Encouraging Foster Parents After A Disruption

Disruptions

A “disruption” is the premature ending of a placement resulting in the removal of a child(ren) from the foster

home. A disruption can be initiated by Child Services, the court, the foster parents, or sometimes, even the child.

The word “disruption” causes feelings of fear and grief and can sometimes even be an embarrassment to families

who have had to disrupt – even when everyone involved agreed the disruption was needed and could not be

helped. No one wants to feel as though they have failed, and some foster families see a disruption as a failure.

However, when a family does need to disrupt, here are some things an Advocate can do to help the family

process their experience:

• Pray for and with the family.

• Continue to surround them with the Care Team services needed to encourage them through the

disruption and transition into their next placement.

• Allow them to share with you and others about what happened. What are their frustrations? What is

the hardest part about it? What is embarrassing to them?

• Offer to connect them with another foster family who has experienced a disruption.

• Offer sound advice and Scripture, as applicable. Be sensitive and encourage them with the truth

that God is sovereign over all things and He is working on a much bigger plan than they could ever

imagine. Taking care to avoid clichés or being overly “churchy,” simply be present for them. Remind

them that the support and care you and their Care Team have offered will continue.

• Give them as long as they need before they decide on their next step.

To learn more about how to guide and support a family through a disruption, please see the tutorial, Walking A Family Through A Disruption, available on the FFM Portal.

Foster Families Who Struggle with Court/CS Decisions

It is very common that we do not agree with the decisions of the court. We feel children go home too early and sometimes the birth family is not ready to receive them well. Sometimes the plan decided by the court continues to be in favor of birth parents who are not working on their court-appointed case plans. PRAYER is the best hope that we can offer these foster families. Hold a prayer meeting before the court date. With the Care Team, set up a 12-24 hour prayer vigil around the court date and have everyone claim an hour to pray. Or get the entire church body involved by encouraging 15-minute interval sign-ups for prayer. We often have no way to combat these confusing decisions, but we can pray, pray, pray!

Crisis: An Advocate’s Responsibility to a Foster Family in Crisis

All foster families will struggle with the dynamics of foster care. It is a given. Common struggles are well

described in this article: http://www.confessionsofaparent.com/6-struggles-every-foster-parent-faces

**1. The struggle to be heard.**

Have you ever had a conversation with someone and it became clear they had tuned out or their

attention was now on something else? We felt this way many times over the years. Trying to be heard

on everything from “This child has some deep wounds and we need direction” to “I am exhausted,

and sad, and I need some help.” In the seemingly never-ending vortex of foster parenting, it’s easy to

feel like you’re standing in the middle of the New York Stock Exchange trying to be heard. The most

important thing we did was to develop a support system of understanding people who were separate

from the system. I’ll explain the importance of this in #6.

**2. The struggle to let go.**

As it is with every warm-blooded human being, once a child is placed in your home, it becomes very

difficult to let go of them if or when they return to their birth parents. You love them, so you become

attached. It is inevitable. And, that’s normal. We faced this a lot. The way we learned to release was to

envision the healing that we hoped and prayed would happen if the child returned to their home. We

kept our minds focused on the positive, and equated it to how we would feel if we were in the birth

parents situation. If we had had our children removed, we would commit to doing everything we could

to improve our situation and get them back into our care.

**3. The struggle to keep going.**

How many days did we feel like quitting? Many! In fact, they often outnumbered the good days.

Sometimes our frustration came from difficult case managers, and other times, it was an interaction

with a birth parent or the decision a judge made. We know what it’s like to want to throw your hands

up and quit. But remember why you got into this in the first place. Take heart in knowing that you are

making an impact in the children’s lives with whom you’ve been entrusted.

**4. The struggle to speak up.**

Early on, mostly because we were in our 20’s, we couldn’t find our voice. We even wondered if we had one

to begin with. We did. And when we found it, we made up a lot of ground. We started making phone calls

and speaking directly to our case managers about the issues at hand. My wife had the majority of these

conversations. We came at it from the perspective of firsthand experience. We were living with the child.

We saw their deep emotions spill out. We started speaking up and speaking out! It starts by recognizing

that you have been placed in a position of great care and that your opinion is valuable. I recommend

picking up the book Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler.

**5. The struggle to stay positive.**

There is so much negativity surrounding foster care at times. Between frustrations with the system,

birth parents and even the children, at times, it exists. We ran into this many times. As hard as it was to

do, we had to stay positive, especially in front of the children. We had to keep in mind that they came

from very difficult places and were struggling to comprehend what was going on. For their sake, as

well as yours, you have to remain positive. Find a close-knit group to dump your truck, but choose to

be positive in every other situation, especially in front of the children.

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