



Common Questions Adopted Children Might Ask

As a new parent you may begin to anticipate that your child may have questions concerning his or her background. It is advisable to prepare for the multiple answers that you may feel you have to provide. Although it is true that your child may not understand the full meaning of adoption until they are 7 to 10 years old, it is important to incorporate adoption language and stories into your daily life. Many parents are concerned about how to respond to their child's questions about adoption. How you respond will have a great impact on maintaining an honest and open relationship with your child. It is important for you to examine your own feelings behind your response as some of the child's questions may trigger intense emotions as you try to formulate an answer to the child's question. (Moore, 2004) Some guidelines are:

- **Be truthful:** Honesty builds a sense of security and enhances trust.
- **Be age appropriate:** Give explanations that your child will understand.
- **Show love and respect:** Include loving expressions in your response.
- **Limit your answer to what has been asked:** you do not need to provide an encyclopedia of answers that your child may not want to know. An example is: Q: Where do babies come from? The answer need not explain the entire reproductive process.
- **Use positive language:** Talk about birth parents, previous foster careers, and birth relatives in a non-judgmental, positive way. This does not mean that you should hide negative aspects of certain events in the child's life. It means that even though you may be angry with the birth mother for your perceptions of how she treated the child, you should still present the positive aspects of the birth parent(s).
- **Use humor:** It is all right to laugh and enjoy your discussions with your child.
- **Reassure:** It is very important for you to help your child to feel safe and that it is a part of life to discuss adoption. Help your child to understand that it is OK to talk about adoption.



Examples of Questions:

- **Why did you adopt me?**
- **What were my birth parents' first, middle and surnames?**
- **Are they still alive and where do they live?**
- **Why did I have to live with a foster career?**
- **Where was I born?**
- **What religion were my birth parents?**
- **Do I look like my birth parents?**
- **Do I have any other brothers and sisters that I don't know about?**
- **What should I call my birth parents?**
- **Do they love me?**
- **Why did my birth parents give me up?**
- **When can I search for my birth parents?**
- **Why didn't anyone tell me about?**
- **Will they come and see me?**
- **Will they come and take me away?**
- **Was I a naughty baby?**
- **Will you give me away?**

Again, you may wish to prepare to answer these questions. The longer you wait to gather information, the harder it will be to locate some of the answers. As an adoptive parent, it is crucial that you acknowledge that your child has a history and that another family existed at another time. You will need to work at addressing differences and work to bridge the gap to find a balance for your child.

Books to consider:

AGES 2 TO 6:

The Day We Met You, by Phoebe Koehler;
Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born, by Jamie Lee Curtis;
A Mother for Choco, by Keiko Kasza;
Through Moon and Stars and Night Skies, by Ann Warren Turner
The Family Book, by Todd Parr

AGES 5 TO 8:

How I Was Adopted, by Joanna Cole;
Families Are Different, by Nina Pellegrini;

AGES 8 TO 11:

All About Adoption: How to Deal with the Questions of Your Past by Anne Lanchon
At Home in This World: A China Adoption Story (2ND ed.), by Jean MacLeod