Grief and Loss Coping Strategies for Foster Parents

FACT Sheet from Washington State Department of Social & Health Services

You may experience grief when a foster child leaves your home. Certainly, parents are grieving when their children have been placed in out of home care. Children being placed in your home are experiencing grief related to their removal, changing schools, losing contact with friends, worrying about their parents, missing their pets—the list is a long one!

Grief is a natural response to a loss. It is the emotional suffering that you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. Any loss can cause grief including:

- The end of a relationship
- Loss of health
- Changes in a role or job
- Loss of financial stability
- A miscarriage or still birth
- Death of a family member
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a cherished dream
- A loved one’s serious illness
- Loss of a friendship
- Loss of safety after a traumatic experience

SCHOLARSHIP CORNER

GUARDIAN SCHOLARSHIP: The Guardian Scholarship provides up to $8000 per year for tuition as well as mentoring/tutoring, stipend for textbooks, a place to stay over holidays, and a number of other supports. The due date is March 1st - the website which includes the scholarship criteria & application is below. Youth may apply for this scholarship in addition to the ETV & All Iowa Opportunity Foster Care Grant. http://www.guardianscholarsfoundation.org/

FAFSA AND ETV/ALL IOWA OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP: All youth in foster care/relative or suitable other placements should be completing their applications for FAFSA and ETV/All Iowa Opportunity Scholarship now if they plan to attend college this fall 2020-Spring 2021. The AIOS closes March 1st.
https://www.iowacollegeaid.gov/
https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

LAST DOLLAR SCHOLAR: One that came out just this year, that is a great opportunity for all youth (not just youth who have been in foster care) is the Last Dollar Scholar, which covers the cost of education (Certificate and 2yr.programs) for High Need Career areas in Iowa.
https://www.iowacollegeaid.gov/lastdollar
https://www.futurereadyiowa.gov/
Learning to Let Go:
Coping with Reunification Anxiety

From the Coalition for Children Youth Families and Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

From the moment a child enters your home, the fear of reunification can also move in. How will you say goodbye? Will the child be returning to a safe and stable environment? How will the other kids in your care react when this child leaves?

The first goal of foster care is often reunification. And, while you may have known that this was the goal from the start, that doesn’t mean that, when the time comes to say goodbye, anxiety can’t happen. Reunification anxiety can happen to anyone, but understanding what to do in certain situations may help you cope with some of those feelings.

What is Reunification Anxiety?

Reunification anxiety is something that can be common for foster parents. Feelings of worry, nervousness, or unease about the child in your care returning to his birth parent(s) / home may enter your mind when you learn that the reunification is drawing near. You might also feel excited or apprehensive; happy or sad; heart-full or heartbroken. The feelings can be mixed and complicated. And, just as you may be feeling a complicated and heady mix of emotions, the child in your care and his birth parent(s) may also be feeling those same or very similar emotions.

During the time that the child has been in your care, his birth parents have been making several complicated and possibly difficult changes. They have been concentrating on all of the things that will make them stronger parents, that will allow them to learn and use new skills, and that will, ultimately, lead to the return of their child to their home. And now that their child will be returning home, they may be feeling anxious and fearful. They may be thinking about what is going to happen when the child returns. How will they manage and cope with the stress of day-to-day parenting? What if things don’t go perfectly or according to plan? The stakes are high and the fear of failure can be very daunting.

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