2019 IL App (2d) 180919-U
No. 2-18-0919
Order filed March 12, 2019

IN THE

APPELLATE COURT OF ILLINOIS

SECOND DISTRICT

In re M.O., III., a minor	)	Appeal from the Circuit Court
	)	of Winnebago County.
	)	
	)	No. 17-JA-50
	)	
(The People of the State of Illinois, Petitioner-Appellee, v. Calandra D., Respondent-Appellant).	)	Honorable
	)	Mary Linn Green,
	)	Judge, Presiding.

JUSTICE HUTCHINSON delivered the judgment of the court.
Justices Schostok and Spence concurred in the judgment.

ORDER

¶ 1 *Held*: The trial court did not err in finding respondent unfit and terminating her parental rights when respondent failed to complete the services necessary for the minor's return and minor had been cared for by one foster family for his entire life. Affirmed.

¶ 2 Respondent, Calandra D., appeals the trial court's rulings that (1) she was an unfit person under multiple sub-sections of section 1(D) of the Adoption Act (750 ILCS 50/1(D) (West 2018)) and (2) the termination of her parental rights was in the best interests of her child young M.O. We hold that the trial court's rulings were not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 3 I. BACKGROUND

¶ 4 When respondent became pregnant with M.O., she had a child, M.O.'s half-sibling, already involved with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).[1] Respondent was informed that DCFS would likely also have involvement with M.O. because she had not made progress toward having his half-sibling returned to her care. On February 24, 2017, respondent had an appointment with her primary care physician who instructed her to go to a local hospital as she was in labor. Respondent instead drove to Beloit, Wisconsin to deliver. After the delivery, the Beloit hospital staff contacted DCFS's hotline to inform the agency of M.O.'s birth. On February 28, 2017, the State filed a neglect petition alleging that respondent had failed to cure the conditions that led to the removal of M.O.'s sibling, thereby placing him at risk of harm. Respondent waived her right to a shelter care hearing, and the court awarded DCFS temporary guardianship and custody of M.O., who was placed in a traditional foster care home.

¶ 5 On May 11, 2017, the trial court held a hearing on the State's neglect petition. At the hearing, the trial court accepted five documents into evidence: the investigative report from M.O.'s birth indicating the possibility of neglect, the order adjudicating M.O.'s half-sibling as neglected, and three orders from permanency hearings, ranging from June 6, 2016, to March 28, 2017, indicating that respondent had not made reasonable progress to return M.O.'s half-sibling to her care. On May 18, 2017, the court found M.O. to be a neglected minor on the basis of anticipatory neglect.[2]

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[1] Respondent has had consistent involvement with DCFS since 2011. M.O. is her ninth child with DCFS involvement. None of the other children are a part of this appeal.

[2] Respondent appealed the trial court's adjudication of neglect and disposition granting DCFS guardianship and custody of M.O. In an unpublished decision filed on December 15, 2017, this Court granted appellate counsel's *Anders* motion to withdraw and affirmed the trial

¶ 6 On July 20, 2017, the trial court entered an order of disposition, finding respondent unfit or unable to have M.O. returned to her care. The court reasoned that because she just began her recommended services and because her visitation with M.O. was still supervised, she was unfit to parent M.O. Guardianship and custody remained with DCFS. The permanency goal was set to return home in twelve months.

¶ 7 Soon thereafter respondent reported to the case worker from Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI), the contracting agency for DCFS, that there were two separate domestic violence situations between her and M.O.'s father (the father).[3] On July 23 respondent reported that she "caught" the father with another woman in their apartment, argued with him, and left. When she returned later to gather her belongings, he confronted her and hit her. He was arrested that night. However, police reports contradict respondent's story and indicate that an incident occurred when respondent picked up the father from work and he questioned her about who she had been with that night. After he posted bail on July 25, he again became violent toward her. The father and his cousin saw respondent driving in a car, dragged her out of the car, and beat her with their fists and a baseball bat; he was again arrested. Respondent sustained a broken arm as a result of the attack.

