

# SURVIVING THE 'UPS AND DOWNS' OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

ONE PARENT'S ADVICE FOR RIDING THE  
ROLLERCOASTER

You may be struggling right now because your kids have been taken away by 'the system'. I've ridden that roller coaster for 11 years so I have some understanding of what you're going through. It's one of the most life-changing rides that you could ever experience. Here are my top tips to help you hang on for all the twists and turns that might be coming ahead.



## HOLDING ON FOR THE RIDE

- Who do you want to ride with or invite into the carriage with you? Think about who you want as your support people, behind you, beside and all around you.
- Never ever give up. Don't get off the rollercoaster. The ride will get smoother. Just keep your focus on the kids.
- The Courts and Child Protection system can make this ride tough. Speak up and if they don't listen, speak up again. Make yourself heard over all the noise.
- You can't get off this ride, so remember what it is that makes you laugh - seek it out!

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF - SAFETY FIRST

- Surround yourself with things that make you happy and give you motivation. This could be photos of your children or your support group, affirmations, things that your children have given you like birthday cards, fresh flowers or nature objects.
- Time on your own is important for self-reflection. Think about what you can do better, rather than dwelling on the 'downs'.
- Find ways of expressing yourself on the ride. Turn negative thoughts or screams of fear into expressions of positive thoughts and affirmative self talk. I used to think to myself 'You can do this' and 'You are worth it' and 'Your kids need you'.
- At the end of the day you need to look after yourself before you look after anyone else.



## REMEMBER THE OTHER RIDERS

- If you continue to have contact with the kids, its important to keep yourself in check. Try to stay positive when you're with the children. Make the most of this time to make it a good experience for everybody.
- Appreciate the moments when you have time with the kids - the cruisy times in your carriage. This prepares you for the times when the ride gets rough.
- Sometimes the people riding with you can send you on a downward spiral, by discouraging you or not being there to support you. This can be friends, family or Caseworkers that actually want to get off the ride. If they told me "you're not doing enough" or try to knock me down, this would fire me up and motivate me to focus on the steady incline back up.

## JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS ALL OVER

- If you get your kids back into your care, know that the ride continues on and may still be a bit rough. Hang on, it will get smoother with time, love and patience.
- Secure your own seatbelt so that you can then buckle your children in. Recognise your kids have just got off their own rollercoaster and now are on yours. So give them time and space to adjust and not force anything.
- If you need help, reach out. There are services around that are willing to jump on board your rollercoaster. You've just got to get out there and find them. Never be afraid to ask.



*This Tip Sheet has been compiled by Alicia Floyd, mum of four children - one at home, two returned home and one remaining in foster care.*

*For further support, stories and conversation join Alicia at her FB Group 'Surviving Child Removal; for parents that never stop loving'*

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