

Helping Children Understand Foster Care: TIPS FOR TALKING WITH CHILDREN



Dear Grown-up,

Thank you for hosting or helping a child host a lemonade stand benefiting the Idaho Foster & Adoptive Parent Association! Whether you know a child in foster care, plan to parent children in foster care, or simply want to provide support to foster families with this lemonade stand, it is important to find ways to explain foster care to children in an age-appropriate way. We hope this guide helps!

With gratitude,

The Idaho Foster & Adoptive Parent Association Team

Here are 5 Quick Tips for Talking about Children in Foster Care:

1

Be truthful and honest in an age-appropriate way. Using simple phrases to explain things is helpful. Avoid using broad statements and try to find positive ways to talk about the children and their biological families.

"Sometimes families need help taking care of children. There can be many reasons a child is not safe in their home, and a lot of people work to make decisions to keep a child safe. Sometimes that means a child will go to live with a foster family, where they can be safe and taken care of."

2

Anticipate questions and think through the answers. It's always okay to say to a child:

"You know, that's a great question. Let me think about how to answer it..." if you aren't sure how to answer at the moment.

3

Ask your child what they understand about foster care.

Often children will give answers that help us understand their level of awareness and this helps adults to not overshare or overload information.

4

Reassure your child that it is never a child's fault or responsibility, and that there is a whole team of adults like judges, social workers, and therapists who help find safe families for children.

"Sometimes adults can make decisions that are not safe for their children. It can be scary to think about, but it is never a child's fault."

5

Focus on sharing the idea of love, compassion, and empathy when telling the story. It may be confusing and children often think very concretely and in strong absolutes. Using the theme of love and compassion in our explanations can be helpful.

"Even when adults make decisions that aren't safe for children, we can help the children remember that they are loved. It can be really hard for some families to stay together, and so our family can help by _____."