

From: Scott Corcoran [scott@afamilyforeverchild.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2013 4:23 PM
To: scott@afamilyforeverchild.org
Subject: Perseverance and Dedication



Dear ,

Children in the foster care system need as many dedicated advocates to help them through the adoption process as possible. The children in foster care programs are used to instability. That can be one of many reasons why they are placed in these programs to begin with. Accepting a new family member into your home is a big step for you and for the child involved. It can be a wonderful experience to find that one person you have been waiting for! For some of these children, however, this is not the first time they have been accepted into someone's home. For some of these children, it may have happened many times, and with all the excitement involved, there is also disappointment. As a result, these children will test your boundaries to see how serious you are in taking care of them. When things get tough, they need to know that you will be there for them no matter what. They may have had families give up on them before, so it should not be the first option that you resort to. The following are some suggestions on how to work with your child and handle their challenging behaviors:

Don't give up- First and foremost, don't give up on your child. Don't let the boundary testing throw you off. It may be challenging, but the child needs to know that you will be there for them no matter what. By giving up on them, you will reaffirm what they have learned in their past experiences with families.

Break the cycle- If your placement started off well and then turns sour, this is your child testing you to find out if you will love them no matter what. This is your chance to show them that you will, and to end the testing behaviors. Work with a professional therapist and your agency to find solutions that will result in your child learning to trust and build a relationship with you. Things will get better again; it will just take time and patience.

Be firm, but friendly- You will not earn your child's respect if you are not firm with them. You need to be consistent and follow through. Don't fall for any manipulative tricks- manipulative children know they can get you frustrated and they will be able to control you. Don't get angry and frustrated when a child wants you to; instead stay calm and in control, while remaining friendly. If they child came from an abusive home, they may be worried that they will be abused further. As their parent, you need to be able to lay down the rules in a firm and neutral fashion. It may be tempting when they first move in to let them get away with things, but how you respond to their behavior from the start will set the tone for the rest of your relationship.

Be realistic- Keep in mind that these children are coming from different backgrounds and family situations where certain behaviors may have been modeled and considered acceptable. In addition, your child may have developmental delays that are hindering his/her ability to fully understand what you are asking of them. Just because your child is one age, doesn't mean they are that age developmentally. As a result you will need to tailor your directives to match what age they are functioning at cognitively.

Work as a team- Teamwork is absolutely vital in parenting. Make sure that you and your partner are on the same page when it comes to parenting styles, discipline and house rules. Your child will test both of you, so it's important that you both remain consistent and don't let yourselves turn on each other. Your child needs to know from both of you that he/she will not get away with anything. If you are a single parent, having a friend, therapist, or family member available to provide support and back up is important.

Unless your child is causing harm to themselves and/or you and others around you, consider adoption dissolution as a last resort. Use your resources and support network to help you work with your child on their behaviors. Sometimes a child just needs to know that he/she will not end up in foster care again.

Resources

You may find the following resources helpful:

Heather T. Forbes, LCSW: [Beyond Consequences](#)

Dr. Karyn Purvis: [Empowered to Connect](#)

Nora Sharp
Matching Assistance Coordinator
A Family for Every Child
nora.sharp@afamilyforeverychild.org

