



The Best Mom I Can Be

BY HOLLIE WILLIAMS

Some names have been changed.

I went into labor late on August 14, 2011. My foster mom, Mrs. Peace, my foster sisters Anita and Shanika, and a midwife were in the hospital to help me. About three hours later, on August 15, at 2:40 a.m., I gave birth to Jewelz Thomas. I was so excited to finally meet my son, whom I carried for 40 long weeks. I loved him from the moment I held him, looked into his eyes, and started to breastfeed.

As I looked at my son, I thought about my mother. She died a little more than a year before Jewelz was born, from cirrhosis of the liver. The last time I saw her was Mother's Day, 2010. Her death was a devastating blow I cope with every day. But I'm striving to give my son the stability she couldn't give us.

Her alcoholism affected our family long before she died. She would run the streets at night and drink out in the cold; as a child, I'd try to get her back into the house. She couldn't hold a job or manage her finances. She would get evicted, and my four siblings and I spent some of our childhood in shelters. Still, she always praised us and told us she loved us. I miss her to this day.

On, January 2, 2001, all five kids were taken away from our mother. I was 9. My mother wanted us back, but had to prove to the court that she was able to care for us. Unfortunately, she was one minute sober and the next minute relapsing. By the time I was 13, I'd been in three foster homes. I kept running away to see my mom. I was the queen of AWOL.

I was angry because I wanted to be home already. The court terminated my mother's parental rights seven years after we went into care, but I couldn't accept that I'd never live with her again. I expressed my unhappiness about being in foster care by consistently running away.

A Good Mother

I love my mother and I miss her a lot. I wish I could hug her again. I cope by reminding myself my mother wanted me to be happy.

I love my son as much as my mother loved me, but I'm going to do better than she did for me. I am not going to let my son be placed in care. I'll do this by not creating an alcohol addiction for myself, by maintaining a stable home, and by furthering my education to decrease the possibilities of poverty or evictions.

I drink on special occasions, and it gives me that buzz of feeling great. But I know not to go past my limits. When I do feel heartache, I don't turn to alcohol to ease the pain. I won't do that to myself or my son.

Instead of drinking, I go to therapy to heal from my pain, get it out in the open, and cry. Therapy has helped me deal with the challenges of foster care, my mother's death, and the stresses of motherhood. Therapy helped me reset my mind to accept the fact that I was going to be a single mother after my son's father was incarcerated. I had prepared for us being a team, and that was a big adjustment.

I also attend parenting classes once a week. They teach basics such as setting limits, maintaining healthy self-esteem, and the difference between discipline and abuse. The parenting classes taught us how an infant is like an alien on the planet, helpless and with excessive sensitivity. Infants cling to us to love, cherish, care for them, and meet their needs. They need lots of love to reassure them that mommy or daddy is here. They learn trust and dependability from us.

We learned in class that you cannot spoil a baby. Holding and pampering a baby and comforting him when he cries is not spoiling him: He needs this comfort to learn to feel safe and secure. We need to be consistent too. My son's father should be released in a few years, so I hope we will be a family of mommy, daddy, and son.

I lived about 12 years of my childhood away from my biological mother due to her alcoholism, and I worried about her constantly. I have siblings I've never met, and when my mother died I lost the hope that I would ever know them. My mother meant well, but that doesn't take away the pain of feeling neglected.

Staying Strong for Jewelz

Having a baby stopped me from running away from everything. I am grateful for my son because my motivation increased. My focus on him replaced feeling bad about my mother's death. His life meant, "Your mom's not here, but I am! So, are you going to neglect us or care for us?"

Jewelz is my little angel. He's an active 20-month-old who's exploring the world. He's sweet, helpful, bright, energized, messy, stubborn, spoiled, and handsome. He loves taking a bath but hates when I rinse the shampoo out. He does not like the word no. He picks up words very quickly, and he likes to sing with the other kids in the day care.

A few weeks ago, I took Jewelz to the hospital because he was wheezing; it turned out he had bronchitis. Before he got his chest X-ray, around midnight, he sang "I Love You," from the TV show *Barnes*. It touched my spirit to see his sweet heart and his courage.

I was a child with an adult soul because I felt the need to take care of my mother, to worry about her, to not let her walk alone. My child will not have to worry about my addiction or us becoming homeless. My son's job is to be a kid, and Mommy takes care of the rest.

This story was excerpted from [“The Best Mom I Can Be,”](#) a story written for [Represent](#)