

A CHILD SUDDENLY CAME TO LIVE WITH YOU

Quick-Start Guide for the First Hours, First 3 Days, and First Week

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You do not have to solve the child's whole future tonight. Make the next piece of life safer, calmer, and more predictable.

START HERE: THE NEXT USEFUL THING

Your goal right now is not perfection. Your goal is to make the next piece of life safer, calmer, and more predictable.

FIRST 24 HOURS

- Food the child can and will eat.
- A clear place to sleep.
- Clean clothes or something comfortable to wear.
- Show where the bathroom is and how the house works.
- Confirm medications, allergies, or urgent medical needs if that information is available.
- Identify the responsible adult, caseworker, school contact, or other professional you may need to reach.
- Explain only the house safety rules that truly cannot wait.
- Tell the truth about what you know. Do not promise what you cannot know yet.

A SIMPLE HOUSE TOUR

Tiny information can reduce tiny uncertainties.

- This is where the cups and water are.
- This is the bathroom. The light switch is here.
- This towel is yours.
- This is where shoes or backpacks go.
- This is where you will sleep.
- If you wake up and need me, this is where I am.

WHEN YOU DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER

Try: "I do not know the whole plan yet. I will tell you what I know when I know it. Tonight, you are here with me."

You can be honest without giving a child the adult burden. If you do not know how long they are staying, when they are going home, or what happens next, say that calmly.

YOUR FIRST-WEEK COMMAND PAGE

One place for the facts, the next steps, and the routines that matter first

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YOUR ONE-PAGE INFORMATION LIST

Start with five headings. Fill in what you know. Write "unknown" where you do not.

CATEGORY	WHAT TO WRITE DOWN	MY NEXT STEP
SCHOOL	School, teacher, transportation, lunch, pickup, what happens tomorrow.	
HEALTH	Medications, allergies, doctor, insurance if known, urgent needs.	
IMPORTANT CONTACTS	Parent/guardian if appropriate, caseworker, relative, school, emergency contact.	
AUTHORITY / PAPERWORK	Only the documents you actually have. Note what you have been told is still needed.	
IMMEDIATE NEEDS	Shoes, car seat, glasses, backpack, clothing, bedtime item, hygiene items, other cannot-wait needs.	

PICK THREE HOUSE ANCHORS

Do not introduce twenty-seven rules. Pick three predictable parts of the day and build from there.

MORNING: What happens after waking up?

My simple plan: _____

MEALS: Roughly when and where do meals happen?

My simple plan: _____

BEDTIME: What are the last few steps before sleep?

My simple plan: _____

YOUR FIRST 3 DAYS

DAY 1 - ORIENT

Basic needs. House tour. Safety. Food. Sleep. No giant rule lecture.

DAY 2 - MAKE TOMORROW VISIBLE

School or no school? Who is driving? What time are you waking up? What happens after school?

DAY 3 - START A SMALL RHYTHM

Repeat the three house anchors. Notice what is working. Change only what clearly needs changing.

THE FIRST WEEK

What to gather, what can wait, and the one next thing

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BEFORE THE FIRST WEEK GETS AWAY FROM YOU

- Identify one adult you can call without giving the whole backstory first.
- Ask for one specific kind of help: dinner, pickup, a phone call, laundry, errands, or sitting with the child while you make calls.
- Confirm what school needs next.
- Confirm what health information or appointments need attention.
- Collect paperwork in one safe place.
- Write down questions as they come up instead of trying to remember all of them.
- If a professional or agency is involved, ask who your best resource person is for the next step.

WHAT CAN WAIT

- A perfect bedroom.
- A perfect routine.
- Every long-term decision.
- Every house rule.
- A full explanation for curious relatives, neighbors, or friends.
- Knowing exactly how this story ends.

ONE ADULT FOR YOU

Name: _____

Phone: _____

One specific thing I can ask this person for: _____

MY NEXT USEFUL THING

The one thing I need to do next is:

The thing I am giving myself permission NOT to solve today is:

Crazy GiGi reminder: Make today safe enough. Make tomorrow a little more predictable. Write down what you need to learn next. Then do the next useful thing.

GENERAL INFORMATION ONLY: Caregiving, placement, medical, school, and legal requirements vary by situation and location. Use the appropriate professionals and agencies for advice specific to the child in your care.