

Advice for Foster Parents

(Names of the authors have been changed to protect identities)

Sammy, age unknown

If you have been through rough times try to share them with your foster children. They might have been through it too. They might have done amazing things that you haven't. You would be amazed at all the silly things a little child could say. When a foster child or any child is crying don't yell at him or her. It will just make them hate you. If you just sit down with them and take very little time to talk to them you won't find out as much as you would by sitting down and talking to them for a pretty good while.

There are times I just lay in bed and think why am I here. Was it because I was bad? But then I think for a while and realize it isn't the child's fault. It is what they have been taught or how they have been treated. The more you love a child and treat them with care and listen to them, the more they will like you. If their behavior is different one day something went wrong for them. Take care of us as much as you can, give us love, and a good home.

I'm sure if you were to sit down and talk to a child, any child, they could tell you amazing things. Life between you and a child may be bad at times, but try not to let that happen very often. When a child's grades are fading badly something has gone wrong. Children have different teaching reactions to different things. Some of these things you may already know but some you don't. That is why I'm saying it now so they won't mess up.

Don't be mean to us because we may have been through things you haven't. If you have a biological child that lives with you, talk to them sometimes too. They may have things to tell you too. I'm not just speaking for the foster children. I am speaking for the biological children too. Children don't get to speak out loud very often that is why I'm doing it for them. Little kids can have their feelings hurt very easily. If you yell at them, they may think they have done something very bad. I know that from past experience that when a child wants to make you mad they won't quite stop until they make it happen.

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Helen J. Age 18

There's not much we can say to help you understand us. There's not much we can say to make things right. But there are some things we can say that make sense.

We don't ask you to believe us when we tell you something. We don't ask you to trust us at any point. We don't even ask you to love us. All we ask of you is to believe in us.

Believing in us helps us to have faith and confidence in ourselves. We need help believing in ourselves.

Not all of us here on our own free will. We were placed with you because we need love, support, comfort, and guidance. There are some of us who asked to be placed where we

are. We have been through hard times just as you have. Everybody, at some point, leads a rough life.

If you have had a rough life, then you more than likely know how it feels to be us. But if you have not been where we have, don't say you know what it's like, because you don't. Don't expect a lot of us. We will do the best we can. Help us to make the right decisions on our own. And, when you tell us something and you don't think we are listening, don't yell at us or get angry. When you think we're not listening or paying attention, that's when we listen the most and the best. And when you are not sure how to handle a situation, think about it first, then take action. Don't be afraid to speak your mind. We are who we are.

Kurt Lewin once said, "If you want truly to understand something, try to change it." You don't have to try and understand that now, think about it and it will hit you later. Don't turn your back on us. Believe it or not, we need you. We may not always show it, but it's there, the words are sometimes best left unspoken. You may never really understand us. But we have truly understood you. Please believe in us. We can make it together.

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