activities ideas

Low-pressure, connection based:

- Walks
- Baking
- Film nights
- Drawing or crafts

Regulating Activities:

- Swimming
- Bike rides
- Water play
- Time outdoors

Don'ts:

- Too many plans in one day
- Busy, noisy environments
- Lots of new experiences at once



Heat, sleep and regulation

Hot weather can affect sleep, mood and behaviour more than we realise. When the body feels uncomfortable (too hot, tired, dehydrated), it's much harder for children to manage big feelings.

Things that can help:

- Encourage regular drinks (of water or cordial)
- Keep bedtime routines consistent (even if sleep is harder)
- Offer quiet, cool spaces
- Be aware of tiredness and irritability

Sometimes what looks like challenging behaviour is actually:

- tiredness
- dehydration
- overwhelm



Looking after Yourself

Summer can be pretty intense and full on, and supporting children through big feelings can be hard, even when things are going well.

Remember not to put too much pressure on yourself; you don't need to fill every day with activities or get everything right.

What looking after yourself can look like:

- Taking a few minutes to sit down with a cup of tea
- Getting some fresh air on your own (even 2 minutes)
- Letting some days be slower and simpler

Don't forget, if things feel a bit difficult or overwhelming for you, there are plenty of support options out there for you to lean on. whether it is your Supervising Social Worker, other foster parents or your wider support system. You don't have to do it alone!

