

Adoption



Foster Care

The mission of Children's Aid Society is to identify and provide services to improve the lives of children and their families.

Post-Permanency Newsletter
Spring 2020

5 Proactive Ways to Help your Adopted Child Through Each Developmental Phase

An adopted child has---and will always have---an extra layer to deal with as she makes her way through life.

Susan Kuligowski June 14, 2016

Adoption does not begin and end when a child is placed into a forever home, but remains part of an adoptee's life for the rest of her life. It is important for parents to understand that an adopted child has---and will always have---an extra layer to deal with as she makes her way through life.

Following are some ways to help your child process adoption through each developmental phase:

Babies, ages 0 to 12 months, require lots of our love and attention. Now is the time to create a strong and loving bond with your child. Be consistent in providing her with a safe and nurturing environment. This will lay the foundation for her sense of attachment and trust that she will later use to build healthy relationships later in life. This will also better prepare her (and you) to deal with very common parent/child separation issues leading into the toddler and early-school-aged years.

If your child came to you from foster care or an orphanage, her ability to form trusting relationships may have been disturbed. It's especially important to pay attention to both her verbal and nonverbal cues and reassure her as much as possible that you are not going anywhere.

Toddlers, ages 13 to 24 months, are into everything, discovering everything, and asking about everything. Parents often find themselves in the role of talking encyclopedia from dawn until dusk. And while you may not have all of the answers (seriously, you won't), be assured your child is going to ask anyway and probably more than once!

Not only is this a great time to become the "go-to" person in your child's life and let him know he is always welcome to come to you with any questions he may have about life in general, it's also the time to normalize his circumstances for him as an adopted child. Making sure your home is a safe place where he feels comfortable about his adoption is a great start.

Thankfully, there are lots of resources available to help you to answer some of the tougher questions, but the main thing is to be open and honest. At this stage, he will be as comfortable with his adoption as *you* are with his adoption. Consider weaving in age-appropriate adoption bedtime stories that he can relate to. Reinforce his own adoption story verbally or by creating a Life book together and let him know that it's something special and nothing to feel awkward about.



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Real Relationships

Program Incentives:

Workshops (Meals, \$50 Sheetz gift card per person); Retreats (Meals, Overnight Hotel Stay, \$25 Sheetz card per couple)

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Sign Up: (814) 765-2686 x241 realrelationships@childaid.org

Funding for this project was provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant: 90FM0104-01-00. These services are available to all eligible persons, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or religion.

5 Proactive Ways to Help your Adopted Child Through Each Developmental Phase

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Preschoolers, ages 2 to 4, are a curious bunch and will, no doubt, start to ask a million questions about the world around them as well as the family that surrounds them. Many parents find that some of the subjects popping up around this age tend to be a little more charged as she begins to notice things like body parts and the differences between boys and girls. And if your child is from a different ethnic background, you can be sure he or she has noticed that your family may not “match,” which sometimes leads to more pressing questions regarding birth family vs. adoptive family.

You're may feel anxious that you're not sharing enough but, at the same time, you don't want to overload your child with too much. At this age, it's safe to play by the “less is more rule.” Many adoptive parents find that allowing your child to guide the conversation is the best bet. When she asks a question, respond in kind. Don't assume she needs an entire dissertation on the topic. It's certainly okay to continue to bring up her adoption story in conversation, to read books and watch videos dealing with adoption issues, and to subtly prompt discussion when the timing feels right, but there is no need to push the issue unless you are noticing she is clearly having a hard time putting her thoughts into words.

Elementary school-aged children (5 to 8 years old) are no longer immersed in a world that revolves around the safety and security of their home, but leans more and more on outside influences such as teachers, coaches, and classmates. Facts, figures, homework, sports, and overall responsibility begins to fill your child's world.

At this age, he will better understand his adoption story. You may find it's time to reintroduce his story on a more intimate and age-appropriate level. The fact that he has a birth family as well as an adoptive family is no longer an abstract concept and should be discussed openly. This will most likely come up as projects like family trees enter his radar. In no way should your child be made to feel as if his birth family/ adoption story is a secret or something to be ashamed of. At the same time, don't push him to share it—leave it up to him to determine how much about his story he wishes to share with his peers.

Additionally, if your child doesn't look like you, he may feel as though he stands out in school for all the wrong reasons. It's important for you to reinforce the idea that he is loved very much by his family and this is where he belongs.

It is common for school-aged children to begin to feel a sense of loss and (if they haven't already) begin a sort of grieving period for their birth family. This is common in adopted children and can happen for a time or for a lifetime, depending on the situation. While you can not take his hurt away, by reinforcing your love and commitment to him, you are preparing him emotionally and mentally for an even more confusing point in his life—adolescence.

By allowing him to learn to feel through his sadness, fears, anger, and insecurity, you are letting him know that it's okay and healthy to acknowledge negative emotions the same way we embrace the positive ones (and, by all means, letting him know that nobody is happy all the time). Teach him healthy coping skills to get through the rough days as you would with any situation he will face throughout his life.

Tweens, ages 9 to 12, are beginning to better understand their feelings, as well as appreciate yours. Many parents say this is a good time to really delve into more intimate adoption discussions, as it's your last best chance before teenage attitude steps in to impair your lines of communication.

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5 Proactive Ways to Help your Adopted Child Through Each Developmental Phase

Continued

Take this opportunity to really listen. Encourage her to do the talking. Listen for cues about how she is processing her adoption amid everything else going on in her life, from a growing interest in a certain someone at school, to running for class president, to sports/band/dance try-outs that may or may not have gone as planned.

