

MELISSA FAY GREENE'S UNOFFICIAL GUIDE TO ADOPTION

1. What are the children like who are available for adoption?

They are like children everywhere. Those who have been loved and nurtured since birth --and cared for in decent orphanages--typically adjust very well to their new families. My husband and I have four children by birth (Molly, 25, Seth, 22, Lee, 19, and Lily, 15) and we have adopted five children (in order of arrival: Jesse, 12, from Bulgaria at four-and-a-half; Helen, 11, from Ethiopia at five-and-a-half; Fisseha, 13, from Ethiopia at 10; and brothers Yosef and Daniel Gizaw, 10 and 13, from Ethiopia on June 10, 2007.)

(Yes, we're finished.)

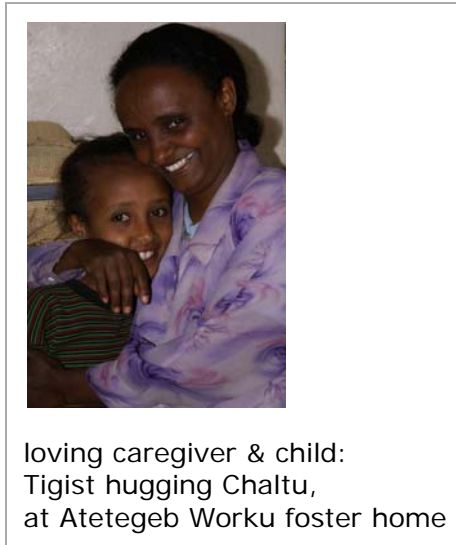
(No, I know I've said that before, but this time we really are.)

(Look, we ran out of bedrooms about four children ago.)

I have written elsewhere about our children's adjustment (much of that material is on this website.) In general, despite traumatic ups-and-downs at the start of each adoption (leading, in Jesse's case, to my brief but full-blown case of post-adoption depression) (and leading, earlier this summer after Yosef and Daniel's arrival, to my bursting into tears in the neighborhood swimming pool and fleeing for the parking lot) -- and despite seemingly insurmountable trauma in our children's early lives -- all five of them have become our wonderful, ridiculous, gorgeous and noisy very own children.

But, like children everywhere, Ethiopian children who have suffered neglect or abuse, before or during their orphanage stays, can be much more challenging. Adoption of severely hurt children should be undertaken by adults who know what they are doing.

Like adults everywhere, Ethiopians love children. I have met spectacularly generous and loving caregivers in Ethiopian orphanages. I have seen orphanages that operate like jumbo families: the big kids rush out the door to school in the morning, run home for lunch, do their homework in the afternoons, play football (soccer) endlessly in the compound, carry about the babies and toddlers. I have seen Ethiopian caregivers wearing the orphaned babies in shawls on their backs. I have seen orphaned babies and toddlers included in the life of an orphanage compound, in ways unknown to the Eastern European orphanages I have visited. All of this is good news for the Ethiopian children, and for prospective adoptive parents.



loving caregiver & child:
Tigist hugging Chaltu,
at Atetegeb Worku foster home

Everyone remembers the brutal Romanian orphanages exposed to the world in 1989 and 1990. Everyone recalls vividly the news footage of these child concentration camps. In particular your extended family members and close friends remember the Romanian orphanages of 1989 and they are eager, now, to tell you about them, to warn you away from adopting an older child.

You have to do your homework; you have to proceed cautiously.

Still: Ethiopia today is not equivalent to Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania.

2. How can I educate myself about the issues potentially facing an internationally-adopted child?

I have heard experts -- in the field of international adoption medicine -- bitterly lament how little homework some parents do. "People spend more time researching their next car than their next child," an international adoption doctor told me.

There is a place for love and faith and , dreams and hope, horoscopes and signs, on your adoption journey, but those heartfelt aspects of adoption should not, at the start, be your brightest guiding lights.

