



Life Balance

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

June 2016

Adoption

A Big Decision with Far-Reaching Results

The desire to nurture and share life as a family is a strong universal need that is felt by many different types of people.

For children without a permanent home, adoption can provide the love and security that all children deserve. For prospective adoptive parents, the rewards can be equally satisfying but with many factors to consider—and steps to take—once the decision is made to adopt a child. If you're contemplating adoption, you have probably already begun your research. Here are a few things to consider as you begin the process.

First, what is adoption like for the many different types of families in existence today (e.g., single parent, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families)? How do you handle the home

study assessment? What do you tell your adopted child—and when? And, finally, what are the chances of rejection? These articles provide answers to some of those questions.

Single-Parent Adoption

In 1970, if you had gone to an adoption agency as a single person and applied to adopt a child, you would have probably been turned down—it just wasn't done. In fact, in some States, there were laws against single-parent adoption.¹

Today, thousands of children in the U.S. are living with single men and women who have chosen to become parents and who have been given the opportunity to provide a loving permanent home for a child. In the last few decades, there has been a steady, sizable increase in the number of single parent adoptions.²

Several factors have encouraged the acceptance of single parent families. Perhaps most influential is the growing number of one-parent households. Most of these single parents work full-time and are financially responsible for their families. While shouldering the economic burden, they also maintain the home and care for their children. This can be challenging but with the proper

support systems it is done by thousands of single parents every day.

In preparing prospective adoptive single parents, adoption agencies stress the importance of having friends and family who can lend support and serve as a back-up system. Having a strong support network can help. Meeting or corresponding with other single parent adoptive families can also help.³

LGBT Adoption

An increasing number of LGBT individuals and couples are choosing to build families through adoption. Laws regarding adoption by LGBT individuals vary by state.

In the past, in states where same-sex couples could marry legally, they could also adopt.

Today, now that same-sex marriage is legal in all 50 states, same-sex adoption is available in all 50 states as well. In the end, and in all cases, child welfare professionals and judges make the ultimate placement decisions based on the best interest of the child.⁴

The adoption process can seem daunting for anyone regardless

What To Tell Your Children

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends telling children that they're adopted as soon as they're able to understand—usually between ages 2 and 4. The concept of adoption still may be beyond them, but it's important to introduce the word into their vocabulary.¹⁰

There are many books for younger children about being adopted. Your family doctor can also be a source for ideas about how to discuss the adoption with your child. Or check to see whether there are any support groups in your area or online.

Let your child know that he or she can ask you any questions about the adoption. Bringing the topic up early will let both of you become more comfortable discussing what it means to be adopted. It is also important that all family members be able to discuss the adoption openly.

To help tell the story of how your child came to your family, keep a scrapbook of pictures and items from when your child was born and when you adopted him or her. These details and mementos can help your child understand your joy about having him or her in your life.

SEAP

Call Toll-free
1-800-692-7459
1-800-824-4306 (TDD)

or log on to
www.liveandworkwell.com
access code: Pennsylvania

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of sexual orientation or marriage status. To make the experience as positive as possible, do your homework before getting started. Being informed is the first step in the process.⁵

Finding the right agency is another important step in a successful adoption experience. One can ask other adoptive parents for feedback on the agencies they used. Or conduct Internet research by reviewing agency websites and joining an online discussion forum. Many agencies have support groups for waiting families. Ask for a referral to those groups, or consider starting a group if one does not exist.⁶

The Importance of the Home Study

The home study or family assessment process is intended to assess the strengths and capacities you would bring to parenting a child needing a family. It lets the agency best match a family's strength to the needs of a particular child. It is also the process through which the agency determines that the home is safe and secure for a child.⁷

The home study process can feel invasive and overwhelming regardless of family structure. It can create added anxiety, particularly when there are concerns about the agency policies and questions about disclosure. In all cases, full disclosure is always advised, whether it's regarding sexual orientation, family history or other aspects of your personal life or background.⁸

Waiting for the Decision

After you have finished applying to adopt and are in the process of completing your home study, you will have a waiting period. During this time, the agency will finish background checks and verify the information you have provided. Typically, this step concludes with a written home study report reflecting your agency's findings. These findings will determine whether you're eligible to adopt. This decision may take time.⁹

If your family is selected as the adoptive placement for a child, you will be provided additional information about the child. Once you have had an opportunity to review all of the available information about the child, and are satisfied that the match is a good one for you and for the child, the process of introducing your family to the child begins.

Can My Application be Rejected?

Rejection of an adoption application doesn't happen often because by the time you get that far into the process, you usually know where you stand. But once in a while, a family is surprised by a rejection. Here are some ways to decrease the chances of it happening:¹¹

- Make sure you are not thinking of a potential adopted child as a "replacement kid" for a biological child.
- Don't ever lie during the application and screening process about something serious, such as a previous criminal offense.
- Remember the importance of having strong references. A bad reference might not completely derail your adoption, but it could cause serious delays.
- Be realistic if you have a serious medical problem and always consider the best interests of a child.
- If you are rejected for health reasons, you might want to reapply to the agency or another agency in a year or two, with a letter from your physician describing your state of health and the prognosis.

The bottom line is that it is crucial to be sincere and strive to be positive but truthful throughout the entire adoption process. This will improve the chances of everything going according to plan and your placement being accomplished successfully.

Resources

www.liveandworkwell.com

Under the LiveWell section, click on Adoption to access specialists, adoption agencies, forums, news and resources. For additional support, you can find a clinician by clicking on the Search for Clinician tool.

1 Adoption Online, Adoption Library, Single Parent Adoption: What You Need to Know, http://adoptiononline.com/single_parent_adoption.html, accessed July 2015.

2 Ibid, Adoption Online.

3 Ibid, Adoption Online.

4 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Welfare Information Gateway, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/faq-lgbt/>, accessed July 2015.

5 Ibid, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

6 Ibid, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

7 Ibid, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

8 Ibid, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

9 Ibid, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

10 American Academy of Pediatrics, What To Tell Your Children, http://kidshealth.org/parent/question/emotions/adoption_question.html, accessed July 2015.

11 "Getting Approved to Adopt," <http://www.adoptuskids.org/for-families/how-to-adopt/getting-approved-to-adopt>, accessed July 2015.