

Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents

Health, Happiness, and Healing

Being a foster parent is difficult. The classes and social workers try to prepare you for the difficulties, but there is not a written manual or set of instructions that works for every kid. Nevertheless, sometimes we forget that there is another side to every placement. Almost every kid that enters the system has a family member somewhere that is working hard to make a way for that child to be with them. It could be a parent who is striving to make better life choices or improve their living situation, or an aunt or uncle or grandma who is trying to navigate an unfamiliar system to find a way to care for their loved one. In any case, my family has discovered that part of finding healing for that child includes helping to mend and promote healthy relationships with family members.



At first glance, it might seem that a resource parent is at odds with a child's family members. However, we soon realized that we all wanted the same thing: health and happiness for the child. Having the perspective that we were collaborating with the family and the social workers to bring healing and happiness to the child made a huge difference in our interactions. We have grown to love and respect the family members of the kids in our care. We spend time having positive conversations about the children and making positive plans for the future. A little kindness and honesty go a long way. This gave us a voice to speak healing words to not only the children we cared for but also their families and loved ones and made the transition of reunification so much easier. A deep level of trust was built between our family and the kin of the children in our care, and that made cooperation toward our goal of health and happiness attainable. It took time (and texts and phone calls and conversations and lots of grace), but it was worth all the effort to see a seamless transition into a healthier family situation for our kids. It was hard, but it was worth it!



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