¶ 8 The first six-month permanency hearing was held on December 6, 2017. The State focused on the reports and recommendations by DCFS. The DCFS family service plan had five desired outcomes for respondent: (1) understand the effect of abuse and neglect on her child and the impact on his life to provide him with an environment free from violence; (2) cooperate with

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court's adjudication. See *In re Maurice O., III.*, 2017 IL App (2d) 170598-U.

[3] At an April 2, 2018 permanency hearing, the court adjudicated the purported father to be M.O.'s biological father. He is not a part of this appeal.

LSSI, all other service providers, and any necessary services for her children's education; (3) establish an environment free from domestic violence by others and violence by herself to prevent exposing her children to further trauma; (4) participate in a psychological assessment to determine her parenting capacity; and (5) maintain a sober lifestyle. Respondent was rated as having made unsatisfactory progress for two of the outcomes: understanding the effect of abuse and neglect on her child and establishing an environment free of domestic abuse. To satisfactorily complete the desired outcomes, she was to participate in individual counseling and follow the recommendations of her domestic violence program. The plan noted that although she had participated in individual counseling, she failed to recognize the red flags in her relationship with the father, which led to two incidents of domestic violence. This concerned the agency because of respondent's history of engaging in violent relationships and her history of being dishonest with agency staff involving issues of domestic violence. The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) report, dated November 20, 2017, noted that respondent failed to communicate with the CASA worker, and that as a result, the worker was unable to observe any of the visits between M.O. and respondent. CASA's counsel also introduced a criminal complaint against the father for another felony domestic battery against respondent that occurred on November 23, 2017.

¶ 9 Respondent's counsel argued that respondent had been attending her required weekly therapy sessions after rearranging her work schedule to accommodate them. Counsel further argued that the reason she had not completed the required domestic violence classes was due to scheduling conflicts with the agencies. Finally, counsel argued that respondent was working toward getting an order of protection against the father. The trial court found that respondent had

not made reasonable efforts and ordered respondent to cooperate with CASA. The permanency goal remained return home within 12 months.

¶ 10 At the second permanency review on April 2, 2018, the State introduced a second DCFS family service plan into evidence. This plan had the same five desired outcomes for respondent, and she was rated as making unsatisfactory progress in the same two outcomes. Again, to satisfactorily complete the desired outcomes, she was to participate in individual counseling and follow the recommendations of her domestic violence program. The plan noted that although she had willingly participated in individual counseling, she continued to display the inability to maintain a safe living environment by allowing the father to enter her home in November 2017, leading to another domestic violence incident. It also noted that respondent failed to maintain orders of protection against the father. The State argued that because respondent had not completed her domestic violence classes, she had not made reasonable efforts or progress on the goal of return home. The State further argued that because respondent failed to complete her services, the permanency goal should be changed to substitute care pending court determination of termination of parental rights.

¶ 11 Respondent's counsel argued that respondent had done everything in her power to complete the domestic violence classes, but, through no fault of her own, LSSI did not receive her assessment until three months after she completed it, which delayed her ability to begin the classes. Counsel also argued that respondent had been consistently attending individual therapy and was making progress toward her goals. Counsel asked the trial court to find that respondent had made reasonable efforts and progress and to maintain the permanency goal at return home. The trial court found that respondent had failed to make reasonable efforts or reasonable progress

toward having M.O. returned to her care and changed the permanency goal to substitute care pending the termination of parental rights.

¶ 12 The State filed a petition to terminate respondent's parental rights on May 9, 2018. The petition alleged that respondent was unfit to parent M.O. on four counts: (1) failure to maintain a reasonable degree of interest, concern, or responsibility as to the child's welfare (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(b) (West 2018)); (2) failure to make reasonable efforts to correct the conditions that caused the removal of the child during any nine-month period following the minor being adjudicated neglected (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(m)(i) (West 2018)); (3) failure to make reasonable progress toward the return of the child to her during any nine-month period following the minor being adjudicated neglected (750 ILCS 1(D)(m)(ii) (West 2018)); and (4) depravity (750 ILCS 1(D)(i) (West 2018)). The two nine-month periods that the State identified for counts two and three were incorrectly listed as May 18, 2017 through February 18, 2017 and July 2, 2018 through April 2, 2018. The State filed an amended petition to address the scrivener's error in the first nine-month period, so that the first nine-month period became May 18, 2017 to February 18, 2018. The State did not address the second scrivener's error.

