

Jack 0:00

Today we have a special guest and a fantastic foster mom. today. We are so happy to have Chrissy joining us.

Chrissy 1:32

Thank you guys for having me. I'm a huge fan of the show. So it's exciting to be a guest.

Cat 1:41

We have a very important question to ask you right off the bat. What is your favorite drink at Starbucks?

Chrissy 1:49

That's so funny because I actually am not a coffee drinker. So if I go to Starbucks, I'm usually getting a tea or a lemonade. Anything that is sweet.

Jack 2:05

Okay, so a cold sweet tea from Starbucks.

Cat 2:08

I don't drink coffee either. But I go to Starbucks almost every day.

Chrissy 2:11

You might have to introduce me to some drinks that are not coffee.

Cat 2:14

I mean, I just get sweet tea or a chai?

Jack 2:16

Yeah. Have you had Chai?

Chrissy 2:17

No. I'd have to get a chai.

Jack 2:19

Yeah. Well, could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your family?

Chrissy 2:27

All right. So let me think I'm a teacher. I currently teach middle school but I do have some background in elementary.

I right now have four kids. My oldest is 12. And I adopted him eight years ago. He also has autism. So he brings a lot of light into our world, but also make sure that everything is structured because he really needs that and helps him and helps all the kids actually.

Okay, so about a year and a half ago, I adopted my four year old and then I just took a placement this past week and so I now have an eight

year old girl who is absolutely precious and her beautiful baby brother who is about six months old.

Jack 3:13

Can you tell me Chrissy What is your favorite thing to do with your kids?

Chrissy 3:20

Well, right now it's summer. And so we do love to go to the pool. I haven't taken them to the beach yet this season, but we do every summer have a trip out to the beach, but pretty much anything outside whether they're kicking soccer balls in the front yard, or we're walking through the neighborhood or something at the pool. Just spending time together outside is absolutely our favorite thing to do.

Cat 3:43

What is your favorite memory with your kids?

Chrissy 3:48

My favorite memory of my kids that would be our summer vacations. We go to the same spot every summer, which is where I've been going with with my parents. So it's been over 20 years that we've been going to the same place.

Jack 4:00

Oh my gosh, that is so cool. Is it in the state or out of state?

Chrissy 4:05

It is in the state. And so it's just we always have we do the same things that mini golf or laying on the beach or swimming in the pools and you know, they go from the splash pad to the kid pools each year. It's just we get to go back and it's familiar. But it's also sometimes we have new faces or we get to compare it with Look how little you were last year when we sat on the fountain and took this picture. And sometimes there's 10 of us and sometimes there's four of you know, but that would be my favorite memory because it just builds every year you know, we grow and we change as a family.

Jack 4:40

That is so cool that you've been doing it for so long. I love that. I love that.

Can you give me one word that you think people would use to describe foster parents?

Chrissy 4:54

I think most people consider us very selfless. They understand that we are inviting children into our home, and we are embracing them. And everything that comes with it. I think people realize that these kids have had some hard experiences, they don't necessarily understand

trauma and how it affects the brain. But they do have a heart for those kids and what they've, what they've been through. And so I think when they consider foster parents, they think that it's a very selfless act to invite these children into our home and take them on as part of our family.

Cat 5:34

Do you think that's true about you?

Chrissy 5:39

That's hard to say, because I get so much out of being a foster parent. So I, to me, it's not a one sided situation, it's not just me being uncomfortable and making new beds or getting the shoes and that sort of thing. You know, for me, I get to see these children grow. And for some of them, this is the first time they've had stability. It's just really an amazing experience to be with these kids. And they come and they're hurt, and they're scared. But they grow through that whole process and their parents grow. So it's just a really, I wouldn't call myself selfless, because although I know that we go through some discomfort in the beginning, we get so much of it as a family by having these children in our lives and their families. So I would not take that word.

Jack 6:37

I think that's so funny that you say it like that, because, well, first of all, I do think you're a very selfless person.

Cat 6:45

You go through some pretty extreme stuff to take care of the kids in your home, and you just do so much for them. That you know, isn't for your own benefit. It's for theirs.

