

OPEN ADOPTION DISCUSSION

Open adoption is all about welcoming others and making room for them in our hearts and lives. Open adoption is about making you feel at home; is there anything we want more for our children than to feel at home? It is about having a respectful attitude and a 'we're in this together' feeling. It's a willingness to reach out to others with respect and good will. The hospitality of open adoption begins with noticing. We so often go about our daily lives without connecting with others, noticing others pain or worry. The hospitality of the birthparents to the child in giving life, and the adoptive parent to the child in giving a home and also to the birthparent in becoming a resource. If we can see the best in others, give the benefit of the doubt, down-play flaws, and focus on strengths of others, we are seeing the potentials of open adoption. You need to get out of your own needfulness. We are so enveloped in our own needs that we are unlikely to see others needs, and we don't want to be uncomfortable or inconvenienced. Open adoption is often uncomfortable and feels unsafe. The most successful open adoptions follow the pattern of hospitality growing into friendship, and friendship growing into kinship. –Jim Gritter

Open adoption isn't just a way of doing things, it is a relationship, and looking at how to enhance that relationship. Open adoption is like any other relationships, you meet, get to know them, assess if you want to be involved for a long time, grow, develop trust/intimacy, commit and live with the consequence of that. The skills we use in other relationships are skills we use in open adoption: good communication, negotiate, compromise, set boundaries, understand what the rules are, flexible, assertive, tolerance, patience, problem-solving skills.

Having the birthparents involved should not impact the adoptive parents' ability to parent. Open adoptions are formed in crisis, so be aware of changing needs. Anticipate your arrangements with birth parents are going to change as your lives and needs change, don't get locked into specifics. Remember to express your needs, assume good intentions, and try to find some common ground or compromise. It should be the adoptive parent who initiates contact with the birthparents. Birthparents are overly sensitive about boundaries, and don't want to intrude. Even birthparents that have placed children, five to seven years ago still worry about intruding on your family and life. Always be the one welcoming.

Open adoption is NOT a contract; you have to somehow get beyond your fears, i.e. birthparent wanting the child back. It is emotionally freeing to get beyond your fears. Must set good boundaries from the beginning, then they will be easier to maintain. (How would you handle family or in-laws being too intrusive? Would you cut them out of your lives forever?)

You may ask, why do we have to change our lives for the birth parents? Because that is what you signed up for as adoptive parents. Your child comes with birth parents.

Benefits don't just come from exchanging names and numbers, but from taking the time of building a relationship that is respectful and trusting, and modeling that relationship for your children as they develop a relationship with the birth parents.

Adoption

Is a means of meeting the developmental needs of a child by legally transferring ongoing parental responsibilities for that child from birth parents to adoptive parents, recognizing that in the process we have created a new kinship network that forever links those two families together through the child who is shared by both. This kinship network may also include significant other families, both formal and informal, that have been a part of the child's experience.

(Kenneth Watson 2003)

Open Adoption

A covenant, a strong, solemn, sacred, lifelong agreement where birthparents and adoptive parents see their involvement with each other as a sacred commitment they make to each other for the sake of the child. Open adoption allows the adopted child the potential of developing a one-on-one relationship with his or her birthfamily.

Historically adoption was not about children it was about adults:

- Confidentiality - protected the adults involved.

Adoption is not about adults, it is about children having a home and a family that can provide for their basic needs. It is a merging of the birth and adopting family - a blending of families - establishing another extension of family. Every child coming into adoption already has a set of parents and a family. We must realize that adoption, though it re-legalizes parental responsibilities, simply changes and blurs the connectedness and affective ties between the child and the two families.

Basic Needs of all Children:

- Security
- Adequate nurture and stimulation
- Meaningful connections
- Sense of hope for their own future

In open adoption the child is able to see his/her birth family and it lessens the feeling of abandonment.

A child bonds to his/her birth family through the process of conception and birth.

A child attaches to his adoptive family through the process of providing a safe home, a nurturing environment, affection, acceptance, trust, and commitment that allow for a positive view of self, others, and the future.