

Talking to Kids about Adoption

1. **Parents Mindset:** Talking about Adoption involves at least two journeys, sometimes three:
 - a. Your Child's: What can your child understand about adoption at different ages and stages of cognitive development?
 - b. Your Journey: How do you - as a parent - feel talking to your child about adoption?
 - c. Your child's Birth parents – whether your family is in direct contact or they are in yours and your child's thoughts and fantasies.
2. **Ages & Stages of Development: How a Child Understands Adoption**
 - a. **Laying Foundation**
 - i. **Infancy & Toddler (0-2)** A time for parents to get comfortable & practice talking about adoption
 - ii. **Preschool**
 1. Relay story of adoption with warmth & love.
 2. Begin to use adoption language
 3. Children absorb the emotional message
 4. The 'sort of' first question "did I grow in your tummy?"
 - iii. **Ages 4 to 7**
 1. Begin to realize they have birth parents
 2. Begin to differentiate between birth and adoption as ways of entering the family
 3. Emotional knowing may precede cognition
 4. Noticing differences in appearance
 - b. **Real Talks and Real Questions about Adoption**
 - i. **Ages 7 to 12**
 1. Increasing awareness of having birth parents
 2. Awareness of some of the losses of adoption
 3. More Questions about being "given up for adoption"
 4. Feeling Different
 5. The issue of permanence
 6. School and Peers
 - ii. **Teens**
 1. Identity
 2. Independence
3. **Your Goals as a Parent**
 - a. Help your child understand his or her history
 - b. Validate your child's emotions and his ability to deal with them
 - c. Let them know you are comfortable talking about adoption – including talking about birth parents.
 - d. Give your child sufficient time and opportunities to metabolize adoption
 - e. Maintain your own confidence and get support when you need it

