

Highs & Lows of Fostering

Fostering is one of the most impactful things you can do to save an animal's life—but it can also be emotionally challenging. This handout is meant to normalize the full range of experiences, celebrate the joys, and prepare you for the harder moments so you feel supported every step of the way.

The Highs of Fostering

Watching Them Transform

One of the most rewarding parts of fostering is seeing change happen right in front of you. Animals who arrive scared, shut down, sick, or unsure often blossom in a home environment.

You may notice:

- A fearful dog learning to trust
- A shy cat coming out for affection
- A sick or underweight animal gaining strength
- A puppy or kitten learning how to be part of a family

These moments - sometimes small, sometimes huge - are direct results of your care.

Helping Them Find Their Forever Home

Seeing your foster animal get adopted can be incredibly fulfilling. You played a key role in preparing them for success by:

- Learning their personality
- Helping them build confidence
- Sharing valuable insights with adopters

You are part of their happy ending.



Being Their Safe Place

For many foster animals, you are the first person who has made them feel safe. You provide:

- A quiet place to rest
- Consistent meals and routines
- Gentle handling and patience
- Love without expectations

Even if they are only with you for a short time, that safety matters and stays with them.

Knowing You Saved a Life

Every foster home opens space for the shelter to help another animal. By fostering, you are literally saving lives, even when it doesn't always feel dramatic in the moment.



The Lows of Fostering

Saying Goodbye

Goodbyes can be hard—even when they're happy ones. It's completely normal to feel:

- Sad
- Tearful
- Empty
- Proud and heartbroken at the same time

Missing a foster animal does not mean you made the wrong choice. It means you cared.

Medical or Special Needs Stress

Caring for an animal who is sick, injured, or fragile can feel overwhelming. You may worry about:

- Doing something wrong
- Not noticing symptoms quickly enough
- Emotional attachment when outcomes are uncertain

Remember: you are not alone, and support is always available.

Compassion Fatigue

Feeling emotionally drained does not mean you aren't cut out for fostering. Signs of compassion fatigue can include:

- Feeling numb or detached
- Increased frustration or guilt
- Wanting to withdraw
- Feeling like you can't do "enough"

These feelings are common in animal welfare and deserve care and attention.

Behavioral Challenges

Some foster animals may:

- Be fearful or shut down
- Have accidents in the house
- Show anxiety or stress behaviors
- Take longer to adjust than expected

Progress is rarely linear. Setbacks are normal, and you are not failing if things feel hard.

Tips for Navigating the Lows

- Ask for help early - questions are encouraged, not judged
- Take breaks between fosters when needed
- Celebrate small wins (a first tail wag counts!)
- Lean on the foster team - others understand what you're feeling
- Remember your "why" - even short-term care makes a lifelong difference

A Final Note

Fostering is not about being perfect - it's about showing up. Some fosters will be easy. Some will challenge you. All of them matter. If you ever feel overwhelmed, uncertain, or emotional, please reach out. Your feelings are valid, and your role is invaluable. **Thank you for opening your heart and home. What you do truly changes lives.**