

Talking to Your Child about Adoption.....Getting Comfortable

Last November 3rd during the lunchtime panel at the Consortium Conference, an audience member asked when they should tell their child they were adopted. The unanimous response was that they should know from day one, all four panelists had no memory of being told, they just always knew, and they all said that this was a very positive thing their parents did for them.

It can be hard to talk about adoption with your child—you might feel awkward or stumble over your words—but putting these talks off doesn't make it any easier. And every child wants to know their story from their parent—not find out accidentally and have it come as a surprise. When this happens it can damage a child's relationship with their parent—they may feel betrayed or that their parent isn't trustworthy. If you aren't already talking about adoption with your child—don't delay any longer—it just takes practice for you to become more relaxed and comfortable so start now!



Things to remember—no matter your child's age or when they joined your family *forever*:

- ◆ Talking openly allows your children to get their feelings about being adopted on the table, it increases their comfort and confidence.
- ◆ Always “frame” the conversation from the child's perspective.
- ◆ Kids are curious, and their curiosity isn't a sign that they aren't attached to you or that they're disloyal—it's a normal part of child development to want to know “their story”.
- ◆ Kids know without your saying anything that there is something different about them and their place in your family—no matter what you may worry about, it can be a relief for them to learn that all that's different is that they were adopted.
- ◆ Kids deserve to hear the truth from you, in clear, honest, direct communications, adoption shouldn't be a secret, it's just another way to form a family.
- ◆ When you talk with your child about adoption you are building trust and security between you—they learn that they can come to you with their questions, concerns, and feelings—and that's a very good thing.

And don't forget:

- ◆ Be age and developmentally appropriate when you are talking—their understanding of adoption is going to be a reflection of where they are.
- ◆ Use positive adoption language and be respectful of their birth parents when talking about them.
- ◆ This isn't going to be a one-time conversation but rather one that comes up frequently—for some children this can even be daily—and remember just because they aren't bringing it up, doesn't mean they aren't thinking about it—so make sure you bring it up if they don't.
- ◆ Make sure they feel comfortable talking with you, there should be lots of questions and you want to be the one answering them, so whenever they want to talk, do what you can to make room for listening.
- ◆ And if you need help—and most parents do need some support from time to time—you can reach out to your local Post Permanency Program, check [here](#) or browse the Consortium Library.