Jack 6:55

But I always laugh because I think a lot of people, like it actually makes me uncomfortable. Because people be like, Oh, you're such an angel. Oh, you're such a saint. Oh, like, the world needs more people like you. And honestly, I don't feel selfless. I feel selfish. Like, I get to wake up in the morning and get those kids snuggles. And I know that they really want to be snuggling their parents and their parents really want to be snuggling them. And sometimes I just feel so selfish that I'm the one that gets those snuggles and gets to spend those moments with those kids. So I totally get what you're saying. Like, it's so rewarding that I feel like, you know, I'm not not being rewarded for what I'm doing. I get to hang out with these kids. But I do think that that's like a pretty common theme. And, you know, that's good. Because like, I wouldn't want people to think I'm doing this for like, a bad reason or, you know, something nefarious, like, you know, my heart is just in helping But yeah, I think I think that I definitely agree with your viewpoint on that.

Cat 8:00

What made you want to be a foster parent?

Chrissy 8:03

Well, I think since I was young, in high school, I had always had intentions of adoption. And so that was always kind of in the back of my mind. But with foster care, I became involved because I'm in the education system. And so I had seen lots of kids and any teacher you speak to, we always have those kids were like, Oh, we would take them home in a heartbeat, we would take them home in a heartbeat. So when you meet a kid that you just adore, and you find out that they are in a situation where they're in the in between, and they, you know, there may not be living with their birth family right now. They're working towards that. And you're thinking, Oh, I could be, I could stand in the middle, I could open my door. So that's really why I got into foster care was because I thought I see these kids, I see them walking my halls every day. And that's something that I have to offer . I could be a foster parent and hope in that in between

Cat 9:03

How long have you been a foster parent?

Chrissy 9:05

So I have been a foster parent for three years. I am starting my fourth year, this month.

Jack 9:11

You've made such a difference in our community in those three years that you've been a foster parent, and I'm grateful that you're one of us.

Chrissy 9:19

Thank you. I appreciate you saying that.

Jack 9:20

Can you tell us a little bit about the big change that happened in your life shortly before you adopted your four year old?

Chrissy 9:28

When I became a licensed foster parent, I was married. I had my son who was nine at the time that we started fostering and we had a new home and we brought children into our home. So we had seven children at the time and all of a sudden it was out of the blue. I found out that my husband at the time was leaving and he did not have a job.

He was moving across state It was just very much, you know, middle of the night conversation. I was completely blindsided, we were a month away from adopting our four year old. And if you've ever gone through that process of fostering a child and moving towards adoption, it's a long process, it takes months, it takes lots of paperwork. So to say

that I was caught off guard is putting it mildly.

I mean, I thought I knew where I was going to be not only the next day, but 10 years from now. And all of a sudden, it was my entire world changed. And with seven babies sleeping under my roof that night, my first thought was, what about them? What is going to happen to these kids? Because they were my, they were my priority.

And, again, this conversation happened in the middle of the night, and I could not sleep because I thought, what does this mean? What does this mean? What does this mean?

And how can I make this as smooth as possible for these children, because I did not want them to suffer any more than they already had of coming into care. And here was this fatherly figure that like me, they just assumed would always be there. And that was going to be taken away from them, too. So it was very important to me to keep as much stability for them as possible.

I did not know what that meant for my license. I did not know what that meant for my son's adoption. We had two other children in our home, their goal had been changed to adoption and thought, you know, for sure they were going to stay with us forever. So there was just a lot of questions, but I had to look at it of the lens of my children.

When I became a single parent. First of all, I had seven children, and I had a van that would only hold seven, one big piece right there is one of my children, he moved in with his brother. So that was already part of in the works prior to this happening. But he was we expedited that and he was able to get with his brother, which was wonderful.

It was just every day something new came up. And with that adoption, I think they just assumed because my four year old had medical needs. And here I was on my own, that I had changed my mind. And I said, Oh, absolutely not, I just tell me what I need to do to continue this process. I still want to adopt him. But part of the paperwork for adoption is you have to do a financial spreadsheet and all of this. And even though you receive a stipend for being a foster parent, you have to be able to support those children without that stipend.

