

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Adoption is a complex, difficult, rewarding journey. If you're considering adoption, you probably have a lot of questions. It's our hope that this resource guide will provide a few answers, but more importantly, we hope it serves as a launching pad for further exploration as you contemplate this important decision.

In this guide, you will find adoption facts and information, accompanying resources and personal thoughts and advice from the adoptive parent and adoptee perspective.

We hope this guide will empower you to seek out other voices in the adoption community so you can continue to learn how to be the healthiest, most supportive parent to your future child.

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WHO WE ARE



Torie DiMartile is a transracial adoptee in an open adoption. She blogs and shares adoption resources at her website Wreckage and Wonder.

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Paige is the founder of Love Grown Adoption Consulting based in Wisconsin and is an adoptive mother of two.





FOSTER CARE VS. ADOPTION

Traditional orphanages no longer exist in the US. Instead, they have been replaced by group homes and the foster care system. Foster care is completely separate from infant adoption and is done through our government. Infant adoption is done through attorneys and adoption agencies (private or for-profit).

Over 438,000 children are in foster care and about 107,000 are available for adoption. 300,000 children in foster care are still in the custody of their biological families. The sole purpose of foster care is to be a temporary home for children until they can reunite with their biological family.

Refer to the glossary at the end of this resource guide for helpful foster-care and adoption related terminology.



60-70%

OF ADOPTIONS ARE OPEN AND LEGALLY ENFORCEABLE IN SOME STATES.1

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It's not a competition, it's another person to love your child. As an adoptive parent you need to get over your fears and focus on what is best for the adoptee. Also, I'm a mom because of my children's bio family. I owe them everything. I want to include them, I want them to share this, and I want them available for when my children want them in their life. Having an open relationship takes work (like any relationship) but it's SO worth it.

Paige



Torie

When you adopt your child, you adopt their family, history and past. It's essential to view their birth family as part of their story and therefore part of your story as well. Having an open adoption gave me access to my history, gave me answers to questions and a sense of peace with my adoption story. As your child grows older, give them the option of making decisions about the way their open adoption relationship unfolds. I chose, later on, to stop spending family visits with all my cousins but to do more intimate one-on-one visits with my birth mom instead.



EXPECTANT MOMS ARE TYPICALLY IN THEIR LATE 20'S AND MORE THAN HALF HAVE SOME COLLEGE OR ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE. 2

Every expectant mom's story is different. Their "why" is complicated and usually involves more than one reason. They continuously grieve; making an adoption plan is arguably one of the toughest things they have ever done.

Because a baby is not legally your child until finalization, it is important to be prepared for the possibility of an expectant mom choosing to parent. If an expectant mother decides to parent after you've met the child in the hospital and taken in those precious moments, it's understandable to feel emotionally wrecked.

However, despite your grief and pain, it is important to remain supportive of the expectant mother in whatever she decides. When an expectant mother decides to parent it is not a "failed adoption." A healthy biological family staying together is the best option for a child.

Terminology:

Expectant Mom =

A woman considering placing her baby for adoption.

Birth Mom =

A woman who has made an adoption plan and terminated her parental rights.



Even infant adoption causes trauma. 3

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Torie

Adoption trauma may not manifest the same way for every adoptee. In my experience, I was a happy, carefree and active child. Though adoption was discussed openly and often in our house, I didn't realize the depth of the pain I carried until later in my adoption journey. It's important to be aware of life experiences that might trigger adoption related loss and trauma (breakups, let go from a job, divorce, etc.) Just because your child is coping well in the present doesn't mean they won't encounter adoption trauma in the future.



Are you prepared to do the work? To educate yourself to better help your child navigate being an adoptee and finding their sense of self? Will you validate their feelings? Will you be there for them no matter what...even when it gets tough and for the long haul? (As Torie shared many adoptees really start to heal/dive into the trauma into young adulthood.)

Paige

EVERY 25 MINUTES A BABY IS BORN ADDICTED TO OPIATES IN THE U.S. 4



Expectant mothers come from a variety of backgrounds, and each has a unique and valid reason for seeking an adoption plan for their child. It's important to recognize alcohol or drug addiction might be part of an expectant mother's story and part of her desire to place her child for adoption. Therefore, an adopted child might be predisposed to addiction and in need of additional support.

There are many potential health concerns and risks that come with drug or alcohol exposure in utero such as significant developmental delays, behavioral and social issues and brain and nervous-system problems. Seek education and seriously discuss your preparedness to parent a child that may have been exposed to drugs or alcohol in utero.

