

## **The Incredible Year Training**

I foster along with my wife for Hackney Social Services.

We got our 1<sup>st</sup> child in July 2008, with little or no experience about fostering, basically we just used our parental skills acquired from bringing up our two children.

This worked for a short period, later our foster child started to exhibit some difficult and challenging behaviours. This causes a lot of stress, confusion, pressure and misunderstanding within the whole family.

Finally we concluded that the placement should be terminated.

While the social workers were busy arranging for another suitable placement, I was lucky to be invited to come and broaden my knowledge by attending the 12 weeks **Incredible Year Programme**.

The training has helped me to sort out the issues I face with my foster child and set the stage for sensitive nurturing and competent parenting that foster positive social behaviours in children as well as enhanced self-esteem, by learning the most effective parenting approaches I have reduced my child's behavioural problems before they got out of control so as to strengthen his emotional and academic competence.

After 8 weeks of intensive training, I have been able to implement some of the new strategies and skills I learnt with my child and we noticed significant changes in our child both at home and report from his school. This has made the family to change our decision to terminate the placement, and work closely with child and the social services.

While in training it was stressed how it's very important to value play and set aside playtime with our children. The teachers emphasised that Play helps to build warm relationships and strong attachments between family members and it also creates positive feelings. Also play time encourages the development of vocabulary so that children can learn to communicate their thoughts, feelings and needs.

Through play I have helped my child to solve problems, test out ideas and explore his imaginations. Play time also helps him to interact socially by teaching them how to take turns, share and be sensitive to the feelings of others, it promotes his feelings of self-worth and competence.

With a flexible approach to special time and good quality special time given to my child, it has helped to reduce pressure, his feelings of anger, fear, inadequacy and has provided successes and pleasure which has developed him into a unique, creative and self-confident person.

During the training we were also taught the importance of using praise and other social rewards such as positive attention, smiles, and greetings with warmth in our eyes, hug, stickers, pat on the back and high-fives with our children. Children who receive a lot of praise from their parents develop increased self-esteem. We also learnt that lack of praise and attention for appropriate behaviours can lead to increased misbehaviours and that if foster carers take responsibility by modelling positively, there is likelihood of positive change in the relationship with the child.

I have learnt to focus on the positive things my child is doing and to encourage and praise him frequently with care and sincerity for his efforts. I used the praise and encouragement strategy to guide my child through the small steps it takes to master new skills, to help them develop a positive self-image, and to provide the motivation he needs to stay in a with a difficult task. Consequently, I noticed that my child likes to repeat and expand those positive behaviours.

Tangible reward is another important type of reinforced tactics I learnt from the training. Tangible reward is something concrete, a special treat, additional privileges, stickers, celebrations, or time spent with someone special. They are usually used to reinforce the achievement of a specific goal. I am using this presently as an incentive to motivate my child to change some of his particular difficult behaviours.

I gave all credits to the organisers of this programme, they are doing a wonderful job, and they are very friendly and supportive.

The training is well presented and easily understandable.

This programme has really given me another dimension to fostering, has added to my parental skills which has taken me to another high level.