¶ 13 The trial on the State's motion to terminate respondent's parental rights began on July 6, 2018. The State called Jennifer Kramer (Kramer), a licensed clinical social worker, who was respondent's therapist. She testified that she was respondent's therapist for nearly a year and identified "several" objectives for respondent to address with individual therapy: anger management, the ability to control her emotions, the ability to develop a safe home for her son, and an exploration of the termination of her parental rights of the other children. She further testified that although alcohol abuse had been an issue for respondent in the past, she did not see the need to address substance abuse as respondent had been "sober for quite some time." When

asked about respondent's history with domestic violence, Kramer testified that respondent had been both the perpetrator and the victim of domestic violence in the past. Kramer stated that she was concerned because respondent had not identified the red flags in the relationship with the father and continued to see him even after he broke her arm. This concerned Kramer because respondent was not making progress toward identifying how to keep herself and M.O. safe. Finally, Kramer testified that, at one point, she believed that respondent was ready to have unsupervised visitation with M.O. However, her opinion changed when the case worker provided Kramer with information that differed from what respondent had told Kramer regarding respondent's relationship with the father. Kramer was worried respondent was being dishonest during therapy.

¶ 14 On cross-examination, Kramer stated that respondent had completed one of her therapy objectives, gaining emotional stability. Respondent also consistently attended her sessions and only ended therapy when her work schedule changed, sometime in April 2018. Finally, Kramer noted that respondent was able to recognize that to be a "functioning protective parent" she needed to be emotionally stable and "avoid entanglements" with men who would harm her or her child. On re-direct examination, Kramer noted that while respondent was able to verbalize the need to keep her and M.O. safe, she had yet to implement any strategies for keeping herself safe in her daily life.

¶ 15 The hearing continued on July 31, 2018. The State called Officer Jesse Geiken as its second witness. Officer Geiken testified that he had been a Rockford police officer for nearly 11 years and was on duty on February 8, 2011, when he was called to respondent's home. There, he witnessed a small pile of debris on fire in the kitchen, which he was able to put out by stepping on it. He also noticed that a glass-top table had been overturned, with broken glass scattered

across the floor, and a piece of glass protruding out of the drywall. There was also an "oily, slick substance" spread throughout the first floor of the home, including the kitchen, living room, and a first floor bedroom. Officer Geiken testified that respondent appeared very agitated and would go from speaking quietly to yelling for "seemingly no reason." He also noted a strong smell of alcohol on respondent's breath. Respondent reported to him that the stove was turned on as a source of heat for the home, and a piece of notebook paper caught on fire, which she tried to put out with cooking oil. When asked to point out the notebook paper, she "looked around for two or three seconds" and said that she could not find it. Officer Geiken later searched for the notebook paper and also could not find it. Finally, Officer Geiken testified that, contrary to respondent's indication that none of her children present in the home at the time of the fire, he discovered that her children were present in the home. The State later introduced evidence that respondent was charged with attempted aggravated arson and endangering the lives of her children as a result of this incident.

¶ 16 Next, the State called Amanda Paul (Paul), the LSSI case worker. She testified that she was the case worker for the entirety of the case and that from an initial integrated assessment of the family's situation, she created two service plans that listed services that needed to be completed for respondent to be reunited with M.O. She identified the two services plans, the first dated April 2, 2017, later amended in August 2017, and the second dated January 31, 2018. From the first service plan, respondent initially was only responsible for individual therapy. However, domestic violence counseling was added in August 2017 to address the two domestic violence incidents in July. Respondent was referred for the counseling in September 2017, completed the initial assessment in November 2017, and began taking the classes in March 2018. Respondent completed four classes before the April 2, 2018 permanency hearing. Paul testified that

respondent did not complete individualized counseling during the first nine-month period and did not make enough progress in therapy to have M.O. returned to her. She further testified that due to domestic violence concerns, and because the agency felt that respondent was being dishonest with her domestic violence counselor regarding her previous incidents of domestic violence, she was rated as not making progress toward having unsupervised visits with M.O.

