

## Episode 5 - How to help foster families Transcript

Cat

In the last episode we talked about how to support foster kids. One of those ways is by supporting foster families, Jack and I came up with some ideas of how a person can support foster families.

Jack 1:08

So one of the things that we thought of was by providing meals. So, you know, as we talked about previously, fostering takes up a lot of time and especially when you get a new placement, sometimes things are a little bit chaotic and if someone were to come in and just drop off a meal or have something sent over like it makes such a difference. I remember the first week we became foster parents, a friend of mine who had also adopted from Africa had pizza sent over, it's just genius and so easy and so helpful. It was so sweet because it wasn't just the pizza.

Like, it was great that we had food to that we didn't have to cook that night, so don't forget the first week we had a foster placement, Mr Jack lost his job, which was insane. It was so scary. Neither of us had ever lost a job before and all of a sudden we have two more kids in our house, and, you know, just not knowing what the future would hold. But yeah, so it wasn't just that they, you know, made it easy for us to not think about a meal that night, but the fact that, like, it just made us feel like we were loved and supported and cared for.

So, yeah, making a meal for a foster family, whether it's like, hey, they just got a new placement Let's send over a meal or, oh my gosh they just had this placement they've had so long, go home, I feel so bad you Let's cheer him up with like an Uber Eats order, you know, I think, or just drop off like a casserole or anything like that or even just like on a normal week like that is such an amazingly helpful thing to do for a foster family and anything you're doing for a foster family, you're doing for foster kids.

Cat 3:01

Yeah, and traditional foster parents, they don't, the rate of pay is really low. And so, it's, it's always going to be a huge help to financial aid to provide food and meals to foster families, absolutely. Another way you can really help foster families are foster kids by helping foster families is by providing babysitting so if you know a foster family by offering to babysit if you feel like that's in your skill set is a huge help to those families, especially,

Jack 3:31

Let me just tell you cat. That is one way that you have really blessed my family is by helping out like when I can't find somebody to watch a kid and I have to go somewhere for a doctor's appointment or court like you have helped me so many times in that way and that is a huge way that you have blessed. that's been mentioned my kids get so excited. Yay.

Cat 3:55

Well you know especially because foster parents, the rate of pay is so incredibly low if you had to pay a babysitter, you legitimately could pay

Jack 4:05

like everything that you're being reimbursed for that whole week, you can pay for,

Cat 4:11

right, right, it's insane, insane especially by the time you feed them, just be gone. And so, and kids don't belong in places like courtrooms.

Jack 4:22

Yeah, so and we got to go to court a lot and some specialty courts you have court every single month. And if the child is, It would not be appropriate for them to be there depending on the parents behavior, or some of the things they might not need to hear. Yeah, like they, if they can't come like offering to babysit them, and they usually do know when court is, and they're anxious about it so if you're a friend of the family and you want to hang out with them and try and take the kids mind off of the fact that like, their life is being decided on in a courtroom, that's a great way to support foster families.

Cat 4:58

Just being non judgmental in general is a great way to support foster families.

Jack 5:03

Yeah, absolutely. You know, everybody says things we don't mean sometimes but if you can try and, you know, keep in mind that, you know, foster families are just trying to do the best they can for their kids, and, you know, trying to help in the way that they know how to..

Cat 5:23

I've had some, some experiences in the last few months I've heard some people say some really not supportive things to foster families I had some people that I know that brought their child to the doctor and the doctor said you need to give these kids up your stress to get these kids up.

Jack 5:41

Well, I will tell you that the my old pediatrician notice I said, Oh, pediatrician, use this like roll her eyes at me and always tell me, like, you know, you need less kids you need less kids. And what I really wanted to say to her is okay if I don't take these kids are you going to?

Cat 6:01

Exactly, exactly. And luckily these foster parents changed pediatricians, instead of giving this child up. I would hope so. Yeah, they did, but I'm remembering the time that you were in the emergency room with one of your little guys, and the pediatrician was grilling you on how many kids you had in your home and I think about six of that time, and really making you feel terrible.

