

Holdin' It Down - Family has always been the foundation of our lives, bringing us love, support, and that feelin' of belonging. But life sometimes throws curveballs, and we find ourselves takin' on roles we never thought we'd have. Today, I wanna share my personal journey as an auntie holdin' it down for my nieces while their mama is locked up. It hasn't been easy, being single, workin' full time, and livin' in a small apartment, but the joy and love them girls bring to my life make it all worth it.

When I found out my sister was gonna be locked up, my heart hurt for my nieces. I knew I had to step up and take 'em in, 'cause family gotta stick together, you know? But bein' a single woman with a full-time job, I quickly realized the weight of the task in front of me. Work and everyday responsibilities leave me feelin' drained and stretched thin. This journey is taken a toll on my well-being. Moments of exhaustion, feelin' isolated, and carryin' the weight of constant responsibility.

It's important for family like me to recognize these struggles and reach out for help when we need it. Takin' care of ourselves becomes a top priority, so we can keep holdin' it down for our loved ones. Knowin' the value of support, I reached out to different organizations and community resources. Foster Kinship has been a Godsend. Connecting with other people going through similar situations has been a blessing. We share our experiences, offer advice, and give that emotional support we all need. Plus, I've been takin' advantage of available services like counseling, applying for urban league, and Boys and Girls club. It's made the load a little lighter and guided me on this journey.

Even though it isn't easy, in the midst of the challenges, there are moments of gratitude and strength that uplift me. Seein' my nieces reach milestones, witnessing their resilience, and feelin' the deep love and trust we share—it fills my heart with an unexplainable joy. It's in those moments that I find the strength to keep pushin' and providing a loving, stable environment for them. I wanna encourage all y'all caregivers going through the same thing to reach out for support, lean on your communities, and remember, it's okay to ask for help. Together, we can overcome the struggles, celebrate the strength of family, and pave the way for a brighter future for our loved ones. **Stay strong, fam!**