

The Truth About Fostering

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Every day, people make the decision to have children... knowing that their kids will one day grow up, and leave them for families of their own. That's a painful, heartbreaking time for any parent... the day that their child finally leaves them... forever.

But does the inevitability of that day... dissuade people from having children? No.

However, when it comes to fostering a pet, I constantly hear the excuse, "It would be too hard for me. I'd get too attached. I could never give them up." And thus, people opt not to foster, and dogs die.

But those very people... who say they just can't take the pain of letting go... have children, children who will soon leave them for college, marriage, and lives of their own. Those very parents often dread that day in the distant future... the day that their kids no longer need them.

But when the time comes, they'll deal with it, as best they can.

Sure, they'll likely cry. Their hearts will hurt... as they let their baby go... and send them off to start their own life with their own family. But does that pain outweigh the years of joy, laughter, and love with their child? Never.

It takes a lot of strength and courage to be a parent. Parenting requires patience, love, and selflessness. For a while, you're everything to your child. They depend on you to be all that they need, to provide them with love and care, and to guide them through this life.

Yet... the entire purpose of parenting is to prepare your children for that day in the future... when they'll go off to start their own life and family. People don't expect their kids to stay at home forever... just to avoid that dreadful pain. Because if they did, those children wouldn't be fulfilling their own needs, dreams, and purpose in this world.

Fostering a pet is no different.

Well... it's slightly different, in one aspect: when people don't step-up to foster... animals die. That's the cold, hard reality... a reality that YOU have the power to change.

Otherwise, the foster experience is very much like parenting a child, and every bit as rewarding... if not more so, in certain ways. Fostering is about taking a deserving creature into your home, during their greatest time of need, nursing them back to health, removing the pain(s) of their past... loving, teaching, and guiding them... and then... sending them off to live the lives they deserve. Fostering is about giving a dog (or cat) the one thing they've never had... hope. And with the simple act of opening up your home to them, YOU are able to grant their one wish. YOU are able to make their dreams come true. YOU are able to save their life.

How many times have you actually been able to save a life? I don't mean simply watching on the sidelines as a life is saved... I mean literally pulling a dog or cat from death, and bringing them back to life. It's an incredible experience... there's nothing like it. But far too many people let the inevitable pain at the end of the experience... blind them from the joy of the journey.

Consider this: Everyone who is currently on this earth... will one day die. Death is painful - often devastating - for those left behind. But death is an inevitable aspect of life. So, if we know in our minds that the people we love will one day leave us, should we never love at all? Of course not... because then, we'd miss the entire purpose of life.

I also think back to my parents, on the day I left for college. I'm lucky to have incredible parents, who have loved, encouraged, and supported me all my life. From the day I was born, they knew I would one day leave them to go to college... which was their ultimate goal for me. And so, they treasured each day with me along the way... and prepared me for my own journey.

When that day finally came, my mother's tears conveyed the indescribable pain in her heart... a sadness that was ever-so real for her, because her baby girl was all grown up... and leaving her. But on that day, did my mother regret ever having me? No. Did the pain of that day outweigh the years of overwhelming happiness she experienced as my mom? Of course not. That day was bittersweet for my parents, because everything they'd done for the last 18 years... had prepared me for that day. Along with the tears in their eyes, I saw something else... pride. Pride for what they'd accomplished, joy that their dreams for me were finally becoming reality, and the resolution in their hearts that everything in my world ... was exactly as it should be.

Would my parents have ever stopped me from leaving for college, just so they could keep me with them? Never. That's exactly why they gave me life... so that I may one day... leave to have a life of my own. The act of loving enough to let go is the greatest gift one can give in this world. It's always about the journey... and when the end-result is bittersweet... it makes the journey that much sweeter.

Often, I write about the pain I feel at the end of each foster journey. I write about that heartbreak, because it's a very real emotion for me, and a very relevant aspect of fostering. However, these stories from my heart are never meant to discourage others from joining in the incredible experience that is fostering. It's never meant to say that I regret the weeks, months, or years of unbridled joy, uncontrollable laughter, and unconditional love. That journey is what I live for.

For a short time, I am everything to these dogs. I'm their world. I represent comfort, love, and hope... when they've only known pain, hatred, and despair. In providing these gifts, I receive so much more in return... more than I could ever describe in words. During that time, I make them whole, and in turn, they make me whole. They remove any sadness, anger, or hopelessness I may feel, and replace all of the bad in the world... with the purest good that exists. In truth, they repair my soul.

At the end, I will feel immense pain as I let them go. I feel this hurt, because I love them. But when I let go, I'm releasing them to amazing families, who will pick-up where I left off, and cherish them forever. Incredible homes... that they would never have had... without me.

I take them into my home... knowing they will one day leave me. But that's exactly why I save them... to catch, restore, and release. And each time I let go... I'm fulfilling my purpose in life, and I'm able to save another.

Just as with any parent... you let your children go, because you love them... more than you love yourself. It would be selfish for me to say that my pain is worth more than their life... that my sadness at the end is somehow greater than the hurt they've known since birth. Without me, they would have died... but now, they live.

Never forget, that without YOU, others will die too. Please... don't let your fears, anxieties, and anticipation of the pain be the reason for their deaths. I'd say that the sadness of their unnecessary deaths is far more devastating than any heartbreak we could ever feel. And trust me... the love you'll receive during your time with them, is far greater than the pain of letting go.

To put it simply, this is why I foster:

Fostering is the most rewarding thing I've ever done. It's given me more joy, laughter, and love than I deserve. At the end, there's always heartbreak. But never for a second does the sadness outweigh the joy. Never do the tears outweigh the laughter. And never does the pain outweigh the love. Heartbreak heals... but love is forever.

*Ashley Owen Hill, Founder
Lucky Dog Rescue, Meridian, Mississippi*

<http://luckydogrescueblog.blogspot.com/search/label/Foster>