

Timing is Everything

Exploring Your Readiness to Foster

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Fostering eventually felt like a natural development, but it was important for us that we waited until we felt we were in the right place in life to be able to prioritise the care of a young person, before we jumped in,

[Chris and Sophiaan](#)

Becoming a carer can be one of the most giving and rewarding things you choose to do in life, but knowing you're ready to foster children requires careful self-reflection and consideration of many factors. We can help you with advice around what children and young people need from a care environment, including some signs that you may be ready:

Emotional Readiness

Being ready in your mind and heart is a big first step in ensuring that the time is right for you and your family to embark on this journey. Great carers are emotionally intelligent and aware of the boundaries to keeping themselves and their family happy and well throughout. If you're ready to foster you would have :

- **Patience and Empathy:** You feel capable of providing emotional support, even to children who may have experienced trauma or have pain-based behaviours. Carers are able to see that children are not their behaviour but they are a sign of their needs.
- **Resilience:** You can handle difficult situations, setbacks, and challenges without becoming easily overwhelmed or discouraged. Most people have encountered tricky emotional times throughout their life however it's important they are something you've set behind you and aren't navigating whilst taking on the journey to become a carer.
- **Unconditional Love and Support:** You're prepared to offer care without expecting immediate gratitude or a specific outcome, knowing that progress can be slow. Children in care need you to be able to give your whole self to providing them a safe and secure environment without expecting a thank you.

Stable Personal Life

A child's entry to care can be a tumultuous time filled with uncertainty and pain. Providing a space for them to settle, feel secure and begin to heal is grounded in having a stable and predictable environment. Knowing if it's the right time to foster can involve having a look at how your personal circumstances can add to a sense of stability for a child.

- **Consistency:** Your home environment is stable, and you're able to provide a sense of security and routine for a child. This means that there aren't people regularly coming and going, and you're not needing to move in the short term. Coping with change and the unknown is something that can be extra challenging for a child who has already been through so much.
- **Healthy Relationships:** You have supportive and healthy relationships with family, partners, or close friends who understand your decision to foster and are ready to support you. If you're going through any major changes in relationships, be that ending a relationship, people joining or leaving the home, or any other major change it can be worthwhile taking some time to settle in first. Ensuring there is great communication within your home is key in this respect to make sure everyone is on board.

Financial Security

We know that the cost of living is a challenge for many Australian's in the present day, and for foster carers another consideration is ensuring that you are financially stable enough that potential outlay of funds will not cause you financial stress.

- **Financially Stable:** You are in a position to support a foster child, covering both expected and unexpected expenses. While fostering agencies provide financial assistance, it's important not to rely solely on that. Carers tell us that whilst the carer allowance provides for most of a child's needs, there are times they will need to dip into their own pocket. One important consideration in this respect is how you might manage if you need to have time off unexpectedly to care for a child due to illness, incident or school suspension.

Time and Availability

Time is one of our most precious commodities and where all human relationships take form. Whilst time is something we often find hard to come by in today's day and age, it's easily one of the most critical factors to consider in working out if fostering is for you and your family right now.

- **Time Commitment:** You have time and flexibility to dedicate to a foster child, attending school meetings, doctor appointments, therapy sessions, and other activities. The biggest thing you can give to a child is your time, and for children who've experienced trauma they will need even more of it than your own children would. It's important to think about your current commitments, work and social, as well as how you take time for yourself in considering if fostering is for you right now.
- **Energy and Patience:** You're aware of the emotional and physical energy required to care for a child and feel ready to commit. Physical time is not the only consideration, but being emotionally available to give a child your undivided attention is just as critical in forming a connection that can help them feel safe and nurtured.

Willingness to Learn

Great carers are lifelong learners who appreciate the many ways we build wisdom and knowledge through our lives. Being ready to model a reflective, growth mindset is an important attribute that people who are ready to take on fostering will display. This includes an openness to challenging your current perspectives and growing as a caregiver.

- **Openness to Training:** You're willing to undergo the necessary training and education required to foster, including learning about trauma, child development, and managing pain-based behaviours. When becoming a carer there is initial training you will need to commit time to completing, along with ongoing learning opportunities along the way.
- **Ability to Adapt:** Whilst training and formal learning is important, learning on the run whilst caring for a child through tapping into your care team's wisdom and reflecting on moments is key. If you're ready to foster, you're open to adjusting your parenting style and household routines to meet the needs of a foster child.

Understanding the System

Foster carers are great team members and advocates for children in care, which requires them to have a good understanding of the child protection and out of home care system in which they are accredited. Sometimes the administrative elements of fostering can be challenging yet critical and legislated parts of providing care.

- **Realistic Expectations:** You understand that fostering can involve complex relationships, including those with a child's family, building care team relationships and the administrative elements of caring. Understanding that fostering and parenting are different propositions are an important factor to consider here.
- **-Commitment to a CARE ethos:** At LWB we practice with CARE – Creating Conditions for Change, as our therapeutic framework. We expect our carers to learn about the elements of CARE and bring them into their home to help provide a space for growth and healing. You can learn more about CARE [here](#).
- **Prepared for Emotional Complexity:** You are aware that children in care may have experienced trauma, neglect, or abuse, and you feel ready to support them through their healing journey. You are prepared for relationships to take time to develop and willing to give that unconditional care required to develop connections and trust.

Support System

Whenever we embark on something big in life having great supports around us are key to our success. Fostering is no different. Carers need to have their own support network on board, as well as being willing to extend that through relationships with peers and professionals.

- **Strong Support Network:** You have people in your life who can provide practical help and emotional support when you need it. It's important to have a think about who you call upon when you need a chat, or a hand with something, and share your thoughts on fostering with them.
- **Professional Support:** You're willing to engage with a care team made up of professionals as part of the fostering process. These will include key Life Without Barriers staff as well as education, health and other professionals a child might be engaged with.

Long-term Commitment

- **Prepared for the Journey:** You're aware that fostering is not just a temporary arrangement—it's a commitment to the well-being and development of a child, whether they stay for a short time or long term. This commitment starts when making an application to foster, with the process itself taking time and availability to move through.
- **Prepared for Change:** You're flexible and can handle the uncertainty and changes that come with fostering, including children coming and going from your home. Whilst you can imagine how bringing a child into your home might make a difference in your life and theirs, you need to be open to flowing with whatever that change brings.

If you're confident in most of these areas, it may be time to start your fostering journey. If you're unsure, we're here to provide guidance, answer your questions, and help you determine if fostering is right for you.

Andrea and Colin reflect on making sure the time was right for them to foster : [Andrea and Colin | Life Without Barriers](#)

Chris and Sophiaan discuss how they waited seven years for the time to be right to foster. Listen to what they thought about along the way : [Chris and Sophiaan | Life Without Barriers](#)

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