



Helping Children Understand Adoption at Different Ages

Children of all ages adjust to adoption in different ways. The following tips are for adoptive parents and caregivers who are interested in helping a child understand adoption.

CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 5

- Be concrete and simple. Use props, drawings or dolls to help explain adoption.
- Stay relaxed and factual when talking about adoption.
- Begin talking about adoption right away.
- Keep in mind that children usually feel good about being adopted at this age.

CHILDREN AGES 6 TO 10

- Respect a child's privacy in public.
- Notice and help kids respond to adoption-related teasing.
- Help kids deflect intrusive questions if they do not want to talk about adoption.
- Be proactive. Talk about adoption and adoptive families with the child privately.
- Support the idea that there are many kinds of families including adoptive families.

CHILDREN AGES 11 TO 15

- Avoid putting a child on the spot about being adopted.
- Refer to adopted children as members of many types of families.
- If the child or the child's friends bring up adoption concerns, provide them with facts.

CHILDREN AGES 16 TO 22

- Be open and converse regularly about adoption and adoptive families.
- Treat the subject of personal or family history with sensitivity. Offer alternative strategies for dealing with gaps in the information.
- Be open to listening and processing with a teen or young adult who brings up the adoption dilemma.
- Refer to a qualified counselor who understands adoption.
- Remember a child's desire to seek information about his birth family does not mean he does not love and need the support of his adoptive family.
- Learn about the adoption support groups in your area for you and your child.

For more online tip cards, visit www.KCSL.org under the "Resources" tab.



Kansas Children's Service League

Parenting questions? Call the Parent Helpline:
1-800-CHILDREN or email/text 1800children@kcsl.org

