

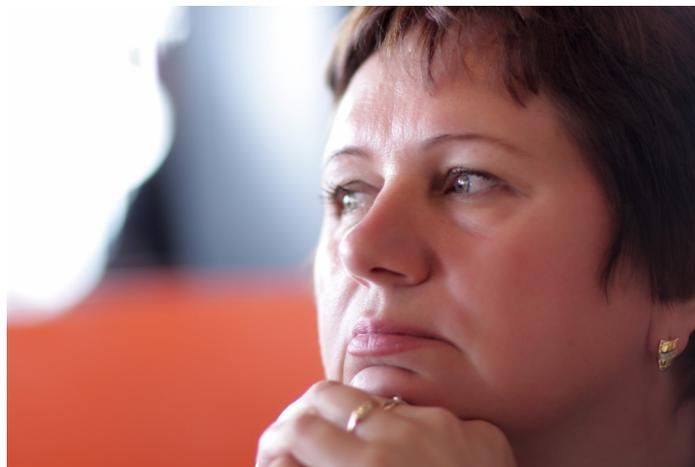


Away from Home: Caring for Your Child and Yourself During an Out-of-Home Care Placement

Adopting a child can sometimes come with added layers of challenge, the sum of which may take you and your family in a direction no parent could ever truly anticipate. It can feel like your world is being turned upside down.

There may be times when children with significant needs are best served in an out-of-home care setting. This can be true of children in birth, foster, relative, and adoptive families. Such a placement is an opportunity for your child to receive treatment that is more intensive. It *does not* mean that your child will not return to your home. In fact, the expectation or plan will be that your child *will* return home. While your child is in an out-of-home care setting, your active participation is needed—if for no other reason than to assure your child that he or she is not “bad,” but rather to reinforce the message that they have some needs that go beyond what you alone can help with right now.

Following are some tips to consider when you are given the recommendation that your child needs to leave your care for an out-of-home placement for a time.



- Analyze the facts. Try to “zoom out” and take emotion out of the equation as much as possible so that you can focus only on the facts.
- Make sure you have exhausted all of your options. Have you reached out for help from your agency? Have you contacted your local Post Adoption Resource Center? (For a [list of centers, visit our website.](#)) Have you tried therapy?
- Be honest with one another. Take time to talk to each member of your family, and really consider how the decision for your child to leave the home will affect each member of the family.
 - Reach out to anyone who may add a missing piece to the puzzle. (For example, your agency staff, religious or spiritual leaders, neighbors, and teachers.)
- Build up your support network, not only for yourself but also for everyone who may be impacted by the decision. The change will be a trauma for all those involved, so make sure you are seeking out help and finding different opportunities for self-care.

Seeking Support

If it has become clear that your child needs

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to go to an out-of-home care placement, you may feel like you haven't succeeded. You may have feelings of grief and loss while your child is away from your home. You may question your ability to parent or even feel guilty about your decision. These are normal feelings to have. It *does not* mean that you aren't a good and competent parent.

Seeking support for yourself and the rest of the family can be helpful. Reaching out to other adoptive parents who have been in similar situations or even speaking to a counselor can allow you to see things from a different perspective. Here at the Coalition, we have the *Journey Partner* program, where you can be connected with another adoptive parent who can listen, be a sounding board, and offer support while you are going through this hard time.

Away From Home, But Still Part of the Family

During the time when your child is away from your home, there are ways to help them continue to feel like part of the family. Your child may be feeling abandoned; you can give them hope by assuring them that you are committed to what is best for them and to keeping them as part of your family. Here are a few ways that may be helpful for your family:

- Be involved with the out-of-home care placement. Take the time to learn about your child and how to best intervene when tough behaviors become hard to manage.
- Create a book of photos and memories, such as a scrapbook or a life book, and either send it along with the child or take it along on visits.
- Visit regularly and supplement with phone calls. Keep your child in the loop and share about what is going on at home and with other family members.
- Ask your child's friends to send letters, text, call, or message your child. They can provide support and keep him or her in

the know about what is going on at school or with their shared social group.

- Create a book of "Top Ten Lists" and put together your fondest, funniest, silliest, goofiest, etc. memories. Everyone in the family can contribute to group lists, or each person can create their own.
- Use technology, such as Skype or FaceTime, to see each other "face to face" in between visits.

The decision to use an out-of-home care placement will be a hard one to make. Try to remind yourself that you are doing what is best for your family, and the change is not forever. You have not failed your child or your family; rather, you are taking steps to ensure your child is getting the care they need.

Finally, remember that the Coalition is here to support you along every part of your journey. Call us, email us, or drop in to talk with a member of our Resource Team whenever you need help.



Resources

Tip Sheets

- [Uncovering Myths about Therapy](#)
- [The Wider Scope of Therapy](#)
- [Somebody To Lean On: Connecting With Or Creating A Support Group](#)

From the Lending Library

- [Partners Newsletter: Building Networks of Support](#)
- *Keeping Your Adoptive Family Strong—Strategies for Success*, by Gregory C. Keck and L. Gianforte
- *When Love is Not Enough*, by Nancy Thomas

More on Coalition Sites

- [Therapist Lists](#)
- [Adoption Related Support Groups](#)
- [Journey Partner Program](#)



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