Jack 6:28

Yeah, I don't even remember that because it happened so often

Cat 6:32

well you call me. Yeah, and so I went up there. Yeah, so that he will leave you alone. Because I was like, how no doctor is going to take my friend Jack like that. And at the time I think he only had six kids, which is a, you know, I mean I'm not saying, eight is unreasonable but six kids, super low, you know,

Jack 6:56

At six am I even pulling my weight?

Cat 6:59

Seriously, seriously. I think that, I think there was something like respiratory going on, it wasn't even a big deal but yeah I couldn't even believe that he was giving you a hard time, not necessary. And so, having friends that are supportive, and I realized that the audacity of me to say this, as I am a friend of a foster parent is ridiculous. But it's important to, to not be judgmental.

Jack 7:26

Yeah, absolutely. And another thing I would say is try not to probe for details because the information that we have about our kids is confidential, and we have to keep that confidential, but beyond, like the legal ease of that these kids are deserving of their privacy, it's true.

Like, if, if a child came to my house, and something happened to them in their past, and I was telling everybody I knew or anytime somebody asked, like I felt like I needed to tell them something like, that's a huge invasion and then that might make that child feel uncomfortable, and not trusting so I feel like it's a very supportive thing to foster families to not be probing for details about the kids that are in their care.

Cat 8:11

I think so too. And just to like piggyback on that like we live in an era where we, we have never lived in before where we have social media, and even with biological children or adopted children we have to really be careful with their privacy you know if you have a child with a diagnosis, it's important not to blast that on social media, you know, Johnny's ADHD is flaring up again, you know like, well maybe it's nobody's business. Johnny has ADHD, you know, kids have the right to privacy.

Jack 8:38

And Johnny's going to be old enough to go on Facebook *Twitter* *Insta* *Snapchat* *TikTok* at some point and potentially see what you wrote and maybe he's gonna feel uncomfortable about it.

Cat 8:52

And so, you know, we certainly shouldn't be doing that on social media about foster kids but, but, you know, to remember that when we're talking to other people about foster kids also they have the right to privacy.

To be emotional support, I think is very helpful to be a good listener.

Jack 9:12

100% You know, there, I know there are some people that I can call when I'm stressed or anxious about a situation with one of my foster kids, and I know some people that I could call wouldn't be, you know, kind of take the note of like well you've signed up for this and you know what did you expect and some people I could call would just be like an ear and be like, I'm so sorry this is happening to you or to this kid or, I'm so sorry that you are stressed about this, or just just to listen, and, you know, that's a huge support just to have someone to call and, you know, make you feel more sane.

Cat 9:56

Another way you can support families who were helping in the foster care system is to provide some resources such as socks, underwear, pajamas...

Jack 10:16

When I smelled my baby this morning when he came out of the shower I just wanted to snuggle him.

Cat 10:22

oh yes yeah nothing like a properly worn out baby that's been freshly bathed and freshly jammed

Jack 10:28

yet but you know we talked about in the other episode how expensive jammies and socks and underwear are, and that that is like a huge thing to do for foster families is to bring their foster kiddos, or, you know if they've got non foster kiddos maybe bring everybody a pair of socks that day like that, because, you know,

then it goes into the whole, you know, we want them all to feel the same and equal. And when people come by and drop stuff off for the foster kids, they feel like maybe "charity case", rather than if you're bringing it for like all the kids in the house. It makes them feel included and part of something he did.

Cat

You know who is really good about that is your family, your family's really good at that. So and that's kind of what, what, what, the next thing that I wanted to say would be to treat all kids in that house, equally.

Jack

So I really feel like I've never had a problem with this, with my friends and family. However I know lots of other foster parents who have where, you know, they have Christmas parties and then they have relatives who come by and just give presents to their adopted or biological kids and not to the foster kids. And that puts the foster parent in a horrible position, because like that child, you know the child's been through enough, let alone to have family come by and make them feel further excluded.

So if you want to come to a house where there is foster kids living. If you are not going to bring a gift for the foster kids and you are for everybody else, just don't bring a gift at all. Honestly, like I don't need people to bring gifts for my kids. And if they, if, if they come and bring gifts for everybody that's very kind and, you know, it doesn't matter what it is. Kids love anything. Give them a pen or pencil and they hug that pencil and go to bed with it and yeah, you know, but, but, if you're going to just bring something for my adopted kids then I'd rather you not bring anything at all. Yeah. Yeah, so definitely it's, it's a matter of like

making them all feel treated equally.

