

## HONORING, UNITING, AND CELEBRATING FAMILIES

### THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS IN FOSTER CARE

#### A Foster Parent's Story

There *is* no training on sacred suffering.

As soon as you say “yes,” you forfeit your right to ever see life the same way again. You cannot unsee the trauma and the stories and real-life wounds. You cannot un-feel the bone marrow-deep love that you have for a child. And you cannot escape the real and true uncertainty of what will ever become of them. Or you for that matter. Everything changes.

But.

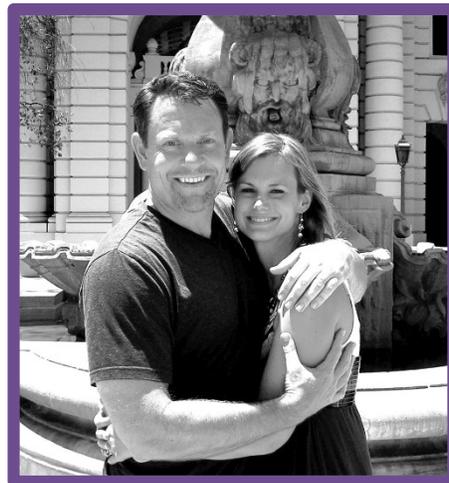
I wouldn't go back even if I could.

This particular child of mine was my daughter in every sense of the word from the very beginning. I held her for the first time when she was 4 months old to the day. I kissed her belly and watched her breathe in her sleep. She was my daughter in every sense...except for legally, of course. It was a strange place to stand, one foot on either side of a dividing line. One heart—split—as if it couldn't reside in the same chest. I couldn't reconcile wanting to keep this child while, at the same time, loving the birth mother and wanting her to succeed. What to do? What to think? What to pray?

Foster care is not for wimps.

*These* are the things that happen in foster care. The things you don't see on the surface. It's the nearly impossible grocery store trips and seeing the children on birth parents' Facebook pages dressed in clothes that you bought and posed in front of your furniture. It's the true love for children and for their flawed parents. It's the appointments and the wondering if the children will ever recover from their rocky starts. It's walking the aisles, doing the things and kissing the necks with uncertainty and fear and great, great love. This is the foster care you might not know about. It's brutal. It's brokenness. It's beautiful. All of it, because it needs to be done and needs to be done well.

To learn more about becoming a foster parent and/or how to join the National Foster Parent's Association, visit <http://nfpaonline.org/foster>.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
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