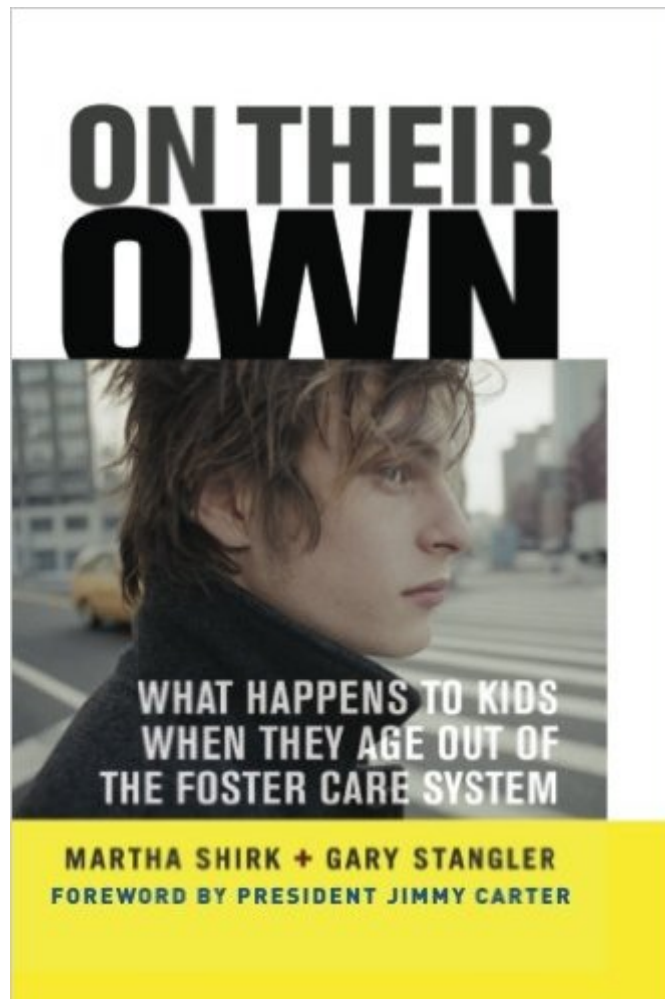


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On Their Own: What Happens To Kids When They Age Out Of The Foster Care System



Synopsis

On Their Own tells the compelling stories of ten young people whose lives are full of promise, but who face economic and social barriers stemming from the disruptions of foster care. This book calls for action to provide youth in foster care the same opportunities on the road to adulthood that most of our youth take for granted--access to higher education, vocational training, medical care, housing, and relationships within their communities. On Their Own is meant to serve as a clarion call not only to policymakers, but to all Americans who care about the future of our young people.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Luiz is 18, sitting on his bed in an SRO. He's hungry, and he has \$20. All he eats is take-out, because he doesn't know how to make his own dinner. He has no idea how to buy groceries or cook pasta. He has to start paying rent for his room in two weeks and has no job. He doesn't know how to ask for one, and isn't sure what a person does while they're working. How will he get up on time for work even if he does have a job? He thinks he needs an alarm clock, but has no idea where a person goes to buy one. He's down to his last set of clean undies, and has no idea how to do laundry. Kids in foster care often lack basic skills. When you go from one foster home to another, you never stay long enough to learn. If each foster home is in a different neighborhood, you end up switching schools constantly. You'll be uprooted every few months, never learning anything in school or at home. If you choose to take in foster children, you have to accept that they can be angry and hostile and moody. They may hate you with a vengeance and not want to take orders from you.

But your primary goal should be to teach them how to live. You need to take them to the supermarket and teach them how to buy pasta, bread, and meat. You need to show them how to cook, clean the pots, and buy food within a budget. You must teach them how to launder their clothes, and since not all buildings have washing machines, you teach them to use the laundromat. I taught scores of boys and girls who were raised by foster parents or by relatives. They couldn't take care of themselves, and life was impossible for them once they turned 18 and were out on their own. Some would go to college and flunk out, because with nobody there to tell them when to get up, they were unable to stick to a schedule.

When children spend most of their formative years in the foster care system, and then are turned out because they've reached the age of eighteen (or nineteen in some situations), the results can be devastating. *On Their Own: What Happens to Kids When They Age Out of the Foster Care System* zeroes in on these issues in great detail, sharing facts, figures, and anecdotal stories of featured young people. How they came into the system, the experiences they had, and what happened to them during the transition out of care. These stories were not new to me, having worked for many years in the system as a social worker; I could definitely connect with what happened to these young people, as I'd seen many of these events firsthand. Throughout this chronicle, the authors talked about different programs that successfully helped young people transition, and also shared legislation that offers a hopeful future for children in this situation. Most of us know from experience that children are not ready to be independent and fully functioning at eighteen, nineteen, or possibly even twenty-one. And when you factor in the scenarios experienced by children in care who are "protected" by law and not offered opportunities to experience independence, you compound the problem. Budgetary constraints are often the obstacles that prevent more help for these children. Community support can turn these issues around when private agencies partner with governmental agencies.

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