¶ 17 On cross-examination, Paul testified that respondent did not follow through in obtaining a plenary order of protection from the father after the July 2017 incidents. Paul stated that respondent continued to have contact with the father after he broke her arm. She also testified that respondent was required to provide proof of attendance of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, but failed to produce any documentation showing that she went to the meetings. Paul admitted that respondent had completed one of her individual counseling goals. Finally, Paul testified that respondent completed the necessary steps for the domestic violence intake but the agency did not receive the results for three months, which delayed respondent from beginning the course until March 2018.

¶ 18 On re-direct examination, Paul testified that she was concerned about respondent's dishonesty involving the domestic violence incidents because she had previously completed domestic violence counseling but had not "utilized what she had learned in her previous class [nor] applied it to her current relationship" with the father. This concerned Paul because respondent was "minimizing her previous issues with domestic violence by not reporting them to [the counselor] at the time of her assessment." Paul believed that respondent's "lengthy history" of domestic violence makes a difference in her being able to make safe decisions for her children.

¶ 19 On September 27, 2018, the State introduced several documents into evidence including the two service plans, the initial indicated integrated assessment, eight orders adjudicating respondent's other children as neglected, four orders terminating her parental rights, records of respondent's February 2011 attempted aggravated arson and endangering the life of a child charges, and two petitions for orders of protection against the father filed by respondent.

¶ 20 Respondent's counsel then called respondent as a witness. Respondent testified that she attended weekly therapy sessions where she discussed her anger over losing her other children and how she could "overcome" what was happening with the current case. She felt that she was making progress in her counseling. Respondent further testified that she attended 16 out of 24 domestic violence classes. She stated that she is applying what she learned in the domestic violence classes by not engaging in romantic relationships and instead "working on" herself. Respondent testified that she loves M.O., that they do "everything" together, and that he calls her "mom." She maintains clothes, toys, and food that he likes at her home. She believed that, if given more time, she could complete all the necessary courses and have M.O. returned to her care.

¶ 21 On cross-examination, respondent testified that she let two emergency orders of protection against the father expire and did not get a plenary order of protection against him. Respondent admitted that she did not attempt to continue individual therapy after her work schedule changed. She further testified that her weekly visits with M.O. are still supervised and that she did not pursue an administrative appeal to obtain unsupervised visitation. She denied having seen the father outside of court since the July 2017 incident when he broke her arm, but admitted she was in contact with him via text message.

¶ 22 During closing arguments, the State argued that it had met its burden with respect to all four counts. The State argued that respondent did not maintain a reasonable degree of responsibility for M.O. and pointed to respondent's history of domestic violence, her not maintaining the orders of protection against the father, her failure to complete counseling and domestic violence classes, and her failure to accurately report the domestic violence incidents to her counselor. The State argued that in terms of both reasonable efforts and reasonable progress, respondent did not finish either her individualized counseling or the domestic violence classes within either nine-month period alleged. Finally, the State argued that respondent was depraved because of the neglect of M.O.'s other eight siblings who were removed from respondent's care.

¶ 23 Respondent's counsel argued that the State had not met its burden and pointed to Kramer's testimony that respondent had been in counseling for over a year and that she had been working on all of her goals during therapy, including her personal safety. Counsel further argued that respondent attended 16 of 24 domestic violence classes and that the agencies, not respondent, were responsible for the delay in her beginning those classes. Counsel also noted that respondent did not need to file an administrative appeal to begin unsupervised visits with M.O. Finally, counsel argued that respondent "lit up" when testifying about her relationship with M.O., and that she maintains an interest in M.O.