So here I am solo parenting on a teacher salary, with six kids under my roof was not receiving child support at the time because my divorce had wasn't legal yet. You know, they're like, well, how are you going to do this? You know, I got a lot of like, kick back. And don't you think he would be better in a home with a mom and a dad. And that was very difficult for me because I do have an awesome relationship with his birth mom. And I felt like I was letting her down to, you know, I said, I'm gonna fight and I know in my heart, since the day I put my eyes on that child, he was mine.

And so I continued to work through and I luckily have a strong support system. I said, if I have to teach tutor kids in the middle of the night, I will do whatever it takes to prove that I can provide a safe and loving home for him for the rest of his life. Because that was so very, very important to me. So initially, his adoption was set for August of that year, and it got pushed back to November, which wasn't bad, but they also expedited it at the end because it was getting close to National Adoption day. And but there's just some things that you know, and I knew that he belonged with us,

Jack 14:14

You know, your life was one way in the middle of the night, it completely flipped a different way. Were there times where you questioned whether you wanted to be a foster parent, to continue being a foster parent.

Chrissy 14:25

I'm not gonna lie, there are plenty of times that I've tried to, you know, move out of the foster care system. Well, so when this happened initially, it was about those kids who were in my home and I did tell myself more than once, once these kids have their forever, then I can let my license expire. And so over time, those kids they found their forever whether that was adoption or reunification, but the way that your license works is you do all your paperwork and everything, you get your house checked out, and your license is good for a year. And so once those kids found their forever, I thought, okay, I'm not going to renew, I am not going to renew. And I would take respites here and there for friends and that sort of thing. But I thought I just really need some time for myself. But it always happened. You know, I had a foster mom, friend, she was moving out of county, and they couldn't find placements for her kids. I was like, Okay, I know, these kids, I've got a bed, they can stay with me, you know, then they have that stability. So I kept it another year. So there was always something that kept me renewing that license. And, and keeping that open, even though Yes, there are times that I told myself, I'm not sure I should be doing this anymore.

Jack 15:48

So one of the things that's interesting about this is, so many people want to wait for their life to be perfect before they start fostering, you know, we've talked before a lot of people always say, Oh, one day, I'm gonna do that. And I've always wanted to foster, I, you know, I just can't do it right now, because all of this is going on in my life. But you know, the truth is that nobody's life is ever perfect, right?

Chrissy 16:12

When I initially began, you know, I got this new house, and I was in a job that I was very comfortable with. And that would be a time that you would consider to be perfect, right? But I've actually been a solo

foster mom longer than I was a married foster mom and had a partner.

So what I can tell you from being in that position where everything was turned around, I learned that what it felt like for these kids, when they when they show up at your door, and they didn't know where they were gonna lay their head that night, sometimes they don't know me from Adam, you know, and last night, they were with their parents, or last night, they were here are there a place where they were comfortable, and they're coming somewhere where they're not. And if anything, it gave me that empathy to understand what it feels like when your world is turned upside down.

And parenting by myself, I've had to rely on other people. And I think, when I was with my ex husband, and we were foster parenting, I was very independent, like, I'm gonna do this myself, if we can figure this out. Didn't mean I didn't ask for help now and then, but I'm not afraid anymore. Like I if I need help with this, I will text this person, I will ask this person and it I realized that it's okay to ask for help. And that's not just with foster parenting, that's with everything.

But it does truly take a village to raise your children. And I have just spread my wings when it comes to opening up that village and making people aware of what's going on in foster care. And if they don't want to be a foster parent, here's some ways that you can support me.

But you're right. I mean, by getting in staying in the foster care system, even when I was going through so much chaos, I realized you can do it like you as long as you have an open heart and a willingness to do whatever it takes to make things right for these kids, you can do it and you're gonna have support around you, whether that's other foster parents, or that's the guardian ad litem program, you know, relying on case management, you know, there are people there who are going to be willing to help you so and what is perfect, you know, what, my house is completely different than your house and any other foster home.

