

# Biological parents



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## Parenthood

*Parents remain parents - how can I remain mother/father*

It is painful to be a mother or father of a child that is separated from you and is raised by other people. It is important to seek support and guidance.

Permit yourself to have often contradictory emotions, anger, sadness, guilt. Learn to take responsibility for your own mistakes, limitations, inabilities in the past.

For creating the relationship with your child it is important to not only blame others. Another step would be to admit your own responsibilities to the children and to adequately communicate them.

Clarify these issues: What do I need for myself? What does my child need?  
Distinguish between the children's interests and your own interests.

Courage



## Together instead of against each other.

*Communication with the foster parents.*

It is important to find your role as the biological mother/father. Think about what you will be needed for and what responsibilities you need to hand over to the foster parents. Many mothers/fathers complain about not receiving any information about their child from the foster parents. They find out late that their child is in hospital etc.

Discuss your need for information with the foster parents. On the other hand, it is also important to tolerate that the foster parents, who have the everyday responsibility for the child, use methods that might be different from the ones you would use when raising the child. If you are not sure get yourself support in counselling centres. The experts offer you the opportunity to try out action steps and to check the effects of your words. Remember not to pass expectations and responsibilities to your child, who might be simply overwhelmed, if you want your child to understand your difficult situation.

Write down essential things (reasons for the separation from your child, feelings for the child, permission for your child to feel good in the other family) on information sheets.

Children can feel and sense how their parents perceive the new situation in life; and they need their mother's/father's consent so they need not have a bad conscience.

Talk



*We have mutual understanding without any formal agreement. But recently with the help of my social worker we signed a written contractual agreement. It clarifies the type and frequency of my contact or communication with my girl.*

## Biographical work

*Provide stability and set anchors*

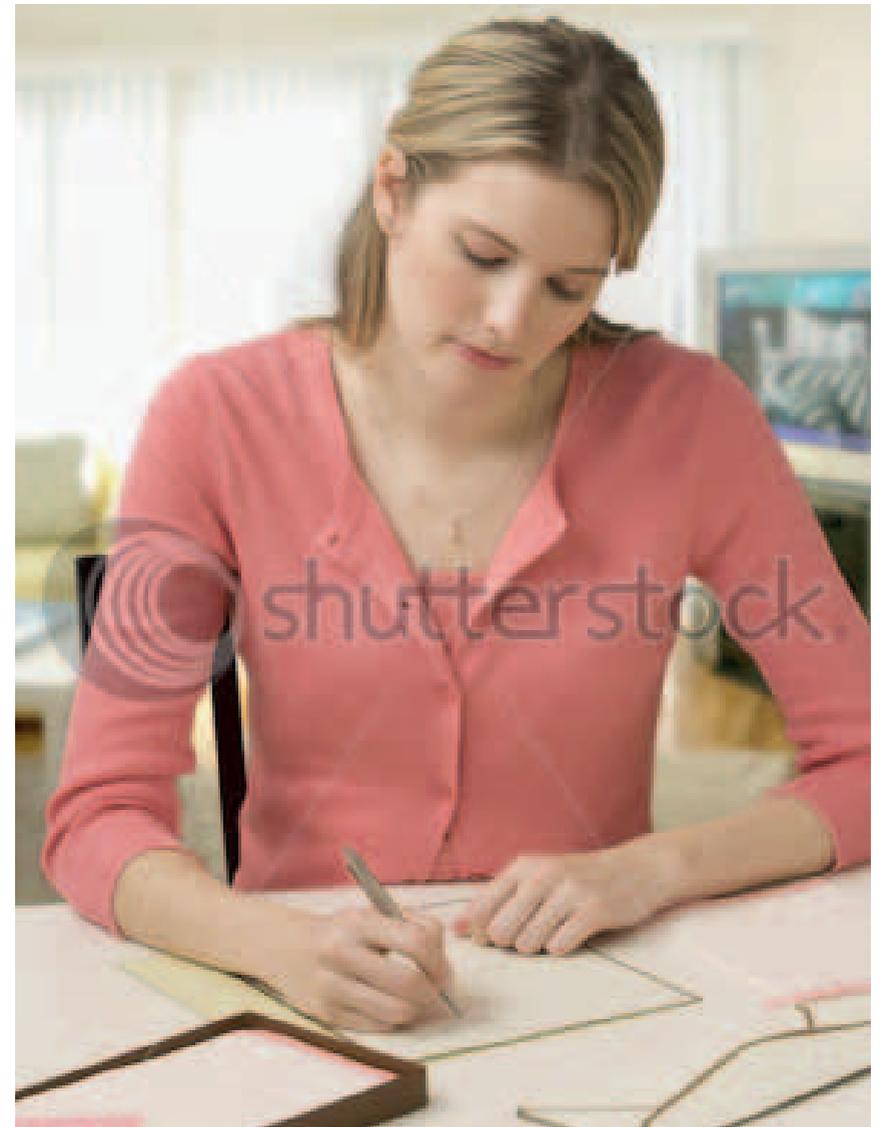
Biographical work is a method of promoting maturation and development in children and adolescents. It is important for each child to know how their mom and dad used to live. They often think about it: Who am I? Whom do I resemble?

