

## What's It Like to be in Foster Care Outline

Laurie Olsen: Entered foster care at 13, fictive kin, never adopted so I aged out. I'm one of 7 kids, my mom parented the younger three with her latest husband, two older ran away from home, other older went to residential treatment and I went into care. I'm now a foster mom and have adopted two unrelated children, 10 at the time of adoption and 3 at the time of adoption.

Laura Singer: I was removed from my parents' custody at the end of third grade when I was 8, until the beginning of 5th grade, age 10. I was separated from my younger brother and moved throughout thirteen different homes before being reunified with my biological parents. I compete in pageants and use my platform "Get Out, Go Serve" to mentor at-risk youth and share my experience in foster care. My current title is Miss Maryland Collegiate United States and I recently graduated from Georgetown University Law School.

Jeanette Yoffe: Entered the New York State foster care system at the age of 15 months, I was in foster care for 6 ½ years, I had visits with potential adoptive homes and stayed in the same foster home. I was placed into a permanent home at the age of 7 ½ and was adopted. Author of the book, [\*What's Your Name, Who's Your Daddy?: A One Woman Show About Growing up in Foster Care and Adoption\*](#)

Dan Hall: Daniel's story is one of going from struggle as a youth to being an inspiring, resilient dad, software engineer and mentor to foster and adoptive parents. He grew up in foster care, with his siblings, from ages 2 - 5, was beaten, verbally abused and told he wouldn't amount to anything. Up until about 15 years ago, he didn't care about anyone or anything. He was eventually saved and adopted by the Halls while his siblings aged out of the system. Daniel has had a long successful career as a top-level software engineer which spans 25+ years. Together with his wife Tina, he has six adopted special needs children and he says they have been and continue to be his biggest teachers.

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- What was the experience of being removed from your home and taken from your parents? I would assume only Laurie and Laura were old enough to have memories of this since they were 13 and 8 at the time.
  - Was there something that your foster parents could have done when you were first placed in the home to help alleviate some of the trauma?
  - Did you feel fully included in your foster family? What can foster parents do to help the child feel included?
  - This wasn't relevant when you were in foster care, but what are your thoughts on blurring out the foster child or putting stickers over their face when posting pics on social media?
  - Relations with the children of the foster family.

- Who did you feel like was on your side? Who could you go to if you needed help?
- Do you think enough was done to help your biological parents before you were removed?
- Do you think enough was done to help your biological parents with reunification? Or do you think they were given too many chances?
- Do you have pictures or keepsakes from the time you were in foster care? Would these have been or are they important to you now? What can the system do to make sure these are preserved?
- While I'm sure you carry the scars of your early life trauma, you have all become successful and--at least from the outside looking in—emotionally healthy adults. What factors contributed to this?
- Tips for foster parents.