Jack 18:41

I know what you mean, though, for sure. You know, to make excuses like, and I don't mean to call it an excuse, because fostering isn't for everybody. But fostering is for a lot more people than who are doing it and just say, oh, I'll do that one day, or when my kids are older, or Oh, you know, I want to wait for this to happen. Or, you know, I've got a lot of hours that I work every week.

You have just shown that none of those excuses are really valid, because you're a single foster parent with special needs kids working full time as a teacher, which is extraordinary. And I just feel like, you know, even if you think your life is perfect, that is going to be

perfect. At a certain point. You could go to sleep one night and have a conversation with your husband, and everything is different than next day. And in the meantime, we don't have enough homes with open doors to children in foster care.

Cat 19:34

It's true. It's true. It really is extraordinary that you came through your own trauma during this time and you had so much resilience.

Chrissy 19:41

I was at the pool yesterday with the kids and a neighbor came up, you know, because they come in with the baby. She says Who's this? Oh, he's mine. She said can I hold them? And I said yes. But you know, as you were talking more and more and she just said, well, you have a lot going on. You have a lot going on and in my head. I'm thinking so do these kids. Yeah, you know, so do these kids. And because I opened my door, a brother and sister get to be together. Yeah. And that was really important.

Jack 20:22

But yeah, so it's so cool that you were able to get siblings together and maintain your license.

Cat 20:30

I think people often use that you have so much going on. It's like an accusation. You know, like, you're so busy, you have so much going on, you know, but the reality is, you're doing one of the most important things you could ever do.

Chrissy 20:42

But and I will say even I, you have to also know your limitations. And so that was I had a placement he transitioned to a pre adoptive home about April, I guess. And I did not take placements from that point until school got out just because everybody knows how busy it is at the end of the school year, and I knew I could not take a placement and give it my all during that time. We were going through changes as a family from elementary to middle school and my job and that sort of thing.

So I did do respite In the meantime, because if you do respite that does open some beds of potential long term placements. So I did respite, but I'll tell you as soon as school was out, like my phone was ringing, how about this? How about this, but it really tugs at my heartstrings, when they talk about siblings separation, or when we have kids in group homes,

Jack 21:39

There is such a need to keep siblings together. Because a lot of people don't have enough room, they may have children already in their home that are adopted or biological when they become foster parents,



and then may only have a bed for one kid. And that's okay, because there are lots of single kids. And if you've got one bed, it's better to help out with that one bed did not help at all. But I know when my three girls got reunified with their mom, a couple of weeks ago, they were calling me before we had even loaded the car. Because there were so many sibling groups sitting in the office that day that they were really trying to keep together.

Cat 22:17

I think that the child welfare system is changing. And they're realizing that more but like in the past, I think they often will set with separate siblings with without question. I do think they're making more of an effort now. But it's the longest relationships we have, you know, long after like, your parents are gone. You know, I mean, hopefully, we get to keep our siblings. You know, it's an I think that often, we don't realize that and I often will hear foster parents or other people in the tub welfare system, talk about how kids don't get along anyway. Or there's a lot of rivalry. Well, you know what my kids don't get along. My kids have a lot of sibling rivalry, but they their relationships will last much longer than I will hopefully, you know. And so those relationships are really important. And when we separate them, then we're causing more trauma.

Jack 23:07

I think there are certain situations where it's not best to keep siblings together. And maybe we could have you on another episode and talk about your one of the situations that I know of that, that that I've seen, like, in certain situations, certain siblings may create more trauma within each other.

Cat 23:25

It's true, but it's a lot more rare.

Jack 23:27

But the thing is that when there aren't those situations, and they're placed together initially, right off the bat, I think that's really important, because a lot of times they're scrambling to find placement, and they, you know, just get kids where they have beds right off the bat. And then two years later, they if the kids need to be adopted, they're trying to put them back together. Yeah. And then these kids have grown apart. Yeah, and I think that is really where the problem is. Whereas if they were able to be pleased together initially, barring certain situations, where you know, you've got mental health disorders, or where they just aren't safe to be around

Cat 24:06

like there are certain perpetration kind of thing. Yeah, there's those issues but we've had way too many siblings that were separated. Yeah, just no good reason other than, other than there's not space.

