

Small Steps Make Big Gains

Stephanie: Oh, well, we have eight kids all together and four of them are adopted. It was difficult being a foster parent, initially, our children came with some pretty tough behaviors.

Jermaine: Some were like mental abuse, physical abuse, even some sexual abuse, to be honest. It was a melting pot of trauma. It was just things we had to learn how to deal with, learn how to cope with.

Stephanie: Our oldest son in that group, he was hoarding and taking things that didn't belong to him, and the youngest one, she just really wanted to be with her mom. And I couldn't fault her for wanting to be with her mom. And when we asked her why she did certain things, she would reply and say, it's because I want you to send me back. So we dealt with just a lot of those behaviors. Getting calls from school, of course, because the kids are acting up. And so, you know, as mom and dad, we would, you know, drop everything and go up to the school to try to get them together.

During that time, I ended up pregnant with number eight. I think at that time, being pregnant, working full time, both of us, and then having seven kids at that time, I was just like, you know, I don't know if I can really do this. Like I'm sure was probably some of the pregnancy hormones, too. But I'm not seeing behaviors change. Like we're really, really trying. We're being patient. We're working with them. We're doing all the things right that you can do. We just kind of felt like we weren't doing things right. And so we called our foster care agency and, you know, they came out to our house and they sat down with us and they said, well, let's really look at what's changed from, you know, the time they started in the house to where they are now. So we went from what could have been four tantrums in a week to maybe one or two. We went from, you know, him taking stuff every day to maybe him taking one thing. And, you know, in that week, guess what? We didn't get a call to go to their school this week! We were like, oh, my gosh, we worked a whole week of work without having to be called! And so we look at those small victories and we're like, you know what? We are really making a difference in their lives.

As foster parents, you will get frustrated. Oh, my gosh, I'm trying and I'm really trying, but nothing is changing. And you really just have to sit down and say, well, wait, you know, she decided to say thank you, where normally she doesn't say thank you. Just small steps. But those small steps make big gains in the end. And celebrate ourselves and say, you know what, the kids are really changing.