

# Parenting Characteristics

## **Empathy and Compassion:**

Empathy and compassion are the ability to perceive/feel others' emotions, particularly others' disappointment or sadness. It requires that the resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents look past the current behavior and find the core distress related to the child's response. These parents know they cannot shield the child from pain but must allow the child to experience and express pain and grief.

## **Self-Awareness/Self-Reflection:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents can understand and be aware of why they have responded to a child in the manner that they have. They can identify what was good, bad and different about the way they were raised while adjusting their parenting to meet a child's needs. They can identify and forgive themselves for having negative feelings toward a child, moving from disappointment to acceptance. They know their history of experiencing loss and being hurt and can identify how they might bring their experience into their parenting in negative ways if they are not careful.

## **Resilient and Patient:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents, and adoptive parents see their role as helping children achieve success in small steps, beginning with measurable daily tasks. They do not dwell on past mistakes or the future to pressure themselves or the children. They celebrate small successes, teaching the child to appreciate each effort, no matter how small. They can wait for answers or solutions without giving up. They can handle and tolerate a child's "testing" behaviors, including hurtful, angry or rejecting comments and actions.

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## **Trustworthiness**

Creating an environment of trust is the role of resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents. Trust is based on understanding the importance of honesty, consistency, routines and rituals. Then it is being able to put that understanding into practice. It requires the ability to be careful about what is promised to a child. Hence, resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents can keep their word and meet expectations they have set.

## **Emotionally Supportive Nurturing**

It is important to create an emotionally supportive environment that gives the child a safe space to talk about their emotions, including the positive ones. Children need a supportive space to share. They need a calming guide to listen and empathize, so they feel heard and understood. This could mean listening more than you speak and allowing the child to find solutions for their problems.

## **Attunement:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents can be aware of, understand and be sensitive to the specific responses and needs of a child, even if the child does or does not express these needs directly. They must be in tune with a child's moods, exhaustion, hunger, rhythms and responses. They must also understand the child's needs for physical contact, affection, security, stimulation and movement. This helps build a trusting relationship. Staying calm in moments of stress while helping the child manage their own emotions.

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## **Tolerance for Rejection:**

These resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents do not take it personally when a child directs hurtful comments or behaviors at them. They acknowledge that the rewards of parenting are not immediate; in fact, it may take a long time before they experience them. Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents can provide a loving, nurturing environment to a child without receiving any acknowledgment, gratitude or love in return. They look to other relationships in their lives to experience those feelings.

## **Committed:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents can be dedicated to a child, sticking with them no matter how difficult the journey. They carefully and thoughtfully consider the requirements of parenting a child. They understand that it is not about fulfilling their own parental needs. They recognize the role may not offer much appreciation or valuing of their skills and talents but are willing to commit to the long-term work of unconditional parenting and supporting child well-being. They believe in commitment and can persevere in the face of adversity. They are secure in their commitment to the children in their care and know that they are doing the right thing.

## **Appreciation for Diversity Other World Views:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents understand and appreciate children who bring a different set of values with them. They can accept that the child's behaviors and values may not be the same as their values and that this will feel uncomfortable and, at times, very wrong. They know that if not resolved/accepted, this can be a real source of upset, tension and conflict.

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## **Realistic:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents understand that there are different kinds of success with different situations and with each child. They understand that their efforts may not change a child's understanding or behavior until much later. They know what their expectations are for the child. They can identify when those expectations are not being met and when they may need to change their expectations.

## **Relationally-Oriented:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents can recognize the importance of the child's relationships. They show respect for the birth family, previous relationships and the child. They can move beyond any anger or jealousy they may feel toward birth families. This allows them to help the child resolve relationship issues with birth family members and former resource families to ultimately grieve losses, maintain connections and feel good about themselves.

## **Adaptability/Flexibility:**

These resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents have the willingness and ability to change their parenting style to adjust, encourage and support the child's physical, emotional and mental needs. As part of a parenting team, they each share the responsibility of caring for children. Successful resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents are comfortable acknowledging when something is not working. They can try a different approach or modify their expectations for the children they are parenting.

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## **Belief in Self-Efficacy:**

Resource parents, relative resource parents and adoptive parents feel competent. They have confidence in their ability to effectively parent.