Instead, try this one: **THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO FOREIGN ADOPTION** by Dr. Barbara Bascom.

It's not as peppy or upbeat as many guides to international adoption; there are no cherubs, hearts, or rainbows in the illustrations as you'll see on many adoption websites. This book does not pretend that your child is floating on a sun-kissed cloud amongst the angels while waiting for you to complete your homestudy; it's not a guide for Dummies or for Idiots, and it doesn't promise a baby in your arms by Christmas.

BUT it will arm you with something more powerful than hearts, rainbows, promises, and heart-melting photographs: facts.

There are facts here about neglect; there are facts here about sexual abuse occurring in orphanages; there are facts here about tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD.) This is not bedtime reading. But it's essential reading. It may scare you away from inter-country adoption permanently. But if you are still standing when you've finished this book, you'll be stronger.

3. No, no, wait, but I just want to adopt a baby girl. A cute baby girl won't have issues of neglect or abuse or attachment or delayed development or TB like an older child might, correct?

Incorrect. Even an adorable baby girl can have suffered less-than-optimum development prior to her adoption. She may have been malnourished in utero or post-natally; she may have been born into a family in crisis., to parents who were ill, hungry, or dying. She may not have received blue-ribbon treatment on every stop along her journey from relinquishment to adoption. She may have the potential to be the most marvelous little person on the planet, but she could require major assistance to get there. Do your homework.

Meanwhile it's possible, actually, to know a LOT about older "waiting" children in orphanages, so don't shy away from considering them.

Five times now, I have been calmed (during the normal period of utter panic pre-adoption) by contact with and knowledge of an older waiting child. After being matched (through Adoption Advocates International) with Helen, we started getting MAIL from her. I got a glue-and-glitter-encrusted Mother's Day card. With Fisseha (also adopted through AAI), we got his report card! "He has very smiling face," a teacher wrote. "I have very much love to him."

Don't rule out an older child during your search for a baby girl. Many wonderful families have been created because there were long waiting-lists for baby girls. Baby boys are also very cute.



Feven, Semegne, Betlehem & Nardos, November 2005

4. OK, I've read The Complete Guide to Foreign Adoption and I'm still interested in adopting from Ethiopia. How do I begin?

Two steps:

(A) If you thought Bascom was dry reading, try this website:

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/intercountry/intercountry_473.html

Here are the regulations, as laid out by the U.S. Department of State, governing inter-country adoption. This will be your introduction to the marathon paper-chase that lies ahead. You will need to meet the requirements set out by the Ethiopian government and by the American government.

Within the State Department website, you can look for country-specific information. A click on ETHIOPIA will take you to this body of knowledge:

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_380.html

But don't despair after perusing the long, long list of requirements; you are going to find an adoption agency to walk you through all of them.

The adoption of Ethiopian orphans by Americans is growing by leaps and bounds. The most recent data looks like this:

Fiscal Year	Number of Immigrant Visas Issued
2006	731
2005	440
2004	289
2003	135
2002	105

[source: **http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_380.html**]

Because Ethiopia's popularity is growing among American and European adoptive parents, the Ethiopian government is under pressure to standardize and manage the numbers of children in flux. The courts are growing more strict; adoption personnel are growing more rigorous. Anyone who thinks that adoption is an easier route to family-building than pregnancy and childbirth has NOT looked at these regulations.

(B). Choose an adoption agency. This deserves an answer all its own.

5. How do I choose an adoption agency?

You will need two agencies.

You will need a local adoption agency licensed to complete a homestudy for an international adoption. This is not the agency that will lead you to your child.

And you will need an international adoption agency licensed to practice in Ethiopia. This agency does not have to be local.

Here is a great chance for you to do thorough and ferocious research.

This may be the single most important choice of the entire process, as it will determine the shape and outcome of your adoption journey.

All adoption agencies are not equal.