Let her know that her feelings are not wrong and that she is entitled to have them. Make sure to let her know that you are available to talk with should she have any questions or want someone to confide in, but that you respect her privacy as well.

Teenagers, 13 to 18 years old, are in a constant state of change physically, mentally, and emotionally. He may push back while he works to establish his identity, while you, meanwhile, are pushing to establish the rules and to hold onto whatever parental control you may have left. Teens most certainly question the authority figures in their life—and parents tend to top that special list. Some parents say it's common to experience some radio silence from their teens, which can be troubling if it's accompanied by teenage angst. This is the time that they are (or are considering, or know plenty of kids who are) experimenting with everything from sex to drugs to joining a rock-n-roll band. Teens also may begin to resent their adoption situation and question why they were placed for adoption to begin with. Some may wish to find the answers by asking to search for their biological family (if their adoptions are not open). While your intent may be to protect or comfort your child, his perception may be that you're trying to control him. You're going to need to find a comfortable place of give and take. Let him know that you appreciate his newfound independence and his desire to better understand his place in the family mix, but also remind him that you're still and always will be his parent. It's quite normal for every parent on Planet Earth to question his or her own sanity during the teen years. And it's just as normal for teens to push parents away, adopted or not.

____ No matter what age and what stage, much of what you do to build a loving bond with your child should be carried on throughout her lifetime. Remember, being open and honest is never a bad thing. It also may help both of you to reach out to other adoptive families in your community, join a support group, introduce books and videos early on, and seek professional help when warranted. Do keep your pediatrician and school staff informed as needed when needed.

SWAN Post-Permanency Services



**statewide
adoption and
permanency
network**

These services are available to any family who has adopted and lives in Pennsylvania, whether or not they adopted their child from foster care, and to those families who have provided permanency to children from the foster care system through permanent legal custodianship or formal kinship care.

Families self-refer by calling the SWAN Helpline (800-585-SWAN) to request these services. The services are part of a continuum of services that strengthen and support families and assist in strengthening the special needs adoption community at the local level.



ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE SUPPORT GROUP



Our support group meets the third Monday of each month from 6-8 p.m.
Meet families like yours who share similar joys and concerns.
Includes light dinner, child care, training hours, guest speakers and more!
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Mark your calendars & join us on:

March 16th– David Delvaux: ADHD

April 20th– Autumn Bloom: Trauma and How It Affects Children

May 18th– PASSAGES, Inc.: Talking to Kids About Touching

Spring Activities for Family Fun By Catherine Holecko April 18, 2019



Put some spring in your step this season with a spring activities jar. It's an easy way to collect a bunch of ideas for family fun. Pull them out any time you're ready for some active play! Kids usually enjoy helping you brainstorm the ideas, but it's also fun to include some options they don't know about. Nothing beats the element of surprise. See below for lots of categories to get you started. Then supplement with your favorite hobbies, games, and local hangouts.

Walk This Way

There's more sunlight and warmer weather in the spring, so enjoy it with a walk. Mix things up by finding a new path or trail to explore, adding letterboxing or geocaching, singing songs, or playing walking games. If your kids have pedometers or other activity trackers, don't forget to bring them along for some pedometer activities.

Family Game Day (or Night)

Play some old-fashioned backyard games: Anything from Red Rover to catch, croquet to statues, ladder ball or dodgeball. List them separately in your jar, or make entries like "family game tournament—kids pick first game:" or "play 3 kinds of tag." Gather some friends or neighbors for a kickball game, or try nighttime flashlight games. Or pick from this huge list of quick brain-break games.

On Wheels

Spruce up your wheeled toys after a winter in storage and take them for a spin: Inline skates, skateboards, scooters, bicycles, tricycles, wagons, jogging strollers, or a combination of all of these! Or hit your local roller rink for public skating hours.

On the Water

Spring is all about melting snow and April showers, so add ways to play in and on the water to your activity jar. You could rent a canoe, kayak, rowboat, or paddleboat or go fishing. You could take a walk in the rain and splash in the puddles, or find a creek or pond and wade in it or skip stones and float sticks.

Nothing But Net

If you have the equipment to do this at home, great! If not, look for places in your community where you can play table tennis, badminton, volleyball, or tennis. Never played before? Learn together!

Sports Report

Take advantage of spring weather by playing pickup basketball outside, trying some soccer-inspired games together, playing golf (regular, mini, or driving range), or smacking some line drives at the batting cages.

Up in the Air

Take advantage of those spring breezes to fly a kite or play beach ball and balloon games. Or take things up high by visiting a ropes course, zipline, or trampoline park.

Spring Activities 50-54 Clean It Up

Okay, so it's not all fun and games. But taking on some springtime chores together can make them more fun. You can even add an element of competition: Who can find the strangest treasure in the yard after the snow melts? Who is the champion window-washer or stick-picker-upper? Can you take on a big project like painting a room or planting a garden?

Old Toys, New Tricks

No need for pricey new toys. Just use these simple objects that you probably already have for tons of fun games and activities: Hoola hoops, jump ropes, pool noodles (no pool necessary), sidewalk chalk, cardboard boxes. Or, if you have a dog, make it project to teach *him* a new trick!

Seasonal Eats

Celebrate the new fruits and vegetables of spring: Find out what's in season in your area, then have a taste test or recipe contest. *Bon appetit!*



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