

*How To Love Unconditionally When You're Angry, from Aha! Parenting Blog*

I know, you never actually stop loving your child, even when she acts like a monster and you can't stand being with her another minute. But unfortunately, the love you feel isn't the most important factor in your child's emotional development. The most important factor is whether your child *feels* loved, unconditionally. That means she feels loved exactly as she is.

Does your child know that she's lovable, exactly as she is? That she isn't expected to be perfect? That her anger, disappointment, frustration and sadness are just part of being human, and that she can count on you to help her learn to manage those feelings so she doesn't have to act on them?

You may be wondering how you teach your child those things. The answer is easy, but oh so difficult. You love him unconditionally. Even -- especially -- when he's driving you crazy.

Why? Because your child knows you love him when he's being sweet, generous, and obedient. He's not so sure you love him when he's feeling angry, or jealous, or greedy. When he acts like a monster, he's afraid he IS a monster. But when you:

- Can stay lovingly connected to him even as you set limits on his behavior .... He learns that he's not a bad person, just human.
- Can resist lashing out at him even when you're "justifiably" angry .... He learns from your modeling how to regulate his emotions.
- Can remember to empathize as you set limits, so he WANTS to follow them ..... He learns self-discipline.
- Can accept that he's an immature human who naturally makes mistakes ..... He learns that mistakes are part of growing, and what matters is noticing, repairing, and planning ahead to avoid the mistake next time.
- Can love him through his upsets .... He learns that feelings are manageable, not dangerous, and that he's ok, complete with all those inconvenient feelings. It's that self-acceptance that helps him eventually manage those feelings so he doesn't have to "act them out."

Healing our ability to love unconditionally means that we commit to parenting from love, not anger. Of course, that doesn't mean that you won't get angry at your child. And we all know we don't feel very loving at those moments.

Loving unconditionally when you're furious isn't easy. In fact, it's such heavy lifting of the heart that it builds real love muscle. But nothing changes your child's behavior quite as quickly. We cannot expect children to be perfect as they are always learning. I always point out to my son that it is his behavior or attitude or whatever it may be that needs adjusting but he as a person is learning and growing and its okay to make mistakes.

**Capital Area Interagency  
Coalition 2016 Foster/Adopt  
PRIDE Training Schedule**  
**April Meeting Location:**  
**Bethany Christian Services**  
612 W Lake Lansing Rd #600, East  
Lansing, MI 48823

Session	Date	Time
4	Saturday, April 16	9am-noon (breakfast & lunch provided) 1-4pm
8	Tuesday, April 19	6-9pm
9	Thursday, April 21	6-9pm

## 6 Things I Wish You Knew About Foster Care, taken from HuffPost Parents

by Dr. John DeGarmo

Before I was a foster parent, I knew very little about the foster care system. Like so many in society, I had misconceptions about what foster care was, what the children were like, and what foster parents do. Now, after 13 years of caring for children in foster care, and over 50 children through my own home, here are 6 things I want you to know about what it is truly like.

### 1. It's Not Their Fault

Perhaps the biggest misconception about children in foster care is that the children are somehow at fault. Yet, this is so far from the truth. These are children who are the victims. These are children who are suffering. Children suffering from abuse. Neglect. Malnutrition; even drug-related problems passed on from a mother's addiction. Children rejected by those who were to love them most, their parents. When placed into a foster home, many of these children carry with them the physical and emotional scars that prevent them from accepting the love of another.

### 2. We Are Not Saints.

I often hear, on a weekly basis, that my wife and I are saints for caring for children in need, and opening up our homes and hearts to kids in foster care. In no way, and in no fashion am I a saint, and I believe that foster parents from all over would echo that sentiment. We are not saints. We become tired, worn down, and exhausted. We have our own frustrations and disappointments. There are times when we succeed, and there are times when we experience failures. We are not the perfect parents. We are simply trying our best to provide a home and family for a child who needs one, and help a child in need.

### 3. It Does Hurt

It seems that the comment that is made to me the most by those who are not foster parents is this; "I could not do what you do. It would hurt too much to give the children from foster care back." As one who has cared for over 50 children in my own home the past 13 years, as well as traveling the country speaking about the foster care system, the question is one that I hear several times a week. My response is this; "That's a good thing. It is supposed to hurt. Your heart is supposed to break!" To be sure, children in foster care need stability and they need security. Yet, what they need the most is to be loved. As foster parents, we might be the first adults who have ever loved the child in a healthy and unconditional fashion. So, when the child leaves our home and our family, we should experience feelings of grief and loss. After all, we have given all of our hearts and love to a child in need.

### 4. We Can't Save Them All

No, we cannot. I understand that. I have been told this by friends and family, alike, as they question why I continue to bring children into my home, and into my family. It can make a huge difference for each child from foster care we bring into our home.

### 5. Working with Birth Family.

Our foster child wants nothing more than to return home to his family. In fact, reunification is often the end goal for most foster children. As a foster parent, part of our mission is to support reunification with our foster child and his biological parents. What is important to consider, as well, is that many biological parents of foster children were abused themselves, and know of no other way when raising children. Certainly, there are reasons why their children are in care that we may never understand. Part of being a foster parent is helping the parents of the children living with us; helping our fellow human beings.

### 6. The Hardest and Most Important Job

Being a foster parent is often the hardest thing we do. After all, each time a new foster child comes into our families, there are new challenges, as each placement is unique, just as the child is, as well. Yet, we are changing lives, while our own lives are being changed. There is a good chance that in the future, the foster child we cared for may not remember our names. But for so many children in foster care, each foster child who comes through our homes will remember one thing; that for a period in his life, he was loved, and some day down the road, he will blossom into something better because of it.

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### Reactive Attachment Disorder Support Group

The Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) Support Group has been meeting for over 13 years. New families are always welcome to join— both foster and adoptive families can attend. The group typically meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at the agency from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Dinner is served potluck style, and if families register ahead of time, childcare may be provided. The next meeting will be held on **April 25**.

Please RSVP to Korey Wheeler at 517-882-4000 Ext. 133 or [koreywheeler@childandfamily.org](mailto:koreywheeler@childandfamily.org)