The cuteness of the magazine ad, the animation features of the agency's website, and the frequency with which the word "angel" is applied to orphaned children, may not translate directly into an ethical, transparent, affordable, and legal process for your family.

(Private – i.e. do-it-yourself-- adoptions are not outlawed in Ethiopia, but they put even more pressure on the courts and federal ministries to oversee children's welfare and they create (to my mind) a kind of Wild West atmosphere. I have witnessed behaviors I considered unethical – including blatant "child-shopping" -- as families zipped by taxi from orphanage to orphanage around Addis Ababa, browsing for children to adopt. American agency directors could tell you horror stories about the families they've been asked to rescue from private adoption disasters. I do not recommend private adoption.)

As the popularity of Ethiopian adoptions grows, so do the numbers of agencies and facilitators operating there. This means you must choose carefully.

One wide-ranging source of information about agencies is the EthiopiaAdopt list found at www.Yahogroups.com. Register with the list-owner and pose your question to the group: "I'm thinking about using such-and-such an agency – can anyone tell me about first-hand experiences with that agency?"

Then stand back and watch the chips fly. Of course you'll want to sift through the feedback you receive. But it will be a prodigious start to gathering information.

The U.S. State Department lists licensed agencies working in Ethiopia. And you may check with the Better Business Bureau in an agency's home city.

It is reasonable to peruse the agency materials and to ask for answers to questions like these:

1. Are you currently licensed to handle adoptions from Ethiopia? Since when?
2. Have you ever had your license suspended? Why?
3. How many Ethiopian adoptions have you completed?
4. Do you run an agency list-serv – a forum for pre- and post-adoptive families to converse online? If not, is there a way for your families to communicate with one another?

5. Can I have a hand in choosing my child, or will I be "matched" with a child by you?
6. What kind of information is available about children you place? Will I see medical reports, photos, videos? Will I learn about the child's history prior to placement at the orphanage?
7. Have you, the director, met the children? Will you have met my prospective child personally? If not, on whose word are we relying about the condition of the child?
8. What is a typical time-line from the time I accept a child to completion of the process?
9. How does the timeline for baby-adoption compare to the timeline for older child adoption?
10. May I travel to meet my child before the process is complete?
11. May I travel to pick up my child or do I have the child escorted? Which do you recommend?
12. Is it possible to adopt two or more unrelated children, or do you discourage it?
13. Is it possible to meet my child's birth-relatives? Does my child have a living parent? (Adoption is legal after the loss of one parent.)
14. What is the cost for an adoption of one or more children? Are there hidden costs? Will I be charged for foster care while my child awaits completion of the process?
15. What kind of post-adoption support does your agency offer? If we have a difficult transition, will you be able to help me through it?

Not all these questions have right or wrong answers.

You may prefer to have an agency "match" you with a child; you may prefer "waiting for a referral."

OR you may prefer to do as my family has done, which is to receive newsletters from our agency with photographs of older "waiting" children.

Virtually all adoptions of babies come through referral, through being "matched."

But many older child adoptions empower you with some degree of choice: photos, medical history, a bit of video.

Some agencies may prefer that you stay home; they will deliver your child to you.

Most agencies encourage your making the journey to Ethiopia, to get a glimpse of your child's country and history.

Meeting birth-parents and birth-relatives sounds daunting, for sure; and IS daunting; but it can be one of the most powerful experiences of your life and a phenomenal gift to your child.

6. HOW WILL I KNOW I'VE FOUND THE RIGHT CHILD?

Well, you may not know this.

You may not feel anything in particular, other than a soft stirring of curiosity. You may feel – upon seeing a photo or film – “now THAT is one cute kid.”

Is he or she the “right” child for you, the one destined by heaven to be yours?

Hard to say.

You'd hate to wish that anyone's “destiny” included becoming an orphan. The child's history is tragic; the child's luck is about to change in a big way, beginning with your appearance on the scene.