Jack 24:15

So Chrissy – what do you think the biggest surprise about being a foster parent was that you weren't expecting?

Chrissy 24:21

I think you read a lot about the heartbreak of being in the foster care system and or being a foster parent and people saying all the time I couldn't do that because of the heartbreak I couldn't do that because of the heartbreak and you spoke about that a little bit a minute ago. And I agree 100% because foster parents will tell you it's worth it in the end it's worth it and it is absolutely worth it. I am surprised that I keep doing it because there has been so much heartbreak with the the kids and my family and watching my boys have their heartbreak parts broken. You know, that's really hard to but I No, in the end, it's made us all better people.

Jack 25:03

But honestly, both of us are foster parents, I wouldn't give it up for anything. And I know you wouldn't either. And the heartbreak is so far outweighed with, you know, the joy, the happiness, you know,

You were talking about how it affects your kids. And you know, My son has struggled a little bit with having his three sisters go home a couple of weeks ago, but seeing the joy that he has, and yesterday was probably, you know, as you know, you were talking about that you didn't want to take a new placement until the summer started, right, like a long term placement.

And what I wanted to mention there was that one thing that people may not know, unless they're a foster parent, is that really, for the most part, one of the hardest times of a foster placement is when they first come to your house. You know, you talk about the honeymoon period, how they're on their best behavior when they first of all, first of all, they're not all your best behavior when they always, you know, you definitely they definitely might be. depending on the age, they might be showing you their good side, because they're scared, they don't feel safe with you yet to show you their bad side. However, they've also just been extremely traumatized And also, they don't know your rules, they don't know your expectations. And so a lot of the times the hardest part of a of a placement, is it right at the very beginning, when you're getting used to each other.

So I think we just hit our stride. So we took three new kiddos that are siblings, the day my girls left, and that was almost two weeks ago. And I want to say that we just hit our stride like a day or two ago where up until then, I felt almost like I couldn't breathe. Like I was stressed all the time. I was anxious, and questioning myself, like what did I do? And obviously, you know, I've been a foster parent long enough to know what I can handle and what I can handle. But in that first period of time, I feel like you would you would probably agree

with me that it's it's very difficult. It feels chaotic. It feels like they're not what are they ever going to listen to me? What are they ever going to start acting like when other kids and you know, you just have to always remember and I think that sometimes when people get a placement and disrupt right away, it's like you have to give that kid an opportunity to get to get to know. And it's not just them. It's my kids too, because my oldest son gets upset when people don't follow rules. Yeah, he's not as you know, upset when he doesn't follow the rules. Different story, that's a different story. But, you know, the first week that the kids were here, it was constantly like, he did this and why would he listen to the rules, it's like, you got to give them time to get used to it. So then my kids were acting up because they were mad that these kids weren't following rules. And, you know, it just takes a little time to

Cat 27:56

And I think to like, you know, that first year life kids are developing trust and when you have a baby home from the hospital, you know, they you get to do that when they wake up in the night and you retrieve them when they cry and you retrieve them. Sometimes I wonder if new placements do that too. In the first few months, if they're, if they are in through their environment wondering Is she gonna come when I cry? Is she going to come when I call her when I get her to she going to come? You know, I know it's just a tiny splinter. But if I cry, well, she come I wonder if they're developing? Well, they are developing trust, but I often relate it to that first year of life when infants are developing trust, and we get so frazzled because we're like, oh my god they want i mean none of my babies slept through the night till they were one and it was so hard. And now I look back and I'm like it's probably because I was so anxious and I probably made them so anxious that they didn't sleep but you know sometimes when I with kids I often and then their parents or other foster parents are like they're doing this they're doing that and it seems so clear to me they're seeking out your trust you know, they want to know if they can trust but I'm sure from like the nucleus it's it seems probably really chaotic.

