

Between Families

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Foster Family Matters Reasonable Expectations of Foster Kids

When a kid comes into your home and you are suddenly in charge of helping to shape his life, it is very easy to get caught up in the moment. You want to do great things for them and with them. You want significant changes to appear before your eyes.

If you are too impatient, this unfortunately can mean you also have unrealistic expectations of that child. **DON'T GET ME WRONG - I DO NOT BELIEVE IN GIVING KIDS A FREE RIDE.** I do believe in making them responsible for all their actions and certainly the resulting consequences, but do keep in mind what has happened to them recently.

Before they reached your home, they were taken out of theirs. Most times, they were not given a choice if they wanted to stay or not, just told they must go. They are going to live with strangers (hopefully you won't be that for long, but you are now). They are going to need to sleep and eat with people they don't know.

The house is strange, the rules are different, even the food may be different.

We're talking significant changes in their lifestyle.

These kids lost all control of what happens to them. They may have very little say in what they do or don't do. Suddenly everyone is making decisions for them. Up to this point, they may have made their own decisions or

maybe no one cared enough to make any decisions. No matter how you slice it, you may be the bad guy and cannot expect them to immediately warm up to you, much less work the program you have in mind for them. No matter how many heart-to-hearts, or home-baked brownies, this is going to take time.

"Your first few days, possibly weeks, need to be used to get to know each other and gain trust. They won't work with you or for you until they trust you."

Often, kids are not given enough adjustment time. The foster parents give up too soon if they see no promising signs or results in a very short time. Foster parenting is about staying in there for the long haul. It teaches one patience, endurance, and what I refer to as stick-to-it-ive-ness. Remember, don't ever give up on these kids. That's often what the parents did and now their children live with you. Think of the honor of being the only adult in their lives who ever stuck it out. The only person they could take at their word and count on.



When starting to work with these kids, remember where they came from. They may never have had to do chores. Saying grace at the table may scare them. Doing homework before they receive nasty demands may be foreign to them. We had one kid whose mom loved him so much she would not make him do homework. She believed he should just play. Maybe these kids are not well versed on hygiene and good personal habits. Manners may mean nothing to them.

Keeping your expectations reasonable may mean learning to choose your battles. We always started with the tough ones. For example, most of our kids had chemical problems of one sort or another. We worked on



that issue rather than worried about whether their room was clean or not. We always prioritized. We did not let go of trying to accomplish other goals with that child. Instead, we worked on those things most important. Years ago, we even

allowed our almost grown boys to smoke; that issue has been settled for foster parents now. At the time our thinking was that "I really need to keep him from abusing drugs or shooting up." Yes, smoking is not good for your health, but it is was of very little concern if he overdosed and died.

I have known foster parents to do the white glove test to check rooms. Personally, I find that ridiculous.

"Our house ran on, "Clean enough to be healthy, dirty enough to be happy."

Sometimes even that was a challenge when the house was filled with 8 oversized boys.

Most kids, once they connect, want to please you. If they don't connect, the battle is more difficult and will require more time. Even when they wish to please you, they may not know how. Remember the mom who thought homework was not something her child had to do? The kids we get come from anything

but traditional situations. The relationships in some of their families are so confused with roles being muddled and boundaries blurred that it is difficult to even understand your foster family. They don't even recognize the family concept.

Expecting these kids to come from losing their parent, siblings, home, and all their important stuff, and to immediately fit right in and "get it" is too much. To expect perfection when their abilities are too few is hopeless. If you think they will be perfect kids in two weeks just because they live in your house, you are lying to yourself. It took some of them 15 years or more to get this messed up, it will not change overnight, no matter how wonderful you are or what you do.

Sit back. Take a deep breath. Realize this may be the challenge of a lifetime. Accept the fact that you can do it. Ask for guidance from a higher power and recognize the fact that you are human. And so is this kid.

**Give him what he needs most
- like love, attention, guidance, patience,
and a chance to succeed.**

Reserve the bad stuff- like judgment, impatience, intolerance, and anger. Adjust your expectations and you will both be happier. Good Luck and God bless you for fostering.