You will, in adopting this boy or girl, make the child your own. Your own life will swerve to meet the child's; the two of you will begin to develop in tandem, becoming different people than you would have been without each other.

Like many adoptive parents, I chafe at the term “biological” to designate only my birth children. First because all children, of course, are the products of biology. Second because aren't my children by adoption also mine biologically? We breathe each other's air, prepare and share each other's food, borrow each other's combs and socks and pencils; Helen sometimes falls asleep on my bed twirling her fingers through my hair. Aren't these somehow biological processes? Aren't our cells intermixing? Haven't the years of Berenstain Bears books I've inflicted on these children been immortalized as brain cells?

In parenting your new child, you will make the child the right child for you. Even if the relationship doesn't feel perfect or magical or pre-destined for the first few weeks (or months), just pretend that all is unfolding according to plan, according to a higher intelligence than your own.

The child will simultaneously create in you the right mother or the right father, the one who knows where to tickle, what to cook, which bedtime story to read, and which flavor ice cream flavor is the best, the ice cream flavor ordained by heaven to be the one you both happen to love.



Yosef's favorite photo so far in America;
a bit of biology happening here?

7. HOW WILL I FEEL WHEN I MEET MY NEW CHILD?

You've studied his or her photo for most of a year; you've worn out the disc replaying the nanoseconds of footage. In the film provided by the adoption agency, your child has not screamed or thrown food; he has not stomped his foot and made an angry face; the baby has not twisted away from you to avoid eye contact. In the realm of photo and film and fantasy, the child is clean and polite. The child is tall and strikingly handsome and academically gifted and developmentally on target. Regardless of age, you can tell this child is going to come straight home and begin by tidying up the kitchen and taking out the trash, before going on a bike ride wearing a helmet and observing all traffic laws and hand signals. This child is easily going to make Eagle Scout by 12.

In real life, children are sometimes not so clean and polite. They sometimes are quite short and dusty, they may have giardia or head-lice, and and it may be a few years before that academic brilliance presents itself. The child will not know how to ride a bike and, after he learns, he will zig-zag in and out of traffic while you run down the sidewalk screaming and waving your arms.

Reactions upon first meeting range from "This is the child of my heart, thank you God," to (my typical reaction) "If I run away right now and deny everything, can they still make me bring this child to my hotel?"

Reactions vary from "That's her! I'd know her anywhere! That's really her!!" to "Has there been a mistake? This child is really not as cute as the photo tacked to my refrigerator."

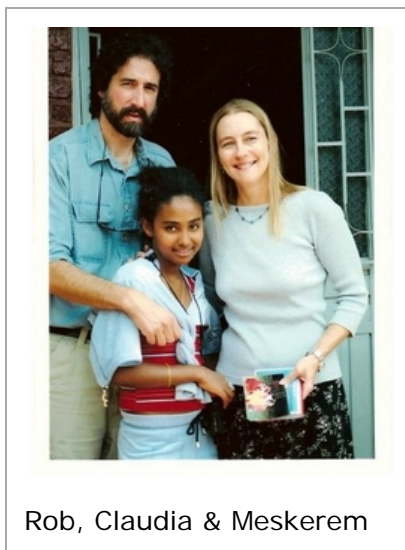
In my book, I describe this marvelous first contact with their daughter as experienced by Rob Cohen and Claudia Cooper:

"On a morning of dazzling heat and brightness—denim sky sparkling with sunlight; dirt roads teeming with people, donkeys, goats, and sheep; flags snapping in the wind; hundreds of tin shops and wooden kiosks displaying their wares—they rode by taxi to Layla House and honked

outside the steel door. A guard pulled it open. Kids spied them in the taxi's backseat and scattered, sprinting in every direction and yelling Meskerem's name.

"Claudia hadn't met Meskerem on her first visit to Layla House. Now she shakily got out of the taxi and tried to acknowledge greetings from children who remembered her. Rob stood beside her in an agony of thrilling overstimulation, trepidation, and excitement. It was all about to happen. It began.