DID YOU KNOW?





Many states lack appropriate laws and cap limits on adoption costs and expectant mom expenses.



Agencies do not have a uniform and universal home study process.



States vary in their adoption laws.



Not all agencies require or provide counseling services for expectant mothers or appropriate training for adoptive parents.



The number of families interested in adoption continues to increase as the number of women placing children for adoption continues to decrease.

ADOPTION IS A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY



"THERE ARE 18,000 DOMESTIC ADOPTIONS A YEAR, AND 36
WAITING FAMILIES TO EVERY CHILD BORN."
-NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION

As uncomfortable as it may feel to discuss family formation as a money-making endeavor, it's important to recognize adoption is made up of agencies, social work employees, and businesses advertising to clients in a supply and demand marketplace. And wherever there is a for-profit business, there is also the potential for profit driven corruption.

Therefore, it's possible for agencies, consultants, or other adoption related entities to take advantage of eager families and vulnerable women. It's essential you are diligent in fact-checking and asking questions in all adoption scenarios, to ensure expectant mothers, birthmothers and children are treated ethically.



INFERTILITY

IF A WOMAN HAS USED INFERTILITY SERVICES, SHE IS 10 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO ADOPT, SAYS THE CDC.

Torie

Adoption will not cure the grief of infertility. Adoptees typically already feel as though they must fill an empty hole in the life of their adoptive parent and might experience internal pressure to be an ideal child for fear of being unwanted and "rejected." The last thing you need to do is add your grief of infertility and unrealized dreams of biological children to the burdens an adoptee must carry.

Paige

I was diagnosed with unexplainable infertility at age 23. I also have a heart condition and found in genetic testing my husband and I are carriers of cystic fibrosis. We had a lot against us. You have to focus on you and your healing before you can even begin to have those adoption conversations. You need to grieve the loss of a biological child and the ability to carry your own child. You and your spouse need to have tough conversations about how important biology is to you and if adoption (and all the things that come with it) is something that is right for you.



73% of ADOPTIVE FAMILIES ARE WHITE.5

Even though African Americans are in the minority in America, black children are in the **MAJORITY** when it comes to foster care. 6

When instances of neglect were proven, white families were still more likely to **STAY TOGETHER** (e.g., kinship care) while black children were placed in non-relative resource homes.⁷

On average adoption of white children costs 10-18 thousand dollars more than the adoption of **BLACK CHILDREN.**⁷

IT'S IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE
THAT FOSTER-CARE AND ADOPTION
ARE MICROCOSIMS OF LARGER
RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN OUR
COUNTRY.

RACIAL IDENTITY



As a parent its essential to nurture and cultivate a healthy emotional, spiritual, physical AND racial identity for your child.



It's vital your child sees their racial identity reflected in toys, storybooks and art to develop positive selfesteem and knowledge of their racial history.



Hair in the Black community is a part of cultural and spiritual traditions steeped in African history. It's important to learn about hair care as an opportunity to bond with your child and validate and celebrate their unique identity.



It's important to be aware of the cultural and political history or your child's racial/ethnic community. Be sure to continuously seek out education.



It's essential to discuss in advance with your spouse the possibility of changing neighborhoods or changing school districts or church communities to provide your child with diverse environments that reflect their identity.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION



CHRISTIANS ARE MORE THAN TWICE AS LIKELY TO ADOPT A CHILD ACCORDING TO ETHICS DAILY.

While adoptive families might raise an adopted child within their chosen religious community, it's important to avoid language that can cause low-self-esteem. "Rescuing" or "saving" a child are phrases that can cause your child to feel like they were pitied rather than loved and can perpetuate the "poor orphan" stereotype. If you are an adoptive family of faith, be mindful of the language you use to communicate adoption to your child and always speak positively of their family and heritage of origin.

Torie

Birth mothers are not, for whatever reason, in a position to parent. This does not make them bad people from which adoptive parents "save" a child nor does it make the life a first family may have provided inherently less valuable. Including this "rescue" language can cause others to place undue praise on your decision to adopt, making adoptees feel like it's an act of charity to be loved.

Paige

You are not "saving" or "rescuing" a child. Putting religious pressure on an adoptee that you "saved" them so they will go to heaven could be detrimental to the adoptee. The adoptee should never be made to feel that they are lucky or saved. They experienced trauma and lost their biological family. There is nothing lucky about that. Also as we discussed, birth families do not fit the stereotype. They are not awful people that children needed to be rescued from.



