

“When I was 21, I had, I had a daughter. Well, at that time I was living in my car or sometimes sleeping underneath a picnic table in a park, being heavily involved in drugs. And I just, I didn't have any support system to help me with her. Without a job and without a partner to help me raise this child. I just didn't see any hope for my future in trying to raise this child. And I didn't believe in myself that I could do it at that point.

“I am a foster and adoptive parent and a birth mom. So I went to this adoption agency and I said, ‘I want to pick the parents. I want to know that these are good people. I can't do this unless I can feel good about who she's going to be going to live with.’ So this family that I chose to adopt my daughter at the time, they showed me extreme kindness and tenderness. They really did. And they didn't have to. They told me that they would keep me updated with these letters and pictures and they followed through with that. And even if it wasn't right on the birth date or right on Christmas, you know, it was around that time. So every year I would look forward to those letters and those pictures that mean everything to me because, because I couldn't be there. And, without that, I don't think I would have been able to move forward the way that I did.

“And so my husband said, ‘let's try this. Let's, let's try fostering a little bit.’ And once we started doing it, we, we saw the need and it was very rewarding. I definitely think my own experience influenced how I interacted with birth parents. So the first child that we fostered, he did ultimately go back to his birth family even after his mom passed away because I maintained that relationship with his mom and her sisters the whole time he was growing up. We used to celebrate Mom's birthday because I knew there were going to be a limited number of Mom's birthdays and I wanted him and—he had a sister—I wanted those two to have those memories of their mom.

“I had experienced this kindness that this adoptive family had shown me. So I knew that expressing that kindness to these birth mothers could have this tremendously huge impact on their lives and on the lives of the people that they interact with. If I treat this person well, the hope is that they're going to treat the next person well. So instead of being cruel and mean to each other, we can be kind and offer each other a little hope.”