



Family Links

Family Links and foster carers



Michael* took part in the Nurturing Programme for parents in 2006. He is a foster parent based in Northern England. At the time of writing this account his family were fostering Kate. This account is based on Michael's OCN log.

*All names have been changed.

Week One
I didn't want to attend the group, I was forced by the agency. I felt angry, the agency knew how challenging it would [be] for me with my dyslexia. I felt

frightened and panicked. Actually once I settled down and was made at ease I enjoyed it and it was useful.

Week 2

I'm not sure about how Time Out is going to work with Kate but I'm going to think about it and have a go later. I've never brought up girls, it's new for me and it feels scary at times because I'm out of my comfort zone. I had a go at *The Nurturing Game*. She enjoyed taking part, it began to break down barriers.

Week 3

'Rules' is a really emotive word, it feels negative and overpowering. Our foster child had a set of basic ways of behaving that were acceptable. We didn't sit her down and tell her what the rules were, we deal with them as we go along.

Week 4

I enjoyed the feedback from others, it gave me ideas. I liked interacting and getting to know people. The size of the group is good, we all get a chance to contribute in the circle. I had a go at giving choices around chores and cleaning up. She realised to take the choice [to] her own advantage, she was learning to take responsibility. I noticed less negative behaviour as a result.

Week 5

This session was very good as it took you back to your own childhood and made you remember how frustrating it was to have your feelings just brushed aside as if they did not matter. We have both always tried to encourage our children to deal [with] and talk about their feelings.

We have always tried to let our own children know how pleased and proud we are with them both and as long as they have tried their best at what they want to do and they are happy that is all that matters. This was very important as James was a fast learner and found school work easy while Kevin struggled all the way through school no matter how much he tried but he never gave up and we were all pleased with what he achieved.

As a child in a one parent family, life was hard. [There was] nothing to look forward to. [I] choose not to think about the past. I have found that the 'I' statements have been hard for me and after thinking

about it for a long time I have come to the conclusion that it stems from my childhood. I would always do any jobs around the house rather than cause an argument with my brothers and sister.

I am now making a point of using the 'I' statements and then taking a few minutes off just for me to sit in the garden or go for a walk, and to my surprise it is starting to work. I had a go at praising myself, thinking of what went well at the end of the day.

And the result was [a] good atmosphere at home, Kate settled down better in company. [Perhaps she] feels anxious if [she] doesn't get people's attention [and] feels neglected as she did in her own previous life. I'm feeling more confident, achieving at [the] Dyslexia Institute. Kate feels more wanted, included and loved. She is more confident, more cooperative, positive, content [and] happy most of the time.

Week 6

[This] helped me to understand children's emotional points of view. [I] reflected on my own as a child and now. I didn't need to use physical harm [on] my kids because we had good, fair, firm boundaries and they stayed within them. For Kate as a foster child [I am] aware of physical touch. I give nurturing touch through positive body language, praise and warm tone of voice.

Week 7

[This week reminded] me of how difficult my own childhood was. I tend to block out my childhood feelings. It was very unsettled, both parents remarried 4 times each. I didn't always get on with my step-mothers [and there were] no material things. It made me as a parent make sure my children had their own things and space. I spent as much time as I could with them, sharing their activities. It made me work very hard to earn money and keep them wanting for very little.

[I] thought about my own children and age appropriate development. I listen, encourage, explain, point in the right direction. I'm helping her to grow up and be safe and independent. I helped my child understand that she is capable. She smiled more, it was a reward for me and I felt good.

Week 8

[I] thought about how a child benefits from praise and empowerment and develops self esteem [and] realistic goals. I had a go at teaching my child to play pool and praising her for potting a ball to raise [her] confidence but not needing to win to feel good. [We were] both happy [and] contented with playing.

Week 9

When I really listen to a child's point of view I find that I value their thoughts and opinions and they feel good. I am more relaxed than I used to be [about] taking on children in care.

Week 10

We are a happy family! I listen more to Kate and try to see things from her point of view. Kate [is] still rejecting praise, and [she is] up and down depending on contact with her birth family. [I am] trying to be consistent and have empathy.

My aims as a parent and foster parent are for my own children and foster children to be ready to do well in life as they leave. My fear for the foster child is that she [won't be] ready to go at 16 years old. Hopefully what she learns with us will help her to take responsibility for herself and stay safe and also as a parent in the future.

[I've learnt to] be realistic [about] what we expect of foster children who have had a hard time. Kate's birth parents should do this course before she returns home! [I'm] sad is it the end, [this is a] perfect programme for children and parents.

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