Cat 12:52

Yeah and Jack's family is really good about that I've always been impressed about how when your family comes even like a Christmas when you have a brand new kid. That kid is spoiled,

Jack 13:03

I do get some grief sometimes because they'll be like, Oh, I gotta do last minute Christmas job it's like, calm down. I got stuff for them, I'll give it to you to give them. But my family is really good and they are really good about. Yeah, so if you want to support foster families, and you have foster families in your life, treating all of the kids equally really just makes a big difference for all of them makes them feel more part of the family. When family and friends comes to that house and treats them like part of the crew.

Cat 13:33

So another way you can support foster families is to help support organizations that support foster families and there are a lot of them out there.

Jack 13:45

So, you know, we know of one organization called Hope sails where they take foster families out on sailing trips, and they give them a respite weekend. So, you know you could donate to organizations like that or Man Up Tampa Bay has done some incredible things for foster families in the past year.

During when COVID was really bad, they were bringing every foster family, like a meal. They came, I think it was Chick fil A, it was these huge platters and even though we are a pretty large family, it fed us for like two or three days.

Cat

That's really impressive.

Jack

Yeah, it was so sweet.

In fact, another thing I heard about the man on Tampa Bay did was there was a foster family and this was an incredible foster family this, like, I want to be this woman when I grow up. She is the type of person that would give you the shirt off her back her shoes and everything else. She's incredibly giving and loving and kind to everyone around her, and

never asked for anything from anybody, and apparently someone found out that they had a problem with their roof and needed to get it fixed, and Man Up Tampa Bay, got a couple companies together, and they donated it, the labor the materials. Yeah, she was like floored.

CAT

So organizations like man I'm Tampa Bay hope sales, making financial donations to them is a great way to support foster families which supports foster kids, And something else is that, you know if you have a friend who's a foster family, tell the parents to go on a trip with Hope Sails and you can watch the kids for the weekend.

Cat 15:30

Oh yeah, that's great. And you know this roof. This family has how many kids?

Jack 15:37

I mean, in total, I think it's like 18, but a lot of them have grown up and moved out, I think, I don't, I'm not sure the exact number in the house at the time but you know that that contribution helps support all those kids.

Cat

Oh absolutely, even the ones that don't live in the house because they're part of that family.

Jack

Yeah, and you know this woman has kids with special needs and she loves the crap out of all of them like, unbelievable. Each of those kids get so much attention, and it's so much fun. My kids love going over there, they're like, It's like a party. It's like going to a huge playground every time there's so many fun happy kids

Cat 16:18

She does such a good job. Y

eah, another way you can help is by being a respite provider, and so a respite provider is a licensed foster parent who provides assistance like on the weekends or during the week when foster parents have to go out of town and so essentially you take the foster kids when the foster parent can't be there.

Jack 16:37

It is kind of like a babysitter for foster kids, you can sign up to be a regular licensed foster

home, and let them know that you're only going to take respite placements,

And then you know you can take kids on the weekends, let's say you have a really busy week with your job, and you're not able to be like a full time foster family, you know, being a respite provider on the weekends, is, is an option.

And another thing you can do to support foster families is to educate yourself. I know one of the reasons that my friends who are foster parents are so like having that group is such as support is because not that we're so educated but that we have the experience and we've been educated by experience so if you're not a foster parent, and you want to be an emotional or any type of support to a foster family, educating yourself on the process and what it's like to be a foster kid and what it's like to be a foster family is a great way to support your foster families around you.

So, And another thing I would say is to teach your kids to love your foster family, kids, and to not make them feel different. So one of the things is that a lot of foster kids like hanging out with other foster kids, because there's not a lot of questions, nobody's, you know, judging anyone nobody's making any weird statements or questions about your biological parents or your quote real parents.

Cat

And, you know, so if you can educate your kids to to treat foster kids just like anybody else, to not to know what is appropriate and not appropriate to say or ask them. I think that's a great way to support foster families and foster kids. I think so too. These are all great ideas. So that's all we've got for you today. Thanks for joining us. See you on the next episode.