

Adoption: Staying Motivated and Inspired

Now that the proverbial rush of the holiday season has drawn to a close, perhaps we are focused on resolutions we have made for the coming year and how to keep them alive. More often than not, however, we fail to adhere to our own best intentions, likely due to a too ambitious or too ambiguous, approach. We bite off more than we can chew (or more than is even palatable,) and rather than readjust our priorities, we give up all together.

Alas, if motivation and will were the only ingredients to maintaining the energy with which we start the year, we might accomplish more of our goals. Experts encourage us to focus on manageable, realistic and incremental goals and to focus on successes rather than our shortcomings.

As we begin this New Year, we in the adoption community are keenly aware that this can be a difficult time of year for families, even for those who have successfully expanded their family. **If your dreams of growing your family have been realized**, like most parents, you are probably feeling both fulfilled and exhausted. Just when you think you have settled into a routine and mastered the basics, it becomes clear that all the training and praying and obstacles you conquered still could not fully prepare you for the realities of parenting.

If you are just beginning your adoption journey, perhaps all of the new information you are gathering is overwhelming and confusing. You may feel bombarded by a dizzying array of choices and directions and may still be wondering if any of them will lead you to the child who is meant to be yours. **Prospective adoptive parents whose process is well underway** may be feeling restless and may wonder just how long they are supposed to patiently wait. It may seem that there are endless hurdles, and that each one brings both faith and frustration.

Of course, all of these feelings are to be expected and although we are all unique, many of these experiences have been and will continue to be shared. Family building, regardless of the route or outcome, can reveal both our best and worst selves. It can lead us to discover what is most important and draw us closer to one another. So with these thoughts in mind, and to address the resolution conundrum, we offer several ideas to stay motivated and inspired, no matter where in the adoption process you may find yourself.

As you reflect on the past year, and its achievements and losses, choose just one step that will lead you to feel more victorious than defeated. **Here are our top ten:**

If you are waiting to adopt:

1. List five things that you know now that you didn't know when you started your adoption journey. What has surprised you? What questions still linger? Take the time to get these questions answered.
2. Take pictures of yourselves everywhere you go even if it's just at the supermarket; you never know where you will take the picture that connects to an expectant parent.

3. Reach out to the adoption professionals you are working with to let them know one thing you feel is working, one concern you have had, and one thing you'd like to do differently in the new year as you move ahead.
4. Refresh your profile picture or place or redesign an advertisement; put your best foot (or face!) forward.
5. Contact a family who has successfully adopted; reach out to them for support and to reduce feelings of isolation, rather than to reinforce the myth that "everyone else" already has children.

If you are parenting:

1. Learn one new thing about your child's birth history or culture and create a special way to share it with him or her.
2. Celebrate the individuality of your family and identify your greatest strengths. Depict them in a story or photographs that you can draw on when times are more challenging.
3. Remember that *all* parents deserve to take care of themselves and that doing so is a way to care for our children. Do one thing that's just for you. A nurtured parent can more easily nurture his or her child.
4. Google an article about adoption; to honor your emerging expertise, share it and your comments with your circle of friends and family members.
5. Attend a group, training or conference of *your* choosing; go because you want to, not because you're supposed to. Learn about the topics that are of most interest to you. IAC Center (www.iaccenter.com) offers professionally led support groups in NYC and multiple locations in NJ. Adoptive Parents Committee (www.adoptiveparents.org) offers volunteer run groups in multiple locations throughout the Tristate.

We know being more actively engaged often helps quell feelings of anxiety, doubt or disappointment, and may even awaken a renewed sense of purpose and excitement. Resolutions do after all require us to be more resolute, but there are no prizes for the most ambitious declarations. The enduring tradition of taking time each year to focus on new beginnings and once again reclaim our drive and commitment to the future unites even the most cynical among us. So here's to an outstanding, meaningful 2012 in which all of our goals are realized.

Anna Sandbank, LCSW
Program Director
Forever Families Through Adoption
62 Bowman Avenue
Rye Brook, NY 10573
(914) 939-1180
adopt@foreverfamielsthroughadoption.org
www.foreverfamielsthroughadoption.org