From a Foster Child’s Heart: What I Want You to Know

Posted on May 30, 2019 by Plummer Youth Promise

As a foster child, here’s what I’d like my foster parent to know.

Everything is new to me. When I first join your family, I need to learn so many new things. What time is breakfast and who prepares it? When can I watch TV? How will I get to school and who'll make sure I have the supplies I need to make a poster for social studies? The list goes on and on.

Things can feel overwhelming for me. Make a point of letting me know how things work in your house. Don’t assume I will figure out your routine on my own. It helps if you tell me that all questions are welcome and that you know it’s hard to get used to a new home.

I’m always watching. I’ve learned to watch the people around me very carefully. Even when I seem “tuned out,” I’m taking in a lot. I need to make sure I’m safe. Remember, I may’ve been hurt by people who were supposed to protect me. The good news is that I see when you’re taking good care of me. And, that makes me feel safer.

Routine is incredibly important for me. Even when I grip about it, I crave routine. I need to know when things happen and what’s expected of me. Knowing what my day will be like helps me feel more secure. If there’s going to be a change in routine (i.e. this weekend we’re going camping), please let me know in advance. Remember to tell me what the change will mean for me. Even “good” changes in routine can be stressful for me.

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Supporting Your LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents

Child Welfare Information Gateway 2013

This factsheet was written for foster parents to help them learn about LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) youth in the child welfare system, the unique risks they face, and the important role that foster parents can play in reducing those risks. The factsheet outlines specific actions that foster parents can take to create a welcoming home for all youth in their care and to promote youths' health and well-being in the community. Also included are links to many resources for more information and support. …

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Seven suggestions for a successful transracial adoption

Advice and considerations shared by adoptive parents and child welfare professionals

When planning to adopt, many people say that the child’s race or ethnicity does not matter.

Parents mean this in the best possible way. They mean that they could love a child unconditionally, regardless of whether they look like them or share their cultural heritage and traditions.

But race and culture do matter—especially to children who have already lost so much. Losing connections to their culture and racial heritage—or being raised in households where their importance is not acknowledged—can affect children throughout their lives.

Learning about and respecting a child’s culture—and finding ways to maintain their connections to it—are critical components to helping an adopted child thrive.

Adoptive families and child welfare professionals provide the following advice on transracial adoption.

Talk with your family and friends

When you are deciding whether transracial adoption is right for you, talk with your family about what becoming a multiracial family will mean. How will they respond to the changes it brings? Are your extended family members enthusiastic about your decision and ready to support you and your child? Do you live in a community that values racial and cultural diversity and is likely to be accepting of the child you bring into your family?

Find mentors and role models for your child

Because you are their parent, your child will turn to you for guidance in many areas. But there may be questions related to their race and culture that you cannot answer and problems you simply cannot understand. Involving adults in your child’s life who share their culture will give them valuable role models and allies.

Also, surround your child with positive images and stories of people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including their own.