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Subject: How to help your child say goodbye



Dear

Saying goodbye to a foster family, friends, teachers, and neighborhood can be very difficult for a child. They may have lived in that area and gone to school with their peers their entire lives. Helping them through the goodbye process will let them know its ok to be sad, and that you are there for them. The following are some ways you can help your child say goodbye.

Gather the pieces. Let your child take some of their past with them. You can do this by giving your child a disposable camera to take pictures of their foster home, their foster family, their school, teachers, friends, neighborhood, favorite park, etc. They should have pictures of any area or person that is special to them. You can then take these pictures and make a scrapbook with your child, and talk to them about what each place or person means to him/her. When you go to visit your child before placement, have them take you around to some of their special places. Bring a video camera and record your adventure so the child can go back and watch it later. Letting your child show you around will tell them that you are interested in their life and will cause them to open up a little more to you, and make them feel like they can share things with you. You can also give your child an address book that he/she may take to school with them to get their friend's phone numbers and e-mail addresses to keep in touch.

Maintain connections. Help your child maintain connections with the people in their life through grace or prayers, phone or email contact when appropriate, holiday cards, etc. This will let them know that its alright to miss their former foster family or close friends or relatives, and your support in maintaing these relationships when they're healthy and positive will show your child that you understand.

Talk. Adopted children, particularly older children, may have conflicting emotions of grief and happiness when they are placed with you. They may be grieving the loss of their birth parents or their foster parents, yet they are excited at being part of a forever family. These conflicting emotions may be confusing for him/her, so you need to let them know that it is ok to feel this way. Talk with your child's former foster family, CASA, or caseworker to get an idea of how they handled these emotions, and what fears and anxieties your child showed while in their care. Let your child talk about their sadness over their former life. Telling your child that you love him/her and you will help them through their loss and sadness will allow them to trust you and move forward.

Transition forward. Work with your child's current foster family and caseworker to let them know that it is ok to move in with your family. If a child hears their foster family say this, then it will make the transition easier. Your child is most likely attached to their foster family, and they do not want to do anything that would betray or hurt them. By hearing their foster family say that its ok for them to join your family, this will allow them to move forward. Create a Welcome Book for your child to help ease the transition, showing off your home, family, and their new life. You can also create a special day for your child that celebrates the day they became part of your family. One of my good friends is adopted, and his parents would celebrate a "gotcha day" with him- the day they "got" him. It can be very simple- make your child's favorite dinner and dessert, watch their favorite movie or play a game, and talk about the day they became part of your family.

For more information and ideas, check out *Adoptive Families'* article "[Helping Your Child Say Goodbye](#)".

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