CONTINUED LEARNING



Bringing baby home is NOT the end of the "race", it's the beginning of your parenting journey. It's essential to continue to seek out information, resources and education regarding adoption as your child grows in order to form and maintain a relationship based on understanding, openness and support. Below are a few resources that Paige and Torie enjoy and recommend:

aAdoptWell (Instagram and Podcasts)
aBigToughGirl (Instagram Birthmom perspective)
ayesimadopted (FB video of two Adoptees)
AdopteesOn Podcast
Born in June Raised in April Podcast

CITED SOURCES



- 1. https://adoptionnetwork.com/adoption-statistics
- 2.Pew Research & Adoption Institute Study https://www.adoptioninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Understanding-Options-Counseling-Experiences-in-Adoption-Qualitative-Study.pdf
- 3. American Academy of Pediatrics-Trauma
- 4.Law Library of Congress and Child Welfare Information
- 5.https://adoptionnetwork.com/adoption-statistics
- 6.https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/racial_disproportionality.pdf
- 7. http://foster-care-newsletter.com/human-discount-black-children-cost-less-adopt/#.XTdAT5NKh-U

Adoption terms were adapted from: Adoptive Families https://www.adoptivefamilies.com/how-to-adopt/adoption-terms-glossary/

Adoption Agency: An organization that is licensed by a state to educate and prepare families as they pursue the process of adopting a child. Agencies do all the necessary legal, administrative and social work to ensure that adoptions are in the best interest of the children.

Facilitator: An individual that is not licensed as an adoption agency or licensed as an attorney. Facilitators offer minimal to no support other than matching an expectant mother and an adoptive family. Once an expectant mother selects a family, the adoption facilitator refers them to a licensed adoption professional to finish the adoption process.

Adoption Consultants: An individual or company that help guide you through the adoption process (like us). They generally have years of experience in the field and share their knowledge and expertise with their clients. Their emphasis is on education and support for prospective Adopting Parents and in some cases assist in matching.



Open Adoption: Involves the disclosure of identifying information between the biological parents and adoptive parents. Both the adoptive parents and biological parents agree in advance on the amount of contact following the placement.

Semi-Open Adoption: Occurs when the potential biological mother or biological families experience non-identifying interaction with the adoptive family. In most cases, the interaction is facilitated by a third party who is usually an adoption agency or adoption attorney.

Closed Adoption: An adoption in which no identifying information about the birth family or the adoptive family is shared, and there is no contact between birthparents and adoptive parents. In a closed adoption, after finalization, the records are sealed and typically are not available to the adopted child.

Disruption: Failed placement (or I'd like to say the birth parents decided to parent), disruption occurs when a child leaves the adoptive home prior to the finalization.



Profile: An adoption profile is a document unlike anything you've ever written. Intended for expectant parents who are seeking to adopt, it's an autobiographical letter of about 1,500 words and pictures that describes your lifestyle, interests, and family, as well as your thoughts about parenting and adoption.

Presenting: You and/or your spouse have seen an expectant mother scenario and would like her to view your profile and read a personal letter to potentially select you as the adoptive parents. Please only present to one expecting mom at a time and keep in mind many agencies require you to be home study ready to present.

Match or Matching: The process of bringing together qualified prospective adoptive parents and willing biological parents, who by choice choose to explore the compatibility of each other and who can agree on the terms under which the adoptive parents can adopt the child.







Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) If a child is born in a state other than where the prospective adoptive parents reside, the Interstate Compact of both the baby's home state and the prospective adoptive parents' home state must give their approval before the child travels to the state where the prospective adoptive parents reside. In an interstate adoption, the agency with custody of the child is responsible for processing the interstate paperwork.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is a court process which permanently ends all legal parental rights of a birth parent to a child. Termination of parental rights can be voluntary or involuntary.

Finalization: The court hearing that results in the adoption order. This is the moment when the adoptee becomes the permanent, legally adopted child of the adoptive parents.





Be flexible

Take care of you before starting adoption

You are in charge of your adoption education and the ethics surrounding it

Open adoption is best for your child Validate your child's feelings

Love & respect your child's birth family YOU are the lucky one to be adopting

Adoption Education never stops
Bringing home baby is not the end,
its the beginning



Remember, maternal separation is traumatic regardless of the age of the child

Be aware that adoption-related trauma may not manifest until later in an adoptee's life

Cultivating a positive racial identity for a child of color must be a top priority

Learning about adoption and how it will impact your child at different life stages is your duty as a parent