¶ 24 On November 5, 2018, the trial court announced its decision, finding respondent unfit on all four counts. For interest, concern, or responsibility by respondent, the court noted "she did not complete her [domestic violence] services and individual counseling, which equals lack of responsibility. Additionally, there were no appeals from the [administrative case review] filed by the mother whatsoever" to begin unsupervised visitation. As for both reasonable efforts and progress, the court focused on respondent failing to complete either individual therapy or

domestic violence classes as required on the service plans. The court also focused on its own findings that respondent failed to make reasonable efforts or progress during the two permanency hearings, and had been the victim of two acts of domestic violence during the nine month periods alleged. Finally, the court found that respondent was depraved because she showed a deficient sense of moral rectitude by not completing the services needed to protect M.O.'s half-siblings who were removed from her care and continuing to engage in a relationship despite the domestic abuse.

¶ 25 The trial court then began the best-interests portion of the proceedings. Both Paul and M.O.'s foster mother were called as witnesses. Paul testified that although respondent's visits with M.O. remain supervised, respondent is appropriate during these visits. Further, M.O. has bonded with respondent and calls her "mom" during their visits. Paul testified that M.O. had been in the same placement for the entirety of the case, he has bonded with his foster parents, siblings, and extended family, calls the foster parents "mama" and "dada," and has had all of his needs met by his foster parents. The foster parents took the initiative to establish regular contact between M.O. and his half-siblings. Finally, Paul explained that removing M.O. from his foster family would be a "traumatic event" for him because he views his foster parents as his primary caretakers. M.O.'s foster mother testified that M.O. has bonded with her, her husband, their children, and their extended families. They have established daily routines for M.O. and have included him in all family events since he came into their care. She testified that she and her husband are "open to any relationship" with M.O.'s biological family.

¶ 26 The State argued that due to M.O.'s bond with his foster family, the fact that their home is the only one that he's ever known, and because he feels safe and secure there, it would be in M.O.'s best interests to terminate respondent's parental rights to allow the foster family to adopt

him. Respondent's counsel argued that M.O. has bonded with respondent and calls her mom, which demonstrates that it is within M.O.'s best interests that her rights not be terminated.

¶ 27 The trial court found that the State proved by a preponderance of the evidence that it was in M.O.'s best interests to have respondent's parental rights terminated, and it appointed DCFS as legal guardian with power to consent to adoption. Respondent timely appealed.

¶ 28 II. ANALYSIS

¶ 29 On appeal, respondent challenges the trial court's findings that she was unfit and that it was in M.O.'s best interests to terminate her parental rights. The State responds by arguing that there was ample evidence to support both of the court's findings.

¶ 30 The termination of parental rights under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 (705 ILCS 405/1-1 *et seq.* (West 2018)) is a two-step process. First, the State must prove by clear and convincing evidence that a parent is unfit under any ground listed in section 1(D) of the Adoption Act (the Act). 750 ILCS 50/1(D) (West 2018); see *In re Keyon R.*, 2017 IL App (2d) 160657, ¶ 16. If the trial court finds that a parent is unfit, then the matter progresses to a second hearing where the State must prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the termination of the parent's rights is in the child's best interests. *In re Julian K.*, 2012 IL App (1st) 112841, ¶ 80. A trial court's findings of unfitness and best interests will not be disturbed on review unless they are contrary to the manifest weight of the evidence. *In re H.S*, 2016 IL App (1st) 161589, ¶ 23. A court's decision is against the manifest weight of the evidence only if the decision is unreasonable, arbitrary, or not based on the evidence, or if the opposite conclusion is clearly apparent. *In re Keyon R.*, 2017 IL App (2d) 160657, ¶ 16.