Chrissy 29:04

Anytime I get a long term placement and oftentimes respite one of them is sick you know, this guy's always happen always to

Lice which you know, may not think it's a big deal. Especially when they've got super thick, long hair and you're having to tug on their hair and your story made me think of it because they thought I was just torturing them and like, I promise I'm trying to help you get these out of your hair. Um, I mean stomach bugs, you've name it, I get new placements and they'll they'll be sick like right off the bat but I will say it although I do not want any child to suffer in any way shape or form. They are learning I am going to help you feel better. I will sit in this doctor's office for three hours I will get you the

medicine. I will be up at night holding back your hair and you're not going to get in trouble for throwing up on my carpet. You know, like, they're like, I think it is a bonding time, although we don't want anybody to be sick and it is a little bit miserable. It does allow us, you know, to bond through that. And some of these children, you know, they've parent, they've been the parent, you know, sometimes they're the oldest and so for them to be cared for. Yeah, it's just, it's really opening for them, it opens that, that trust and that bond.

Jack 30:24

Now a question for you. Cat is, you know, I will say that a lot of kids do come into care sick, right. However, I do you feel as though Chrissy is the extreme? Like, it's almost like, Oh, she's getting to a place where there's got to be someone saying, is there a correlation between going through trauma and your immune system?

Cat 30:52

Yeah, it does decrease your immune system, you are more likely to be to get sick when you've been through trauma.

Jack 31:00

So I would, you know, most kids at removal are going through a trauma in that moment. But a lot of the times, like when I look at the reports, afterwards, of kids who come into care, it's like that whole week, there was something going on that just build them out and lead up to it

Cat 31:15

There is a correlation, because it's increased cortisol decreases your immune system, and the increased stress the increased trauma.

Jack 31:26

So pair that with if there's sometimes when there's neglect, or try to be as the kid might not be, you know, always brought to the doctor, when there's an issue add on top of that decreased immune protection due to the anxiety that they're experiencing from the trauma. Now,

Cat 31:43

a child might already be having chronic ear infections or whatever, you know, those things might already be happening. And

Jack 31:49

so you must just beginning to really stress kids, really bad trauma,

Chrissy 31:52

because you remember, you remember that placement I got and he cuz they do when the kids are brought into care, they get kind of an a medical overview anyway. And so I had this one little guy, he wasn't even to yet. And they said he couldn't walk. He was 20 months. And we sat him down. And he he was but it was more like a waddle almost like

he was dizzy, you know, when he walked really awkwardly, and we were like, this is, you know, strange. And it lasted I mean, more than 24 hours. Well ended up taking him to urgent care. But long story short, he was in a car accident. Oh, restrained way before he came into care, like, oh, my god, yes. Great. They open he we looked over him and he was fine thinking, well, he was not fine was halfway, he was not fine. And we ended up going through all all of that. He knew he ended up having scans and all of these things. Remember, he couldn't jump on a trampoline for like six months. And he's my very athletic one. So anyway, it was kind of one of those l like you guys forgot to mention that.

Jack 32:59

And it was a car accident, that was like part of a car chase, which was like the result of him coming into care because he was in the car for a car chase, and there was an accident. So you wouldn't have thought that they would have told you about that right off the bat since that was why he came in to care

Chrissy 33:16

Exactly. Today, but he was also the one that they said, Well, you just keep one night. You I think you were the one who orchestrated that.

Jack 33:26

Yeah, I'm also Yeah, sometimes sometimes when placement calls me or if I'm chatting with somebody from placement, and I know somebody has room that that other people might not know about, I'll be like, hey, by the way, call so and so I bet you can get them in there. So that's our fun, I enjoy, you know, forcing my friends.

