Between Families Training

How to Support Your Foster Childs Culture When it’s Different From Yours

January 2023

**Challenges Foster Parents Face When Fostering A Child From Another Culture**

Foster parenting is hard work even if the child you’re fostering has the same cultural background as you. If you’re welcoming a child into your home from a different culture, there’s a whole additional set of challenges to overcome.

Here are a few of the most prominent challenges to consider: **Cultural Biases:**We all have cultural biases. We’ve developed them as we go about living our lives in our specific context. They influence how we see the world and the way people act in it. The trouble with biases is that we don’t notice them; they’re automatically applied to every situation we walk into. It’s essential that as a foster parent, you take some time to explore what cultural biases you have and develop a plan to counteract them so that you can best care for your foster child. **Lack of Knowledge:**At the beginning of your journey with a new foster child, there’s going to be a steep learning curve for you to get up to speed about a child’s culture, the food they eat, the music they listen to, the things they do for fun, and so much more. Some of this learning can be accomplished via self-education and reading, but often the most effective approach will be talking to the child, if they are old enough, or with the child’s biological parent, if that is possible. **Language Barriers:**Challenges stemming from cultural differences are multiplied when you’re also contending with a language barrier. To have a child placed with you, you must have a working knowledge of their language, but that doesn’t mean that all communication will be straightforward. We recommend working with a child placement agency (CPA) to identify translation and support services as needed. Keep in mind that placing a child with a family that doesn’t speak the child’s language is a last resort and does not happen frequently.

You know that supporting your foster child’s culture is important. You also know that there are challenges ahead. Here are five ways you can more practically support your child as a transracial foster parent.

**1)Talk to the Child’s Parents:** A child’s parents will know the most about the things that make their child comfortable and loved. If possible, take some time to talk to them, listen to what they have to say, and consider how to adjust your approach based on what you learned in the conversation.

**2) Have an Honest Conversation:** As we all know, parenting involves a steady dose of listening and humility. If your foster child is old enough, it might be a good idea to sit down and have an honest conversation about what’s different at your home from their culture. This conversation may yield some simple things that you can change that will help your child feel more comfortable and at home.

**3) Research Traditions & Holidays:** Take some time to do some research on the [traditions and holidays](https://foster.wachildrenandfamilies.org/blog/the-importance-of-keeping-a-foster-childs-traditions) of your foster child’s cultures. If you can in some way replicate the experience around each of these things that they had with their family or community, you will provide a source of comfort and familiarity to them in the unfamiliar world they are now living in.

**4) Make Sure Your Foster Child Is Able to Spend Time with People Like Them:** One of the best ways to provide stability to your foster child is to make sure they can spend time with people like them. This might mean researching school districts, after-school activities, and more that will allow them to interact with children and adults like them. This means, in a practical way, that you need to be comfortable with being in the minority for the sake of your foster child.  For example, if you are fostering a Native American child, you might consider researching ceremonies and activities held by their tribe so that they can attend and participate in them.

**5) Check Your Biases:** As we talked about above, we all have cultural biases that impact how we look at the world. As you go through your day, try to question those biases at each turn. Ask yourself: “How is my cultural background influencing how I’m approaching this situation?” Awareness is the first step to understanding.

**6) Get Outside Help:** Remember that you don’t have to be in this alone. The child placement agency likely either has resources in-house that can help you or knows of other qualified organizations that can help. Reach out to them early and often. They’re committed to help because they’re just as committed as you are to the growth of the foster child in your care.

[How To Support Your Foster Child’s Culture When It’s Different From Yours (wachildrenandfamilies.org)](https://foster.wachildrenandfamilies.org/blog/how-to-support-your-foster-childs-culture-when-its-different-from-yours#:~:text=How%20To%20Get%20Started%201%201%29%20Talk%20to,Biases%20...%206%206%29%20Get%20Outside%20Help%20)

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**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN TO YOUR ASSIGNED FOSTER CARE WORKER FOR ½ HOUR CREDIT**

**Printed Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. **List** the 3 prominent challenges to consider when fostering a child from a different culture
2. 2) 3)
3. **Fill in the blank:** The trouble with is that we don’t notice them; they’re applied to every situation we walk into.
4. **True or False:** The most effective approach to learning about the child’s culture is to talk to the child, if they are old enough or with the child’s biological parents
5. **Multiple choice:** Challenges stemming from cultural differences are multiplied when you’re also contending with a
6. **Learning difficulty**
7. **Language barrier**
8. **Mental health diagnosis**
9. **None of the above**
10. **True or False:** A child’s parents will the know most about the things that make them feel comfortable and loved
11. Fill in the blank: Having an honest conversation with a child about what is different at your home form their culture will help a child feel more and at
12. **True or False:** Replicating the experience of a child’s traditions and holidays **won’t** provide them with a source of comfort and familiarity
13. **(Free Text)** List 3 examples of how you can that you can help children spend time with people who are like them
14. **2) 3)**

1. **True or False:** Awareness is the first step to understanding biases
2. **(Free text)** Why is it important to get outside help when fostering a child from another culture?

**ANSWERS**

**1. List** the 3 prominent challenges to consider when fostering a child from a different culture

1. Cultural Biases 2) Lack of Knowledge 3) Language Barriers
2. **Fill in the blank:** The trouble with biases is that we don’t notice them; they’re automatically applied to every situation we walk into.
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