

THOUGHTS BY GRANDPARENT RAISING A GRANDCHILD

You know, for me there are stages to being a grandparent raising grandchildren. The first was horror at the life my granddaughters' parents expected her to live and the vow to rescue her no matter what the personal cost to myself. I KNEW that if I could just take the baby for a while, that would be what woke my daughter up and get her to straighten out her life. Then I could give the baby back. In this first stage I was going to SAVE both my daughter and my granddaughter. I would do anything because I KNEW I had the power to change their life. WRONG!

Stage two was falling totally in love with Danni. Even though she was what I called a "high maintenance baby", because she was having problems due to withdrawal from drugs her mother took while pregnant. In this stage I realized that Kelly was probably never getting well enough to care for Danni. This is the stage where I decided that Danni was mine. This is the stage where I decided to turn my back on my own daughter to help my granddaughter. I realized then that there was nothing I could do to SAVE Kelly. Part of me was sad to admit that Kelly was never going to get well. But the other part of me rejoiced that I could keep this baby to myself. Turning my back on my daughter was easy because it was at this time Kelly was robbing us, lying to us, acting hateful, and making my very existence on this planet a miserable experience. I wanted her to disappear from the face of the planet.

Stage three happened when I got my wish. My daughter did disappear from the face of the planet. We didn't know where she was, what she was doing and if she was alive at all. I dreaded picking up a news paper, or watching the news because every time an unidentified body was found in this country I was afraid it would be my daughter. I realized that I did love my daughter. It was the pain and chaos she caused in my life that I hated. It was her mental illness and addiction that I hated. I also had learned from you, my good friends, that even though we can care for our grandchildren, love them as if they are ours, that they need the bio parents in their lives no matter how bad those bios are. I had to acknowledge that although we are Danni's true parents in the sense that we are the ones providing for her and giving her the unconditional love she needs, that she has another set of parents. Parents who gave her life but nothing else but in the eyes of the child are still part of them and needed. I learned that no matter how good a mother I am Danni will always want her birth parents too because a child identifies her self worth by those parents too. The children seem to feel, "If the ones who gave me life can't care about me, then there must be something wrong with ME". During this stage I hated my daughter for what she was doing to my baby.

NOW I am in a stage of acceptance. I accept my daughter for what she is, an addict, mentally ill, out of control, a criminal. But I love her anyway. I can see if you strip away all those ugly layers she is also the daughter I raised. She is a good kind person that will not step on an ant on the sidewalk, that will give away things she needs to help someone else in need. And I realized that she does love her daughter, she just is unable to convert that love into the action needed to care for her properly. But by giving the baby to me to raise she shows that she can not. I now am in the stage where I can love my daughter for what she is, and forgive her for what she is not. I can pray for her to get well but I can not fix her myself.

So dear friends, no matter what stage you happen to be in, I hope this helps you to find that we all go through these feelings and who knows.... there might be more stages down the road. After all most of us are at the beginning of this "new adventure".