

## Multicultural Family Adoption Issues

*When a child of one culture/ethnic joins a family of another background*

### Things to consider before adopting

- ❑ Identify and examine your beliefs and assumptions about other races/cultures. Quickly think of 3 words to describe another race/culture. Is your view positive or negative? How has that shaped your decision on “who” to adopt?
- ❑ How are you identified or defined by your culture?
- ❑ Will your friends accept a child of another background?
- ❑ How about your parents, siblings and extended family?
- ❑ How about your neighbors? Is your neighborhood culturally/ethnically diverse? How about schools? Places of worship? Etc.
- ❑ In your normal activities, do you interact with people of various ethnics/races? If not, will this become difficult for you?
- ❑ How will you expose your child to their heritage/culture? Are there role models in your circle of friends, family or neighborhood?
- ❑ Names – reflecting identity?
- ❑ Is your child a foreigner being raised in the US or a new American?
- ❑ Discrimination can be overt or subtle. It can be positive or negative.
- ❑ Adopting a child of another race/culture/identity will change the “family” identity from this point forward, throughout future generations.

### Things to do as a parent

- ❑ Believe that you are the best parent for your child
- ❑ Be clear and positive about your feelings. Your child will pick up on ambivalence.
- ❑ Find support from family and friends
- ❑ Talk about other races and cultures with respect.
- ❑ Do not accept biased slurs or remarks about any race/culture or group of people that are different.
- ❑ Address misinformation.
- ❑ Share “histories” in a culturally sensitive way.
- ❑ Teach you child why “isms” exists and what can be done to override it.
- ❑ Be prepared to support your child, advocate for your child and family and educate others about racism and adoption.
- ❑ Stay cool and don’t exaggerate issues.
- ❑ Learn and share ideas about other cultures and races, including, historical or folklore reading, music, food, etc. Eat ethnic foods of all cultures; don’t force one ethnic on child and family.
- ❑ If you want your child to be bilingual, consider being bilingual yourself.

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- ❑ Plan and involve your entire family in activities that reflect the cultures/races of your family, not just your child's race/culture. (i.e. visit ethnic neighborhoods, go to ethnic museum exhibits and cultural celebrations, etc.)
- ❑ Learn cultural norms and values then create new rituals/celebrations for your family, based on cultural customs/traditions.
- ❑ Join adoptive/parent/family groups that share your family's cultural/ethnic make-up
- ❑ Reinforce that the USA is built upon the idea that all races/cultures are a valued part of society and that your family is strong because of its diversity and composition.
- ❑ Respect religious differences and choices among cultural groups. You can expose your child to the cultural aspects of religion without having them observe that faith.
- ❑ Balance differences and similarities
- ❑ Provide a sense that we are all made up of various parts, have different experiences and that no two people are the same. Explore strengths and weaknesses. Identities are unique.

#### Future challenges

- ❑ Day-to-day interactions and events.
- ❑ Remain alert to your child's needs, moods and peer groups.
- ❑ Maintain open lines of communication (atmosphere of openness) where feelings and thoughts can be shared.
- ❑ Support your child if situations arise and ask them if they want your help in a situation or planning for a future interaction/situation
- ❑ Stay connected to activities and staff who interact with your child (teachers, school administrators, after school staff, coaches, etc.)
- ❑ Homeland visits – let's child connect to culture, let's you see what it's like to be in the cultural minority
- ❑ Intercultural dating and marriages
- ❑ Grandchildren

*This information was created by Kathy Ann Brodsky, LCSW, Director of the Ametz Adoption Program of the Jewish Child Care Association of New York and may not be reproduced without the consent of the author*