

Notes From A Foster Mother



"How can you do foster care? Simply love them and then let them go back to their birth families? I could never do that!"

As a foster mom, I hear this all the time by well meaning people. Others seem to think we must be made of tougher material than the average parent. Well, it may surprise you that we are ordinary people just like you. Some of us have jobs outside the home. Most of us are married. Most of us have children of our own. But there are some single parent homes too. And like all people who have grown close to and loved another child, it is difficult to say goodbye. It is difficult for us to let go of someone who we have seen grow and change while they were living in our home.

When a social worker brings a new child into our home, there are some shaky times. Things are a little hectic as you adjust to this new arrival, and they adjust to you. It's important to be flexible, to slowly introduce the ways of your home. Before you know it, life has settled down into a comfortable routine and the awkwardness of the first few days are over. Then the child's worker calls and tells you when your foster child is going home. In between those times, there have been days of frustrations, days of joy, times of trouble, and times of great pride for the growth your foster child has taken. Love them? Oh, yes we do, with all our hearts. We have taken a stranger into our home and loved him/her as our own, always knowing that he/she belongs with the birth parents. One must always remember that to them, no matter what the circumstances that surround their placement in your home, the birth parents love is a true and natural bond one should never try to break.

My children have the normal reactions any child would have if someone new entered their territory. They want to be friends and big sister and brother to the foster child. They have the same sibling rivalry that a normal family has. They complain once in a while that the "quantity" time isn't divided evenly. But when the foster child leaves, they are the first to say, *"When do we get another one?"*



Love them and let them go? Yes, it sounds hard, and it is. Any maybe it's not for everyone, but does it take a special kind of superhuman quality? I don't think so. Everyone, if they look deep enough will see that they too can find room to love another child for a little while. What are the rewards? The smiles, the hugs, seeing the growth in your own children as they share and care for someone who has less than them. But one of the biggest rewards for me is in knowing that it took so little of my time to reach out, love, care and make it better for a child – our greatest asset on earth.

So amongst the tears and the worries of letting go to an uncertain future, is love and strength in knowing that we have touched a life and made it better by just being here.