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Credits: Jo Ann Wentzel

<http://library.adoption.com/articles/reasonable-expectations-of-foster-kids.html>



Care Provider of the Month

Joshua and Rachel Hamleton

Joshua and Rachel Hamleton became licensed in November of 2013. They took in 2 girls; ages 11 and five in December. The five year old is a selective mute and still does not speak to them; however, her behaviors and her ability to care for herself have improved greatly since being in their home. She no longer throws tantrums on a daily basis, now feeds herself, and uses the toilet. She has done wonders in daycare and is interacting with the other children.

The Hamleton's have done an extremely good job with the children and they are patient and understanding. They celebrated their one month mark (of placement with the girls) by having a day at the park with treats. They truly feel blessed to have the children in their home. They are wonderful foster parents and have proven they truly care about the children, taking on a challenge with not knowing what to expect resulting in positive outcomes. Thank you Joshua and Rachel for doing such a great job and for being TFI foster parents!

Recruitment Moment Family Traditions

Happy Anniversary

1 year

Michael & Cyndi Antoni

Clint & Cheryl

Boyce/Lakin

Jacque Bretton

Jeffery & Alisa Brown

Gary & Margaret Dulek

Ricky Jr. & Amalie Greeve

Chase & Krysta

Hobart/Lane

Wade & Megan Housh

Joel & Rachel Jantz

Jill Koertner

Terry & Sue Morrison

Betty Pickens

Brian & Denise Rokey

Ross & Korena Scheible

Sydney & Melody Shaw

Michael & Marti Shields

Debara Thomas

Kiristie West

Ralph and Debbie

Zarazua

5 years

Howard & Kelly

Alumbaugh

William & Allison

Griesbach

Rex & Sheila Wilson

10 years

James "Doug" &

Dorothy Clopton

It is so important to have traditions. They are part of the glue that holds a family together. Traditions are beneficial in several ways. First, they give children (yes, even teens!) a sense of security. Children know that in an uncertain world, some things stay the same. Lasting memories are formed and our children may continue the customs in their own homes in the future. Here are some ideas that are easy and have worked over the years for many of our experienced families.

- Sunday dinner
- Friday night movie and pizza
- Game night
- Nightly devotions and prayers
- Celebrate holiday and birthdays
- Vacations and camping
- Anniversary dates

TFI Recruitment Incentive Reminder

For every family you refer that becomes a licensed or certified home you will receive a \$500 incentive payment.

This is just our way of saying "Thanks" for everything you do as a TFI Foster Family. Good luck and Happy Recruiting!

After hour emergencies, please call 1(877)921-4114.

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training, go to: <http://childally.org/train/>

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Foster Family Living: Ways to Help Children Succeed in School

Success in school can be a powerful factor in a child's self-view and help to shape their beliefs about their abilities and future. As a foster parent of children from many differing backgrounds, experiences and abilities, there are things you can do to help each child find successes in school. Here are a few examples:

1. Meet with the child's teacher: Whenever possible, it is highly encouraged and will help the teacher understand the youth and the teacher's expectations. This partnership can set a solid footing for the child to experience caring adults cooperating for their success. So don't just wait for those parent-teacher conferences but get engaged early.

2. Establish consistent communication: Don't wait to hear how the child is doing both related to grades and behavior. Most schools and teacher respond quickly to emails or phone calls and can provide you with great opportunities to praise a child by knowing the specifics of what they are improving on.

3. Help evaluate the needs: Often children coming into foster care have had inconsistent or inadequate supports for school success. At times, this can be overcome just by the connections, communication and supports you provide. There may also be a need for more supports. When you see those needs arise, be an advocate for the child by engaging your Foster Care Worker to assist you in next steps to get the help needed.

4. Homework- it is for Home: Establish ground rules for when, where and how homework are to be done. By providing structure, you are removing stress for the child when it comes to homework. They

will understand the when and where of homework being done. And how you will be there to support them on getting it done. This is a wonderful safety net for children to experience and achieve success. Plus, you get the opportunity to again praise them for what they accomplish. Because even if they need your help to finish the work, they deserve praise for the effort.

“Always remember that success can look different for everyone.”

Lastly, always remember that success can look different for everyone. Evaluating it for each child is part of your role as a foster parent. So while getting a C-on a test may not sound great to you at first, perhaps it is a major stride forward to the child. Providing that praise for success and support to continue to improve will make a difference.

