

*Strengthening Minds. Uplifting Families.*

## Healing Happens Through Relationships



My professional background in the child welfare system has greatly impacted my view of what children need while they're in foster care. I've filled lots of different roles within the child welfare system over the past 13 years. I currently work as a licensed therapist in Texas, specializing in complex developmental trauma, and I've also recently become a foster parent. I think all my experience led me to this point in my life of understanding trauma and how it impacts children, and how to heal from trauma. I've seen the impact of what trauma can do on countless families and children. I've also seen how families can reconnect and heal from trauma. All of that has helped me recognize

what is important to children and healing: Giving them space, giving them patience, giving them understanding and compassion even when they are struggling. They don't know things can be different because this is what they've grown up with. It's not their fault. We need to be the adult in that situation, stay calm, and meet the need that they are expressing—not ignoring the behavior, but understanding what drives that behavior.

This is one of the things I remind myself of frequently: "Okay, they're yelling, they're screaming, they're hitting. What is the need behind that and how do I meet that for them? How do I explain to the parents what need they're expressing, and how do I help the parent meet the need during their visit?" If you're a caregiver new to learning about trauma or the child welfare system, or the impact that trauma has on children and families, it can be really overwhelming. It can feel like there's too much to know and too much to learn. But what I know about trauma and healing is that we heal through relationships. If you are good at connecting with people and empathizing with them, you are going to do fine. If you can offer that to the children and families, you're well-prepared already.

*Samantha is a foster caregiver in Texas and a member of the Compassionate Caregivers Advisory Group. [Compassionate Caregivers](#) is multimedia campaign that seeks to promote engagement and collaboration between foster/kinship/adoptive parents and the child's biological family. Compassionate Caregivers is a part of the [Texas Permanency Outcomes Project](#).*



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

