

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of being a foster parent is the moment when your foster child leaves your home. As a foster parent, your home becomes a place where foster children come for a period of time, with the goal of being reunited with their family in the near future. There are times when the removal of a foster child from may come suddenly, and without any prior warning. You may only have a few days, or even a few hours, before your foster child is to move. This may be due to a court order, health reasons, or placement into another foster home. Other times, plenty of notice is given to the foster parents beforehand. Whenever you are told, there will sure to be emotions involved, for both you and the foster child.

One of the ways you can prepare for your foster child's departure is by organizing a lifebook. This book can be a wonderful healing tool for your foster child as he moves to a new home. For some children, a lifebook is the only reminder they may have of previous houses and families they once called home. Essentially, a lifebook is a scrapbook of your foster child's life, and is something he can take with him to his new home, and throughout his life. Sadly, when many foster children are placed into a foster home, much of their early life story is lost, and can never be retraced.

Think about throwing a going away party for your foster child as an opportunity to show him how much he will be missed. Invite the caseworker, church members, friends of the family along with his friends, and anybody else over that played an important part of his life with you. Perhaps you could give him some going away presents that he might remember you by. Make it as fun a party for him as you possibly can, again showing him that he is cared for.

Packing for him can be emotional, as it may bring back memories of being removed from his previous home. How you pack for him will be important to his well being.

First, make sure he has a suitcase, or suitcases. It does not need to be a brand new one; some foster parent associations or child welfare agencies may offer these for free. Second, nicely fold all of his clothing and belongings in the suitcases, including him in this. If he has a lot of toys or large items, you may have to use boxes for these. Make sure you pack everything he owns, including everything he came with to your home. Third, include as many group photographs of him with your family as possible. Pictures of you and your family may help him in the grieving process of leaving your home, and can serve as a valuable reminder that he is loved and cared for. Finally, place some self addressed self stamped envelopes in his suitcase so that he can write to you from his new home. Add some stationary, pencils, and pens, so that he has everything he needs to write to you. Also, include contact information for him, such as your address, phone numbers, and email address in his lifebook. Finally, if possible, attempt to stay in contact with your former foster child. Emails, phone calls, and letters will help him in this time of transition, as well as remind him that he is important, and valued.

Saying goodbye is never easy for anyone, and may be especially difficult for you and your foster child. After your foster child leaves your home, you may feel like you never wish to foster again, as the pain is too great. The grief you feel may be overwhelming. On the other hand, you may feel relief when he leaves, as the time with him in your home was a difficult one. Whatever the circumstance, there will be emotions involved. With the right preparation, this time of transition can be a little bit easier for all involved.

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