¶ 31 We begin our analysis with the court's finding of unfitness. The trial court found respondent unfit on all four grounds the State alleged: (1) failure to maintain a reasonable degree

of interest, concern, or responsibility as to the child's welfare (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(b) (West 2018)); (2) failure to make reasonable efforts to correct the conditions that caused the removal of the child during any nine-month period following the minor being adjudicated neglected (750 ILCS 50/1(D)(m)(i) (West 2018)); (3) failure to make reasonable progress toward the return of the child to her during any nine-month period following the minor being adjudicated neglected (750 ILCS 1(D)(m)(ii) (West 2018)); and (4) depravity (750 ILCS 1(D)(i) (West 2018)). Because the grounds for finding unfitness are independent, reviewing courts may affirm the trial court's judgment if the evidence supports any one of the grounds alleged. *In re B'Yata I.*, 2014 IL App (2d) 130558-B, ¶ 30.

¶ 32 With respect to the first ground of unfitness found by the trial court, section 1(D)(b) of the Act provides that a parent may be found unfit for failure to "maintain a reasonable degree of interest, concern or responsibility as to the child's welfare." 750 ILCS 50/1(D)(b) (West 2018). Because the language is disjunctive, any of the three elements—interest, concern, or responsibility—may be considered on its own as a basis of unfitness. *In re J.B.*, 2014 IL App (1st) 140773, ¶ 51. This ground does not focus on a parent's successes, but rather the reasonableness of her efforts and takes into account the parent's difficulties and circumstances. *In re Nicholas C.*, 2017 IL App (1st) 162101, ¶ 24. A parent is not fit merely because she has demonstrated *some* interest or affection toward the child, but rather the interest, concern, or responsibility must be objectively reasonable. (Emphasis added). *In re B'Yata I.*, 2014 IL App (2d) 130558-B ¶ 31. "Noncompliance with an imposed service plan, a continued addiction to drugs, a repeated failure to obtain treatment for an addiction, and infrequent or irregular visitation with the child have all been held to be sufficient evidence warranting a finding of unfitness" under section 1(D)(b) of the Act. *In re Jaron Z.*, 348 Ill. App. 3d 239, 259 (2004).

¶ 33 Here, respondent argues that the State is blaming her for being the victim of domestic violence and that this is not a proper basis to find a parent unfit. In response, the State argues that respondent was required to complete certain services that were a part of her service plan, which affected her ability to maintain responsibility for M.O., but that she failed to do so. We agree with the State.

¶ 34 According to the case worker's testimony, respondent failed to complete two distinct tasks in the service plan: individual therapy and domestic violence classes. Kramer, respondent's therapist, identified several objectives that needed to be addressed before reunification with M.O. could occur. We note Kramer's testimony that respondent successfully completed one of her therapy objectives and applaud respondent for that achievement. However, she did not complete the other three identified objectives: (1) anger management, (2) the ability to develop a safe home for her son, and (3) an exploration of the termination of her parental rights of the other children and what led to that. Kramer noted that although respondent had vocalized the need to keep her and M.O. safe, she had not yet actually performed any of the actions to do so. This was a serious concern for Kramer, as she explained that voicing the need to do something is different than actually implementing the strategies discussed in therapy. Kramer also was concerned about respondent's honesty in counseling, which led her to change her opinion about whether respondent should have unsupervised visitation with M.O. Ultimately, respondent never advanced toward having unsupervised visits with M.O. Finally, respondent stopped attending therapy when she could not attend Kramer's office hours because her work-shift changed, and she did not continue individual therapy elsewhere.

¶ 35 Regarding the domestic violence classes, we note that respondent's delay in beginning the classes was through no fault of her own, but rather the agencies' miscommunication.

However, this was respondent's second time attending domestic violence classes, and as the service plans indicate, respondent did not implement what she learned in the previous classes to her relationship with the father. The amended August 2017 service plan indicates that the "red flags" she missed contributed to the two acts of domestic violence in July 2017. The January 2018 plan noted that respondent had repeatedly failed to implement this training, leading to a third incident in November 2017. This, in part, led to respondent receiving unsatisfactory ratings on both "understanding the effect of abuse and neglect on her child and the impact on his life" and "establishing an environment that is free from domestic abuse to prevent exposing her child to further trauma" outcomes. Further, although respondent attended some of the classes, she also missed several classes and did not complete the course.