"Meskerem came out the doorway of a far building and turned in their direction. They both registered instantly, "She's as beautiful as her pictures." Thick, curly hair gathered back into a ponytail, tall, slender child, elegant face, the thick arched eyebrows and shy smile. She walked toward them sweetly, alternately looking at them and looking down at the ground; she carried herself gracefully all the way across the compound straight to them (they were paralyzed); she put her arms (she was nearly as tall as Claudia) around Claudia's neck and delivered the great hug of Claudia's lifetime: an unrelentingly hard, grateful, and loving hug, a hug that went on so long that Rob (towering over both of them) bent to be included. They held on to each other for a long time. The white sun edged an inch across the sky, changing the angles of silver light bending from car bumpers and wristwatches and window hardware around the compound; they hugged as classes changed and children danced around them and skipped away; they hugged for so long that, by the time they let go, they'd leapt across the oceans and continents, they'd reassured one another, they'd found one another."



Rob, Claudia & Meskerem

But here's the thing: even if your first moments are nothing like that, your life can still turn out fine.

All my children have been shy upon first meeting, head down, refusing eye contact.

They've all turned into boisterous and normal children eager to make eye contact, especially when it is far past their bedtime, finding 11 p.m. a wonderful moment to snuggle and to look up and to ask, trustingly, hopefully, about a little something glimpsed in the Limited Too catalogue.

8. HOW WILL WE MANAGE THE TRIP HOME FROM ETHIOPIA?

You'll be exhausted beyond human endurance.

After months of paperwork and anxiety, you'll have flown 20 or more hours to Addis Ababa to meet your new child; you'll have taken charge of the child, whose language you don't speak, whose daily habits and schedule you don't know, and who may or may not be thrilled to spend time with you; you'll have flown with this child back across North Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, Europe, and the Atlantic Ocean; you'll have changed planes, had layovers, and endured long lines. You'll be dead on your feet before you enter your own foyer, lugging the suitcases filled with colorful Ethiopian baskets, ready to begin your new family life.

Behaviors that have been displayed by newly-adopted children traveling 20 hours by air have included energetic screaming and kicking and fleeing up and down the aisle, throwing up, throwing food, throwing tantrums, marathon sleeping, entering a trance-like state of sheer panic, and/or excellent dinner manners and calm movie-watching. .

Our ten-year-old son Fisseha was thrilled beyond words to be given airplane head-phones; he donned them instantly and enjoyed them greatly for three-quarters of an hour. Then I discovered that the head-phones were not plugged into anything. He was simply enjoying the new head-wear. When I plugged him in, a look of astonishment crossed his face, and the music and static distracted him for a good three hours.

Jesse, crossing the ocean by air at age four-and-a-half from Bulgaria, came to believe (we surmised) about two hours into the flight: "This is it. This is America. This is my new life. I have got to get out of here." He was fleeing up and down the aisles in search of an exit and a fast boat back to Bulgaria. He sat down in the middle of the aisle and rocked back and forth, the orphanage self-soothing scary-looking rock; in my arms, he flailed and screamed and kicked. He kicked the seat in front of us so hard and frequently I feared we'd injure the man. Late in the flight I suddenly remembered: "Benedryl! We were supposed to have given him Benedryl to help him sleep!" As he writhed and flailed and screamed, I got a cap-full of Benedryl between his lips and waited, my arms and back aching, for it to kick in. It kicked in as we were in descent towards Atlanta. We carried his sleeping body off the plane and into immigration, where he slept on the carpet during our wait, and he slept in luggage claim and he slept on the car-ride home and straight into his new life.

The good news: you'll likely not be the only new parents bringing home a terrified Ethiopian child on your international flight. Worst case scenario: you make rueful eye contact across the cabin.

Best case scenario: the kids find each other and laugh and whisper and play the card game UNO until the movie starts.