Cat 33:48

Well, and you know, I don't know, like back to the, you know, kids being heartbroken thing. I don't know that like I can even say this in a way that sounds eloquent enough. So you might have to, I don't know. But I was reading some research recently that talked about how when youth and young adults seek out images on the internet that are not appropriate. Those are often kids and young adults who haven't been exposed to any life experience that's caused them to have significant emotions, like both negative and positive. Like they haven't had a lot of sadness. They haven't had a lot of heartbreak they haven't experienced like, you know, just having their heartbroken at their grandmother's funeral. They haven't experienced also a lot of joy. They haven't experienced like true life, ups and downs. And so when my own kids experience ups and downs, I'm so sad, you know, like when they're experienced, like, you know, when their experiences are really sad, but it does. I do feel like there's a protective factor that, you know, gives them resiliency later on. And, you know, I know that they will not be probably seeking out those experiences, artists Because they're experiencing them naturally.

Chrissy 35:02

Does that make sense? Yeah, organic. And I will say that's, you know, you understand with your kids, that I call them my forever kids. But yes, they go through the heartbreak, just like I do when kids go in and out. Now they don't know the background of, you know, where these kids are going, or why these kids are going, they just know, you know, my brother's not here anymore. And my sister's not here anymore. But it has molded my kids in to have such empathy and compassion. And that's not a typical character trait of autism.

But I will tell you, my 12 year old knows how other people are feeling, you know, he can read those facial expressions, which is difficult for some, but he and he, he loves these kids when they walk in the door. And he's sad when they leave. But you're right, like it, it's teaching them they, you know, to be thankful for what they have and grateful for what they have. But also we can do hard things, and we're going to come out, okay. And I'm very fortunate that I've had a wonderful life and great parents and awesome siblings. And, you know, that made it sometimes difficult to relate to what these kids are going through.

But again, I've had a point in my life where everything was turned upside down. And I said, I'm going to figure out how to get through it. If these kids can get through it. If they can come in my door and open their hearts to us, I can do the same, I can fight through all these challenges. And I will figure it out, I'm pretty stubborn, one way or the other, you know, to keep them safe. And to give them that consistency and show them especially I had some female tweens in my house at that time, and I wanted to show them you can do this, you don't need a man or a partner, you know, you can find that inner strength, you have it within yourself, you can do anything you put your mind to. So do not let anybody tell you that it can't be done because it can.

Cat 36:56

What do you think got you through this time? Like what support system? What tools did you use?

Chrissy 37:02

Well, my parents played a very big role in all of this, unfortunately, they were in Japan. On the night when all this happened, of course, they had to be halfway across the world. But, you know, my, my parents loved these children, they love my children fiercely. And they've had their hearts broken by foster care just as much as I have.

But we are family. And we'll do anything, you know, for each other and to help each other. And so sometimes that meant, you know, I was at work. So my mom would go to court, my mom helped with transport because I had, you know, six kids at four different schools. And so she, she would help get two of the kids to one Elementary School,

which wasn't the one I was teaching at.

I had a neighbor who would help with transport to school, I became very close with a another single solo foster mom, we had always been friends. But at this point, it was kind of like, we did a lot of like, let me drop this kid Off with you. Because I got to take this one to the doctor. And you know, so we did a lot of that our kids were really close.

I found a church program that just embraced all of my kids, and allowed me to drop them off and go to service and have time to myself. I also had to learn to take care of myself. And that is what all the people who helped me, they would tell me like, what are you doing for you? And so I figured out a way to give myself a little bit of that time.

Because I think if I don't take care of myself, I can't take care of them. So I would say definitely my parents, other foster moms and neighbors. And I've I had to be very vulnerable, I think with some of those those people and letting them because it was hard for me to say I can't do this by myself, you know, but, you know, I had a friend she showed up at my door the next day.

And you know, I think she just knew she just knocked on my door and she said, hand me the baby. You know, go help the girls with their hair. I'm here, I'll do whatever you need. And so I had to accept that. I had to be willing to accept that and know that that didn't mean I was a weak person. It just meant that I was putting my kids first.

Jack 39:24

What do you think the best thing is about being a foster parent?

Chrissy 39:34

My favorite part is working with those birth families. And you know whether they are working their case plan and getting really close to reunification. I've had kids who've reunified and that's awesome. I've also had cases where those kids their goal was change to adoption, but I still kept in touch with them and with that birth family, because in this these situations, it was safe to do that. But I think family is so important.

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