¶ 36 It is evident that respondent was subjectively interested in reunifying with her son by the appropriateness of visits and maintaining food, clothes, and toys for him in her home. However, a fact finder could objectively find that respondent displayed unreasonable conduct by failing to complete the services required of her in her service plans and not progressing past supervised visits. Because failing to complete a service plan demonstrates that respondent did not maintain responsibility (*In re Jaron Z.* 348 Ill. App. 3d 239), the trial court's finding that respondent was unfit because "she did not complete her [domestic violence] services and individual counseling, which equals lack of responsibility" was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 37 We turn next to respondent's contention that the State did not prove by a preponderance of the evidence that it was in M.O.'s best interests to terminate her parental rights. Respondent argues that because she and M.O. have bonded, he would be "hurt" if her parental rights were terminated, and thus the State did not meet its burden. We disagree.

¶ 38 Once a trial court finds a parent unfit, the issue becomes "whether, in light of the child's needs, parental rights should be terminated." *In re D.T.*, 212 Ill. 2d 347, 364 (2004). The court must consider a number of statutory factors in the context of the child's age and developmental needs, including physical safety and welfare, the child's sense of attachments, and the least disruptive placement for the child. 705 ILCS 405/1-3(4.05)(a-j) (West 2018). Additionally, the court may examine the nature and length of the minor's relationship with his present caretakers and the effect that a change in placement would have upon the minor's emotional and psychological well-being. *In re William H.*, 407 Ill. App. 3d 858, 871 (2011). A respondent's interest in maintaining the parent-child relationship must yield to the minor's interest in a stable, loving home life. *In re D.T.*, 212 Ill. 2d at 364. As previously noted, we will not reverse a trial court's best-interests finding unless it is against the manifest weight of the evidence. *In re N.B.*, 2019 IL App (2d), 180797, ¶ 43.

¶ 39 It is true that both Paul and respondent testified that M.O. calls respondent "mom" and that evidence was presented demonstrating that M.O. has bonded with respondent. Further, Paul testified that respondent was appropriate with M.O. throughout their weekly supervised visits, and respondent testified that she kept food, toys, and clothes for him at her home. However, Paul also testified that M.O. calls his foster parents "mama" and "dada," and that M.O. is "comfortable" in their home as he seeks them out for both play and comfort. Paul further testified that M.O. has bonded with his foster parents, siblings, and extended family. Paul noted that M.O.'s foster parents are "who he knows as his parents" as they have been "his daily caretakers for his entire life." Finally, she attested that the foster parents are willing to adopt M.O. and that disrupting his home environment would be "traumatic" for him. M.O.'s foster

mother testified that she has made sure that M.O. visits with his half-siblings and is "open to any relationship" with his biological family in the future.

¶ 40 Although the evidence suggests that M.O. has bonded with respondent during their weekly supervised visitation, that alone does not compel a conclusion that termination was against the manifest weight of the evidence. See *In re Angela D.*, 2012 IL App (1st) 112887, ¶ 39. The evidence also shows that M.O. has lived his entire life with his foster family, has bonded with each person in the family, and views his foster parents as his primary caretakers. Evidence was presented that removing M.O. from his foster parents' care would be traumatic for him. M.O. has been integrated into his foster family and feels safe and connected with them. Further, his foster family is willing to provide stability by adopting M.O. and is "open" to maintaining a relationship with his biological family. The trial court's finding was consistent with the testimony presented, and we cannot say that its decision to terminate respondent's parental rights was against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 41 Accordingly, we hold that the trial court's decision to terminate respondent's parental rights and appoint a guardian with the right to consent to M.O.'s adoption was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

¶ 42 III. CONCLUSION

¶ 43 For the reasons stated, we affirm the trial court's findings of unfitness and best interests and affirm the judgment terminating respondent's parental rights.

¶ 44 Affirmed.