

Dos and Don'ts

Fostering and Adoption

Parenting children from difficult backgrounds can be incredibly demanding. We asked adoptive parents, foster carers and kinship carers what helps, and what doesn't help. Here's what they would love you to know.

✓ DO

✓ **Do** talk to us and find out more. Every situation is different, and we'd love to help you understand our world.

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✓ **Do** take our lead in how to respond to certain behaviours. Responses such as 'time out' can be harmful to traumatised children. If in doubt – please ask!

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✓ **Do** show an interest in our children. Those who have been separated from extended birth families may really benefit from the caring involvement of an extra 'grandad' or 'aunt'.

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✓ **Do** offer specific practical support – providing meals when a new child arrives, helping with laundry, gardening or lifts, or sourcing new clothes or toys when a child joins our family at short notice.

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✓ **Do** understand that while our children's behaviour might seem challenging, they may be responding through the lens of past experience or trauma.

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✓ **Do** look out for kinship carers – grandparents and others caring for children with little or no official support, in the midst of very difficult family situations.

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✗ DON'T

✗ **Don't** ask personal questions – "Is their birth mum an addict?" or "Couldn't you have your 'own' children?"



✗ **Don't** look strangely if we are bottle feeding an older child or playing babyish games with them. They may have missed these experiences in their early lives, and we're helping the brain make connections that most children develop naturally.

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✗ **Don't** ask "Are they yours yet?" or "Are you going to adopt them?" That might not be the best outcome for the child.

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✗ **Don't** pressurise us into taking on lots of church ministry, but realise our commitment may vary depending on what's going on in the family. Caring for hurting children at home is our prime ministry.

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✓ DO

✓ **Do** be sensitive to the needs of looked after and adopted children at celebration times and special days such as Mothers' or Fathers' Day, or Christmas. They can be difficult times.

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✓ **Do** look beyond the 'naughty' behaviour – you will probably find a child who is frightened and overwhelmed.

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✓ **Do** think about whether you could help with babysitting or respite care (which may involve background checks or assessment).

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✓ **Do** support us if we are applying to adopt or foster. The process can be very challenging and feel like a rollercoaster of emotions. Please pray, be sensitive and offer support through this stage.

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✓ **Do** trust us that we know what we're doing! Parenting a traumatised child requires a different approach.



✗ DON'T

✗ **Don't** assume our children know how to behave in church, in a way that might be expected of those who've been attending with their parents for years.

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✗ **Don't** just refer in church to 'parents' or 'mums and dads'. Talking instead about 'parents and carers' or 'grown-ups' will include the carers or extended family who have children in their care.

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✗ **Don't** take photos of our children without permission, or post photos online. There may be safeguarding issues you aren't aware of.

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✗ **Don't** say, "All children are like that" or "Don't worry; he'll grow out of it". You may not appreciate the unique challenges we are facing, and this can sound very unsympathetic.

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✗ **Don't** say "I could never foster; I couldn't let them go". It sounds as if you're saying we're heartless, or don't love them. It does hurt when they leave, but we know it's for their best.

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✗ **Don't** ask if these are our 'real children'. They are all our children, whether birth children, adopted or fostered.

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✗ **Don't** tell our children how lucky they are to be with us. They didn't ask to leave their homes, siblings, extended family and neighbourhood and come into care, so please avoid telling them how they should feel.

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Find out more: www.cff.org.uk/family-life/parent-support

Produced for: www.homeforgood.org.uk

Care for the Family

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