ForeWord Reviews

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

The Supportive Foster Parent: "Be There for Me"
Kalyani Gopal
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"In the United States alone 80% of those incarcerated have been in the foster care system. They lag behind their same-age peers by a year or more in school and even futher in terms of their emotional and behavioral controls … So how can we change the lives of our future generations in foster care placements?" asks Gopal. Many loving and attentive adults are interested in helping to reduce such statistics but they aren't sure how. *The Supportive Foster Parent* is designed to point them in the right direction.

Each foster child is different. Some are rejecters, resistant to foster care; while others are labeled overpleasers, grateful they were removed from biological parents; or distancers, unattached to foster parents due to family loyalty. But the job of the foster parent is the same: "Successful foster parents are those who, through experience and instinct, learn to 'empower' the child so that she/he learns to become self-reliant and confident."

Seven chapters follow the trajectory of fostering, offering information about examining motivations for wanting to be a foster parent; welcoming a child in your home; getting to know the child; and then letting the child go. Thoughtful quotes by luminaries (e.g., C.S. Lewis, Joseph Campbell, and Albert Einstein) are sprinkled throughout the book, including the closing thought by Maya Angelou: "I long, as does every human being, to be at home wherever I find myself."

The easy-to-read chapters are filled with bullet points, charts, and anecdotes designed to empower would-be foster parents to provide the most effective care for children, but the book occasionally falls short in terms of substance. For example, a section on dealing with cross-cultural issues merely suggests the obvious: Talk openly about race and culture, spend time with the child's birth family, and affirm the child's cultural background. This book shines, however, in its ability to synthesize a wide range of information that impacts fostering children: types of foster children and specific behaviors they display, parenting styles, aggression, depression, and therapies.

The author credits a research assistant, but the research is not carefully documented

parenthetically or via bibliography. Nonetheless, using expertise acquired over twenty-five years as a licensed clinical psychologist and as a consultant handling foster care issues, she has created an excellent beginning resource for those interested in becoming foster parents. Books like this one can help foster parents nurture a future generation that contributes positively to society.

Kaavonia Hinton