What families do they come from? Where did they go to school? How did they like it there? Are there any brothers or sisters? How were their lives in their homes? When and where did mom and dad meet? What did they like about each other?

Even if you have no personal contact or do not write letters with your child, try to write life letters, birthday cards or birthday letters and keep them for later in a memory box. Creating a book of life is one way of organising the child's internal chaos.

Book of life

In addition to the child's previous stages of life, a book of life always includes the current description of the child and her/his experiences: her/his appearance, strengths, hobbies, sleep-in and waking-up times, etc. It also includes the child's feelings. - What are you particularly happy about? What are you angry about?



*In the beginning we felt like we were sleepwalking. The only thing on our mind was that our child was gone. We are the parents, the roots.*

## Visiting contacts

*What is the purpose of visiting contacts and how can you make create them in a good way?*

There is often disagreement or confusion concerning the meaning and purpose of visiting contacts between both biological parents and foster parents as well as authorities and biological parents. This often makes it difficult for all parties to define appropriate patterns of behaviour. It must be said that the time of a visiting contact is an exceptional circumstance. There are clearly many issues with regard to how to organise them:

What is the contact with the child for? (Is it to keep up the contact or to revive it?) What behaviour of mine, the foster parent, is appropriate? Is it clear who has got the educational responsibility during that time? What is important to you? Experience from visiting contacts shows that children are often very insecure during or after the visiting contact. Confused by the expectations of all people involved. It is important to show the child, also during visiting contacts, that you accept the foster family and are not "everyday mother". Sometimes that is also the foster parents' expectation for you to take that role; it does, however, not reflect reality.

If you have never lived with the child you can see the visiting contact as mutual orientation.

If you have not have any contact for a longer period of time get yourself counselling support and think about what the child might need from her/his mother or father. Think about what you can answer to the question, "Why did you give me away?"

It is a long process to figure out what parents/children can mean to each other.

Your  
My  
Our  
Children



*Why do you not come more often? I did not catch it. She asked me several times. I did not give an answer; I did not know what to say. Now I know that it would have been reasonable to say that it is good to see her but that it also makes me very sad. When I leave that hurts so much and, therefore, I do not manage to come more often.*

## Cooperation with the youth welfare office

*In the child's interest: How can cooperation be made constructive?*

A fundamental condition for successful cooperation is to build a trusting relationship between foster parents and biological parents. The important thing is to disclose all the different expectations, goals and differences together with the responsible social workers.

Participation

Ask the social workers for counselling and support services to further promote your relationship.

You have the right to have a reliable point of contact, to extend your parenting skills based on your competences and to review your educational gaps.

As biological parents you have the right to be empowered for an active participation of the fostering relationship.



## Project coordination

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