

Your Role in Building Relationships: Questions For Foster Parents

Are you willing and able to communicate in a respectful and non-judgmental manner with the child's parent and other relatives if asked to do so? Are you able to listen, really listen, when they express their feelings about the child and what is happening to **their** family?

Will you answer the questions birth parents ask (if permitted by your agency and social worker) without irritation, anger or defensiveness, and in a way they can understand?

Can you avoid tones of criticism, disgust, anger, hostility, and ridicule in your voice or facial expressions and body language?

Do you provide adequate "personal space" for interactions between the child and his visiting relative(s)? Are you willing to allow privacy during visits to the child and parent, unless directed to stay in the room by your agency?

Are you able and willing to engage in "small talk" with the birth relative on topics not related to the child? Are you uncomfortable spending time on casual conversation? Are you in a hurry to leave when the visit ends?

Do you find yourself using one word, closed responses, or avoiding conversation totally?

Do you often ask the birth parent(s) for information which is not relevant to the child's current situation, about the past, and about the parents' personal difficulties?

Are you comfortable making eye contact with the birth parents and other relatives?

Do you invite birth families to have a glass of water or a cup of coffee, if the time and occasion permit?

Do you speak to, and about, the birth relatives with respect? Do you encourage them to share their views and show them that you are willing to listen to what **they** have to say?

Are you able to avoid lecturing the parent(s) while providing mentoring and modeling positive parenting skills?

Can you speak in a positive way to the child about his birth parent(s) and avoid criticizing or berating the parent in front of the child? Are you comfortable praising the parent so the child hears you?

When situations arise during visits, do you immediately step in to solve the problem, or do you stand back and allow the parent to handle it, giving gentle suggestions or asking the parents' opinion whenever possible?

Do you **really** believe that the parent is capable of change and loves their child?

Adapted from: *Foster Parents & Birth Parents - Working Together for the Children*
(www.fosterparents.com)