Helen, age five, was divine; Yosef & Daniel, 10 and 12, were delighted and well-behaved and took these photos mid-air.



en route from Addis to Atlanta

9. WHAT IF THINGS GET REALLY DIFFICULT WITH MY NEW CHILD AFTER WE ARRIVE HOME?

Things can get really hard. The demands of a baby, young child, or older child may far outweigh your earlier estimate of what you could handle. You may find yourself blinded by fatigue, bleary-eyed with regret and confusion. You may hear the word “Mom” more often than human ears can withstand. There’s a sort of “buyer’s remorse” that can kick in, after you bring this precious and long-awaited child home. You wouldn’t be the first to wonder, “WHAT was I THINKING?”

I’ve written elsewhere about post-adoption panic (see RECENT ARTICLES), which hit me hard after Jesse’s adoption in 1999.

Part of what was hard about it, for me, was that I’d never heard of it. I didn’t know what was wrong with me. I reached the conclusion that what was wrong with me was that I had ruined my life and the life of my family permanently, and there was no escape, and it was all my fault, and it would never get better.

It’s really hard to think rationally when you’re in this state.

In *TWO LITTLE GIRLS: A Memoir of Adoption*, [NY: Berkley Books, 2006], Theresa Reid writes of despair after the adoption of a second daughter, Lana, a three-year-old from Ukraine:

“I have no patience for this new child, who gets up two or three times during the night, and never sleeps past five-thirty A.M., who is hungry and desperately needs to eat, who asks for food, and then, when I hopefully, lovingly put food before her—even specially prepared food she has eaten happily before—cries and whines and angrily pushes it away. “Nyet!” she shrieks.

“Nyyyyyyyyeeeeettt!” as she shoves it off her tray, kicking and flailing, then slumps in her seat with her head down and cries.”

Reid phones her adoption agency for help (I did the same in 1999), expecting to be offered support. Instead (as I was), she is met with confusion and bewilderment.

“I may be at my wits’ end,” Reid writes of her thoughts after ending that phone conversation, “but I think I can objectively say that this is NOT okay, to put together extremely challenging family constellations and then walk away. I hang up, abandoned, angry...”

The good news is that, in most cases, these can be the disharmonious opening notes of a love story. An out-of-synch beginning is not predictive of the parent/child relationship.

My tips for getting through a rocky and nauseating depression after the arrival of your child:

- (1) Take really good care of yourself; do whatever it takes to get enough sleep, including spending the night at a friend’s, including arranging for naps. Nothing else will work if you’re sleep-deprived.
- (2) Make yourself eat and shower and exercise.
- (3) Get help. Hire help if you need to. While a babysitter is there, sleep or exercise or read or eat.
- (4) Put Feelings on a back-burner. This is not the time for Feelings. If you could express your feelings right now, you’d be saying things like, “Oh my God, I must have lost my mind to think that I can handle this, to think that I wanted a child like this. I’ll never manage to raise this child; I’m way way way way over my head. I’ll never spend time with my spouse or friends again; my older children are going to waste away in profound neglect; my career is finished. I am completely and utterly trapped.” You see? What’s the point of expressing all that right now? Just put Feelings to sleep. Instead, live a material life. Wake, dress, eat, walk. Let your hands and words mother the new child, don’t order Feelings into action.
- (5) Pick up something to read that carries you away. I’ve found that reading about Paleolithic art engenders deep calm and a sense of remove. There’s something about studying 40,000 year old cave painting that makes you feel you can survive the sound of your new child’s voice the next morning.
- (6) Let yourself off the hook. This is not your fault. You’ve done a grand thing—you’ve gone out into the world in search of a child and, despite every obstacle over tens of thousands of miles, you’ve brought the child home. You’re exhausted. This is all really hard. If it were easy, everyone would do it. You’re doing fine. Just rest up, find something to laugh about, and give Feelings the month off.

