

Fragile Placements

I have always known that kids who are in foster care think they are going to get moved. Each child would be told that this was not the case.

A few weeks ago I was talking with a young man who had been in several homes. He is now in a home that plans to take guardianship. He is NOT moving. He said "Ya, I know they are taking guardianship. I have been in guardianship before. I can still move." I reminded him of the many bad things that he had done and that he was STILL in the home. He said to me. "What happens if I do one more thing? That one more thing will make them change their mind. I can still move."

This conversation made me realize how fragile foster kids see their placement. Everyday they wake up wondering if this is the day they will be shipped off to another home. They have been primed to think this for good reason. They have been moved for reasons that they did not understand.

I realized that parent's standards for foster kids are actually much higher than for their own biological kids. When our son stole from the collection plate and his dad was the pastor, it never occurred to us to kick him out. When the same child got kicked out of preschool Sunday school, we did not say: "I am calling Social Services". He faced severe consequences and learned that this is not acceptable behavior. By the way, he is an adult now and is very responsible.

My husband and I took a foster child into our home 40 years ago. We received NO training. When the adolescent girl in our care organized a séance with the church youth group, brought a fifth of whiskey from a home visit, and became sexually active with a young man from the local air force base, we said, "This girl needs to go." In our untrained minds these were serious transgressions. If we had the support to help us set up a safety plan that young woman could have stayed

Most of foster children's negative behavior is the result of fear. Their biggest fear is moving. As we get frustrated with our kids behaviors, we need to ask ourselves: "Would we move our biological

child for this behavior?" Some times we may have to answer yes. If not, ask what else can we do to help the child.