

Is Building My Family Through Adoption Right for Me?



Most parents would agree that parenting is the most challenging and most rewarding job that you

will ever have. This is multiplied when your child comes to your family through adoption. What makes parenting a child through adoption more challenging are the issues of grief and loss. There are no adoptions that happen without a loss that occurs first.

Grief and Loss

Research tells us that even adoptive parents who take infants home from the hospital may still experience issues of grief and loss. Children being adopted from the child welfare system or an orphanage will likely also struggle with grief and loss, in addition to various stages of past trauma, some of which may be significant.

You can overcome this, however, by learning as much as possible and knowing when and how to get help. To read more about grief and loss for children in adoption and foster care go to: <http://wifostercareandadoption.org/library/358/grief%20and%20loss.pdf>.



Questionable Questions

Adoption is a widely accepted means to build your family, but there are still many people who don't fully understand it. When these people find out that adoption is a part of your story, they may ask thoughtful questions to broaden their awareness of the issues.

Others may ask questions that cause you to feel offended and may be inappropriate, especially if asked in front of your child.

Some of these questions include:

- Why did you adopt a boy (girl)?
- Can't you have children of your own?
- Why did you adopt a child of another race? Don't you want your kids to look like you?
- How much did your adoption cost?
- Aren't you worried about attachment problems?
- Why did you adopt an older child?
- Why did you adopt from another country? or Why did you adopt from the U.S.?

Thinking about how you may react when confronted with an invasive question may

Continued on page 2

even factor into your decision to adopt or motivate you to talk to other adoptive parents about how they field such questions. Additionally, you may want to consider how you will help your child understand the questions and the feelings that may arise in them as a result.

Birth parents are also unique to the adoption experience. Knowing your child was born to someone else can create certain feelings for both you and your child. Research has found that maintaining a connection to the birth family is extremely beneficial to an adoptee.

It can also be challenging, however, to manage those feelings while still encouraging natural curiosity and connection to the birth parent. Finding the balance can be easily achieved when you are comfortable and confident in your role as the parent, but this is not achieved overnight.

To read a story about a family who successfully maintain an open relationship with a birth father go to: <http://wiadopt.org/library/1003/toes.pdf> or a story about a mother who kept in contact with the foster family of a child from Guatemala go to: <http://wiadopt.org/library/723/maintainingconnections.pdf>.

Successful Adoptive Parents

How can you tell if you're a successful parent, let alone an adoptive parent? No one ever knows! But generally, successful adoptive parents:

- Are patient, flexible and tolerant.
- Have prepared for adoption and are ready to assist their child with getting adjusted.
- Encourage some kind of connection with their child's birth family (or culture) to help their child form a sense of identity.

- Create and use a support network of friends, family members and faith-based communities, including other adoptive families. (And remember to include us at ARW as part of your community.)
- Find humor in daily life, even when things are hard.
- Practice self-care.
- Like a good challenge and are willing to fight for their children!

Considerations of Adoption

Listed below are questions to consider while thinking about the impact that adoption will have on your life:

- Will friends and family be supportive of your decision and provide support?
- Do you have access to other adoptive parents in your community or can you get connected outside of your community?
- How will you feel about being connected to your child's birth family forever?
- If you are going to co-parent, do you and your partner feel the same way about adoption?
- Are you open to adopting a child from a different race or culture? What are the impacts of that for your life?
- What is your level of tolerance of others' judgment both good and bad?

Adopting is a beautiful way to add to your family, and it's a decision that will have a lifelong impact, but it's not the right fit for every family. Taking the time to consider the issues that accompany adoption is worthwhile, regardless of the choice your family makes.