10. Isn’t there anything fun to read in the adoption world?

Yes! There is a wonderful adoption literature. Prospective adoptive parents have a special hunger for information and for stories, and, later, a special need to write about what they've been through.

My all-time favorite adoption book is *THE CHILDREN* by Jan de Hartog (NY: Atheneum, 1969), a Dutch Naval writer, a WWII hero. Living in the U.S., the father of grown children, he became unexpectedly the middle-aged father of two little Korean sisters. Though many recent books cover similar ground, full of modern and post-modern psychiatric jargon, there's little missed by old Jan de Hartog, who turns a wry phrase. You can find this out-of-print book through online booksellers.

In Chapter 12 -- "Clinging" -- he writes of an experience with which many adoptive parents identify -- the ferocious attachment to one or the other parent. Addressing you, the mother, he writes: [after clearing the hurdle of the child's coldness to you, the mother]

"... you will suddenly find yourself confronted with a hunger on his part for physical closeness, so ravenous and insatiable that chances are you may end by being sincerely worried whether there isn't something psychologically wrong with him. Even to the most extrovert and sensual among us there comes a point beyond which the need for being hugged, caressed, kissed and snuggled turns from an uninhibited desire for affection into an obsession that soon makes us do the opposite of what we are so breathlessly urged to do: we draw away in alarm and confusion...

"... All children from Korea or Vietnam are literally starved for affection; once they surrender themselves to you, there is no moderation or restraint until their desperate craving is satisfied...

"Those few months are likely to be trying. In the beginning you may enjoy his total and unrelenting claim on your full and constant attention. But the desperate tightness with which especially the very young child will clasp your leg, clutch your arm, cling to your neck until you have to carry him with you from morning to night may well alarm you. The thing is to try and relax. Let yourself be kissed, hugged, nuzzled, nibbled and beset by frenzied embraces like any simian mother, whom you can observe in any zoo. Your colleague among the gorillas goes about her monkey business totally oblivious of the huge-eyed, frantic young clinging to her breast, waist or even tail with all the symptoms of utter terror.

... You will have to resign yourself to the circumstance that, for the next few months, you will be carrying a small shivering body attached like a leech to some part of your person during most of your waking hours and, once he has overcome his initial exhaustion, your sleeping hours as well. But I assure you that this is normal..."

It is normal to feel panicky after you've committed to a child. Here are a few books in which I took great courage and comfort, if only to find myself in a community of mothers and fathers also experiencing longing for a child.

THE FAMILY OF ADOPTION by Joyce Maguire Pavao (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005) Not to be missed! Valuable insights into truth-telling within an adoptive family.

A LOVE LIKE NO OTHER: Stories from Adoptive Parents, edited by Pamela Kruger & Jill Smolowe (NY: Riverhead Books, 2005) I'd like this book even if it didn't include an essay of mine.

FOREVER LILY: An Unexpected Mother's Journey to Adoption in China by Beth Nonte Russell (NY: Touchstone, 2007) A fantastic portrait of falling in love with a baby; and one of the most real and engaging babies to appear anywhere in adoption literature. I could do without the dreams of a past life and of destiny, and I feel that the adoptive mother the author accompanied to China was deserving of greater empathy, as she was clearly in the grip of post-adoption panic. But I could not have done without this baby.

SECRET THOUGHTS OF AN ADOPTIVE MOTHER by Jana Wolff: honest misgivings about transracial adoption.

A PASSAGE TO THE HEART: Writings from Families with Children from China, edited by Amy Klatzkin (Yeong & Yeong Book Company) Wonderful medley of how-to essays (my least favorites) and idiosyncratic truthful memoirs (my favorites.)

THE RUSSIAN WORD FOR SNOW: A True Story of Adoption by Janis Cooke Newman (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2001), honest, lyrical, reflective, about a couple's longing for a child and the fears that beset them in the face of many rational reasons to turn back.