

## My experience as an au pair

I truly believe that nearly everything happens for a reason, even those things that we don't completely understand at the time. My experience as an au pair has been very special for me. Honestly, I think it changed my life completely -- the way I see everything and do everything is different now.

In 2015 I made the decision to quit my job as a video editor. I wanted to see more of the world and get to know different points of view. I was first placed in L.A. with a family who were very kind to me yet we never quite clicked. I felt strongly that it wasn't the right place for me. At the time all my friends thought I was making a big mistake but I felt I needed to follow my instincts. When I spoke with my host parents, they supported my decision and I went into rematch. It was a little scary because I didn't want to go back home yet, but I felt confident everything would be okay.

Fortunately, I found another kind family, this time in Seattle, and with them I had a chance to start again. I quickly fell in love with the city, the people, the four children in my host family. I felt something that had been missing before. I felt we had a deep connection. Everything was like a good dream my first year with them, so when they asked me to extend I was really happy.

In the first month of my second year, we all had a big shock. My youngest host kid, Ewan, who was 7 at that time, was diagnosed with leukemia. Ewan's life was turned upside down and so was everyone else's. I knew then that my second year would be very different, but I also knew I had to be there for them, because at that point we were family. We ARE family, I should say.

I can't find enough words to express how I feel about Ewan, his brothers and sister, and his parents. They are warriors. They are heroes. I have learned so much by just watching them keep true to what is most important at a time like this. Ewan's treatments and his health were top priority, of course, but it was also important for Ewan to know that we were there for him every minute. At the same time it was important to make sure he still got to have fun with his friends and feel like a normal kid.

I also learned a lot about being a part of a team, both within the family and also with others in their wonderful community. Sometimes it was hurrying to get Ewan's sister's snack packed and her soccer clothes ready so a family friend could take her to soccer practice on time, and sometimes it was being at the hospital with Ewan. It was an honor to be part of such a caring community that reaches out a helping hand at time of need.

When I look back now at my au pair experiences, I like to think about it this way: My first host family got me started in the program, and supported me in doing what I felt was right. Because of them I was able to meet my second host family at just the right time. That was simply meant to be. We needed each other. I will always be thankful for finding

them and for being at their side during this period in their life. Part of my heart will always be with them.

I learned last year that life can be challenging, that we might not understand many things that happen, and that sometimes it feels like you can't get a break when bad things happen one after another. But if you are with people you love, then you can make the best of any situation, together. This is now a belief that guides my days. And paying attention to what is truly most important on any given day helps me decide how to spend my time wisely.