

Setup for a setback

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I was seven years old when I went to live with my grandparents.

No one knew it, but my mom had been in jail for three days and I was living all by myself. Everyone forgot about me. On the third day someone remembered and went to the house and took me to my grandparents. I did not know what was happening. My grandparents just told me she would be gone for a little while and I had to stay there. So I did.

I was angry. I did not understand why she had left me – just like dad. I thought she did not want me. Then in the end, I do not think she ever did at all. But I ended up going back to live with her. It happened all over again when I was thirteen.

I was back at my grandparents. I was hurt and confused. Everywhere I went, it seemed like no one wanted me. I was that “oops” child that was born out of wedlock and no one knew what to do with me, except my dad. He loved me – but then, he left me to deal with all this by myself. So I grew up believing that he did not really love me either.

All over the world, kids get taken away from their parents every day. Some reasons children are taken away include substance abuse, child abuse, neglect, or death. These kids, like me, are usually either placed in foster care or with other family members. No one understands the psychological damage this does to the child. I do... because I lived it.

It still has a huge effect on my life to this day, and I suppose it always will. More than 523, 000 children are in the foster care system (“Reflections of a Foster Youth” 1). Most of these kids do not get adopted, and they turn to

other sources seeking love, that they cannot seem to find in adults. Joseph Doyle, an economics professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management who studies social policy, says that kids who stayed with their families were less likely to become juvenile delinquents or teen mothers and more likely to hold jobs as young adults (1). Foster care can also cause money problems. The United States spends 22 billion dollars to provide services for children in foster care; this averages about forty thousand dollars per child (“Reflections of a Foster Youth” 1).

These lonely, misplaced kids have no money to build on for their future; unless their parents left them money, which is rarely the case. They usually have to get a job and start out all by themselves. Many of the kids do not succeed because it is very hard to do. Thirty-three percent will experience homelessness twelve to eighteen months after leaving foster care. Three of ten of the nation's homeless are former foster children (“Reflections of a Foster Youth” 1).

Kids have to adjust to all the new places they are taken. There is always a shortage of foster homes for kids in need, causing siblings to be split up or moved from home to home as space becomes available (Colette 1). From families to case workers to foster homes, there are never enough people to care for these kids. Case workers are in huge demand all across the nation. Foster families sometimes feel like there is not enough support or compensation, and this is because the case workers are overloaded with too many demands (“Pros and Cons of Foster Care” 1).

Most of the kids that are not put in foster care usually stay with another relative. According to the 1990 Census, 3.5 million children, or 5.5 percent of kids in the United States, live with their grandparents (Genaro 2).

Grandparents report more behavioral and emotional issues of custodial grandchildren than other children of the United States population.

Two major reasons may account for these issues within custodial grandchildren (Smith 1). Substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, death, illness, divorce, incarceration, and HIV-Aids are all reasons children usually receive care from grandparents. These all bear risks of psychopathology within the children (Smith 2). Custodial grandchildren also experience these difficulties because of the challenges the grandparents face. Grandparents face many issues because the kids are unplanned. This can strain the caregiver's money and retirement, as well as cause anxiety, anger, irritability, and guilt (Smith 1).

As a child raised by my grandparents, I felt that I was a burden to them and to my other family members. I felt as if no one wanted me and I would be better off if I was not alive to bother anyone. So I definitely had psychological problems as a kid being raised by grandparents. Another problem is that it is hard to get the financial support needed to raise kids from deadbeat parents. When more people move into a one or two person household, it may put the household at a great economic disadvantage.

All the expenses that come with a child can be greatly overwhelming (“Children Raised by Grandparents” 2). My mother did not seem to care and assumed that if I was going to live with my grandparents, then they could

take care of me financially too. Many parents do this and it causes a huge strain on the grandparents. Both financial and psychological turmoil are common problems faced by foster parents and grandparents in this situation. A daycare provider says that most of the kids she has kept who are not raised by both parents have more emotional issues than those who are guided by parents.

Kids raised by parents have far less psychological problems than those of custodial grandchildren ("Children Raised by Grandparents" 2). These issues are completely avoidable. People make bad choices. This is why so many kids today are not living with their parents - like they should be. Children today are messed up and turning to drugs, alcohol, and sex because some parents only think about themselves.

Most kids that are abandoned are born out of wedlock. They were never really meant to be here; the parents say it was an accident. People need to grow up and quit believing their excuses why they abandoned their own child. We should not need foster care. Grandparents should not have to assume responsibility when their kids have an unexpected child.

If a person is responsible enough to be having sex, they should be responsible enough to handle the child they produce. If they cannot provide for the baby, they should not have it. By doing this, parents set their children up for a setback, instead of setting them up for success. If people became more responsible and mature, we would not have this issue. The same daycare provider says, "Families of the children should take responsibility and take up for the children".

All we need to do to solve this problem is to take responsibility for our actions and make smart decisions.