

Foster Parents Strengths Guide



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1. How does the Strengths Guide help you?

As a foster parent, you play multiple roles. You are a caregiver, mentor, role model, and source of stability and love to your foster children. Fostering is a journey that requires continuous support, guidance, and empowerment. The Strengths Guide helps you identify your strengths and provides resources for your fostering journey.

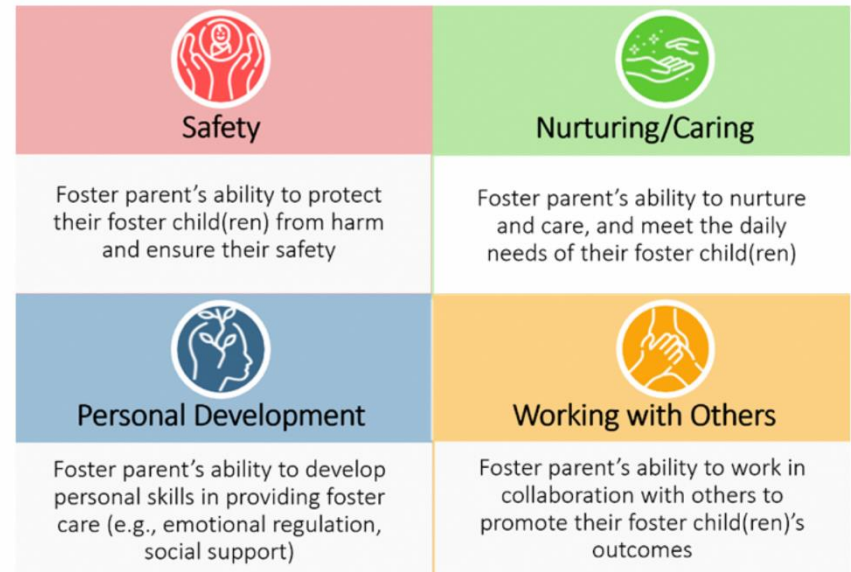


2. What does the Strengths Guide cover?

Strengths in the Guide are clustered under four domains.

The four domains represent the areas of development that are essential for the journey of care you are embarking on as a foster parent. Your Foster Care Workers will work with you to review the different strengths under each domain. They will support you in identifying additional resources and training to help you enhance your strengths.

Ultimately, the Strengths Guide aims to help foster parents provide better care for your foster children.



Domain: Safety
1. Violence-Free Home Environment
a. Understands the potential impact of violence, unresolved conflict and trauma on foster children’s development and that healing takes time
b. Understands how the relationship with your spouse and household members can impact your care of foster children
c. Able to provide a home environment free of violence and frequent conflict through the use of effective conflict management strategies
d. [If caring for foster children with higher needs] Able to provide adequate supervision for foster children
2. OHC Legislation and policies
a. Understands the relevant legislation, policies and procedures relating to the rights of foster children
b. Understands procedures for foster children to access support and professional advice where appropriate
3. Confidentiality
a. Understands the importance of confidentiality and able to respect the privacy of foster children and their birth families
4. Impact of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development
a. Able to identify signs and indicators of possible abuse and/or neglect and able to respond appropriately
b. Has confidence in effectively managing unsafe behaviours by foster children

Domain: Nurturing/Caring
1. Meeting Foster Children’s Medical, Developmental and Educational Needs
a. Able to meet foster children’s emerging medical, developmental and educational needs as s/he grows older
b. [If caring for foster children with higher needs] Able to meet foster children’s higher needs in relation to their diagnosis and/or emotional and behavioural needs
c. [If caring for foster children with higher needs] Has advanced knowledge and understanding of specific disabilities, mental health conditions and/or the impact of trauma on children
2. Cultural Respect
a. Demonstrates respect and understanding for foster children’s ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background
3. Nurturing Care
a. Understands the importance of providing nurturing care equitably to all children under your care

Domain: Nurturing/Caring
b. Able to empathise with foster children and his/her circumstances
c. [If caring for foster children with higher needs] Demonstrates acceptance of foster children’s diagnosis, emotional/behavioural challenges, experiences of trauma and/or higher needs
d. Provides nurturing care that is characterised by warmth and playfulness
4. Positive Behaviour Management Strategies
a. Understands the need to provide a safe and stable home environment with appropriate discipline (e.g., no physical or corporal punishment)
b. Understands how separation and loss may impact foster children’s behaviour and how these can be overcome with nurturing care
c. Demonstrates positive behaviour management strategies for challenging behaviours
5. Secure Bond with Foster Children
a. Understands the importance of a secure bond ¹ for foster children’s development
b. Able to develop a secure bond with foster children
c. Support foster children’s connections with others
6. Development of Foster Children’s Identity
a. Understands the importance of disclosing to foster children that they are a foster child
b. Able to encourage and support foster children to take age-appropriate risks and be more independent
Domain: Personal Development
1. Expectations & Understanding About Fostering
a. Has reasonable expectations about what fostering involves and requires, and about foster children in care
b. Understands the potential impact of fostering on personal and familial well-being
c. Demonstrates reflective abilities through your fostering journey
2. Social Support
a. Able to create and sustain a network of supportive contacts as a foster family

¹ A bond focuses on the caregiver's relationship with a child while attachment focuses on a child's relationship with their caregiver. Attachment relationships generally develop over the course of years while bonds can develop in a shorter timeframe. Because fostering can be short-term and focuses more on your ability as a Foster Parent to establish a good relationship with the child, we should therefore emphasise the bond between you and the child.

Domain: Personal Development
3. Stress Management & Emotional Regulation
a. Has a wide range of effective coping strategies that you and other household members can employ to manage different stressors, and is able to regulate own emotions well
4. Mental Wellbeing
a. Understands the impact of trauma and grief on your development, functioning and care of foster children
b. Your trauma and grief have been constructively addressed, and that adversity has prompted reflection, learning and growth in you
Domain: Working with Others
1. Effective Partnership with Foster Children’s Care Team
a. Understands and agrees with MSF's principles of fostering
b. Able to inform and collaborate with foster care worker and other professionals involved on foster children’s behalf to make sure their needs are met
c. Your household members are supportive of fostering and willing to work with foster children’s care team for effective partnership
2. Commitment to Ongoing Learning
a. Able to reflect on current strengths, attitudes and knowledge and integrate new knowledge into your care of foster children
b. Is open to suggestions from professionals
3. Working with Foster Children’s Birth Family
a. Understands the importance of foster children having contact with their birth family or other significant persons
b. Shows empathy towards foster children’s birth family
c. Demonstrates willingness to facilitate foster children’s access with their birth family, home leave and reintegration with foster children’s birth family per the care plan



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