



Wanting to Parent and Considering Adoption as a Way to Build Your Family?

Adoption, like any decision to parent, is a path, a journey. Adoption is a different path or process from conception. Adoption usually involves exploring parenting biologically, acknowledging your infertility and making the choice to build your family through adoption. Adoptive parents agree that the joys of parenting do not depend on how you become parents.

Whoever you are you will come to adoption with all of your losses, disappointments, joys, and successes. You do not have to be the perfect person or to have resolved all of your life events in order to adopt. You just have to be ready to do some research and some work.

Reaching a decision to build your family through adoption requires action. What is your next step? As an adoption professional who has helped thousands of adoptive parents, I want to give you a few hints on what to do next. The first step is to just

begin. Pick up your phone and call a local adoption agency or do an internet search. Any New York State adoption agency has to provide you with an orientation type meeting where all your adoption options are discussed. These meetings should be free. Make an appointment to attend an orientation with an agency. At Family Connections Inc., the agency I work for, we prefer individual orientations so that we can address the specific questions a couple may have, questions you might not want to ask in a public meeting. Talk to several agencies to get a feel for standards of practice and for the variety of options available to you.

If you meet with an agency, use the time to get to know the agency and obtain some education on the adoption process. No question is a bad question. The agency should tell you about adoption opportunities in general and tell you how their agency fits into current adoption practice. Every agency has different programs. An agency will want to know a little about you to see if you will fit into their

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program. They should tell you about their adoption philosophy and practice and how that generally fits into the laws of your state.

Choosing an agency is an important part of a successful adoption process. When you call the agency, do they take the time to speak with you? Did they send you or offer to send you any information? Did the information arrive in a timely manner? How comfortable are you with the way the agency describes adoption or their philosophy? You should be able to trust your agency so spend time to ask questions and get to know them. Another important aspect of choosing an agency is their cost of services. How and when are the costs paid? Can you purchase some of their services such as home study services or do you have to purchase all of their services or nothing? What is refundable and what is not? What are the financial risks? You have to determine if you can afford the financial risks. Will the agency allow you to duo track such as pursuing an international adoption and a domestic adoption concurrently, or pursuing a private domestic and agency domestic adoption at the same time? Most importantly an agency should respect your right to self determine your choices within the bounds of state laws and ethical adoption practice.

Learning about the adoption process from the internet, books, magazines, an adoption attorney, an adoption pediatrician (one who specializes in the medical issues in adoption), and the adoption community will help you to make good decisions for your family. A great website for books is www.tapestrybooks.com. A good magazine is "Adoptive Families". If you know anyone who has adopted a child, chances are they will be willing to talk to you. Look for adoption support groups in your community if you don't know anyone who has adopted. It is important to speak with an attorney who specializes in adoption so that you will be able to understand the legal process that is involved in an adoption. You can find a pediatrician who specializes in adoption medical issues

by looking at local teaching or university hospital groups or online (google "international pediatrician or 'adoption pediatrician'").

Think through the options and decide if domestic adoption or international adoption is anything you are interested in pursuing. Being able to tell an agency you interview with what kinds of adoption are of interest to you can help you to sort through what path you should take. Some agencies specialize in international adoption (adopting a child from Russia, China, Africa, etc.) and some specialize in domestic adoption (US kids). Don't wait to feel you know everything before contacting an agency. Talking to an agency that will educate you regarding all of the opportunities can be a great first phone call. But if the agency only knows one way to adopt because that is all they do, call another agency before you commit yourself.

Keep an open mind. Try not to reject an opportunity until you have researched it properly. Some adoption opportunities can seem strange or scary to you at first but after research you may feel very comfortable. For example, I have rarely seen couples choose an open adoption plan (where the birth parent and the adoptive parent share some or all identifying information) without reading about open adoption and listening to how an agency arranges and plans for open adoption but I have seen many couples who were initially very scared about openness in adoption choosing an open adoption plan that is very satisfying to them as adoptive parents. Remember adoption is a process where you should be part of the adoption planning. The more you educate yourself the better prepared you will be to make choices.

Many families have built their family by adoption. Like any process that has the ability to greatly change our lives, make our dreams come true, and become one of the very best days of our lives, it is complicated and requires knowledge. The knowledge is however readily available. Most adoption professionals love speaking about adoption. Adoptive families are likewise eager to help by sharing their experiences and their knowledge. Reach out and in a very short time you will have copious amounts of information to process. Reach out, begin the process because haven't you waited long enough to become a parent?

*Written by
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