



Impact of Adoption on Adoptive Parents



Adoptive parenthood, like other types of parenthood, can bring tremendous joy—and a sizable amount of stress. This factsheet explores some of the emotional ups and downs that adoptive parents may experience as they approach the decision to adopt, during the adoptive process, and, most importantly, after the adoption.

What's Inside:

- Why adopt?
- Managing the adoption process
- Impact of (adoptive) parenting
- Resources



While every adoption is unique and every parent has different feelings and experiences, there are some general themes that emerge regarding adoptive parents' emotional responses. The purpose of the factsheet is to identify some of these themes, affirm the common feelings, and provide links to resources that may help adoptive parents manage emotional issues related to adoption.

- **Why Adopt?** looks at motivations that lead families or individuals to consider adoption and explores some of the questions prospective adopters may want to ask themselves.
- **Managing the Adoption Process** examines some of the feelings parents may encounter as they pursue adoption.
- **Impact of (Adoptive) Parenting** explores parents' feelings about the parenting role after the adoption is finalized. Also included are strategies that parents can use to work through adoption issues, ensuring the best outcomes for children and parents throughout their lifetimes.
- **Resources** links to websites, books, support groups, and other ways for adoptive parents to find more information and help.

Why Adopt?

Adoptive parents come to the adoption decision for many different reasons. Some adopt because of infertility, and adoption is their alternative way to grow their family; others adopt in order to add to their family, to help a specific child, or for social justice reasons.

This factsheet is a companion to two factsheets for other members of the adoption triad on the impact of adoption:

- *Impact of Adoption on Adopted Persons* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_adimpact.cfm)
(Spanish version: www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/impactoadoptadas.cfm)
- *Impact of Adoption on Birth Parents* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_impact/index.cfm)
(Spanish version: www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/impactobio/index.cfm)

Infertility Issues

Parents who adopt because of infertility have already experienced loss and disappointment because of the inability to have a biological child. In addition, they may have dealt with repeated miscarriages or intrusive fertility treatments. It is only natural for adults to respond with grief to these losses, and they may also experience feelings of inadequacy ("why me?") and lack of control.

Regardless of the exact circumstances, couples and individuals who turn to adoption because of infertility may have already weathered an emotional roller coaster. For those who need help working through the grief of infertility, there are support groups and counselors who specialize in helping infertile couples and individuals. It's important to remember that both partners in a couple may not resolve their grief at the same pace, and arriving

at the decision to adopt may come at a different time for each person.

Making the Decision

Families, couples, and individuals who decide to adopt should always go through a rigorous screening process that encourages self-reflection and consideration about their reasons for wanting to adopt as well as their expectations for the child and the parenthood experience. In approaching adoption, prospective adopters may want to consider their feelings about the following:

- How will a new child fit into the parents' lives and their relationship?
- How will a new child affect family dynamics—especially if the family already has children?
- What changes are the parents willing to make to ease the child's transition?
- How do the parents feel about “open” adoption, that is, contact with the child's birth family?
- How do the parents feel about welcoming a child from the foster care system or an orphanage who may have experienced abuse or neglect?
- In cases of transracial or transcultural adoption—how do the parents feel about accommodating, helping, and promoting the child's positive cultural and racial identity?
- How will the parents inform family members and friends, and how they will deal with questions from family, friends, and strangers about adoption?
- How will the parents answer their child's questions about adoption, the child's background and history, birth family, and the parents' reasons for adoption?
- How willing and able are they to seek help for themselves or their child when necessary?

For more information about making the decision to adopt and deciding what type of adoption to pursue, read Information Gateway's factsheets:

- *Adoption Options* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_adoptoption.cfm)
- *Adoption: Where Do I Start?* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_start.cfm)
- *Foster Parents Considering Adoption* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_fospar.cfm)
- *“Special Needs” Adoption: What Does It Mean?* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/specialneeds/)

Managing the Adoption Process

The adoption process can seem intrusive and overly cumbersome to prospective parents. Each State has its own laws governing adoption. Intercountry adoptions are subject to additional regulations. For the most part, these laws are designed to protect the best interests of the child and the expectant parents before they

decide to place their child for adoption. So, it's normal for prospective adopters to feel vulnerable and powerless about the adoption process.

During the process, prospective parents will find themselves making life-changing decisions, which can be both exciting and stressful. Decisions need to be made about what type of adoption to pursue; whether to work with an adoption service provider and, if so, which one; how to answer the home study questions; and, finally, how to respond to a potential placement of a particular child or children. Prospective parents may also experience long waiting times and have to face uncertain outcomes. It's not unusual for them to feel anxious about the process and to find it difficult to go about their regular routine when so much is at stake.

A good agency and social worker can help prospective parents manage the adoptive process and provide guidance for the decisions and learning along the way. Some agencies may be able to link prospective parents to support groups for those awaiting adoption or to counselors who can help them with the sometimes extensive waiting period.

Sometimes a planned adoption does not proceed, and the prospective adoptive parents are devastated. While the prospective parents may have known intellectually that the expectant parents could change their minds about the adoption or that their foster child's grandparents might seek custody or that a child in foster care could be reunited with his or her birth family or that a country might shut down its international

adoptions, the reality can be very difficult to accept. If the parents have already met and attached to the child or served as foster parents, it may be particularly difficult. This is a loss for the prospective adoptive parents, and grief is an understandable reaction. They may need time to work through their grief before they're ready to proceed again.

Impact of (Adoptive) Parenting

For many adoptive parents, completing the adoption matching and placement process means that the most difficult phase is behind them. Most adoptive children settle in with their new family, and research shows that the great majority of adoptive parents are satisfied with their decision to adopt.¹ But settling into parenthood or the "postadoption period" can present its own difficulties for parents. In some cases, adoption-related issues arise long after the adoption, and parents may be unprepared for the lifelong process of adoption. Some parental stressors are the same types of challenges that all families—biological and adoptive—face; however, there are other potential stressors unique to adoption, and adoptive parents may want to familiarize themselves with the possibilities.

¹ Vandivere, S., Malm, K., & Radcliff, L. (2009). *Adoption USA: A Chartbook Based on the 2007 National Survey of Adoptive Parents*. Washington, DC: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. Retrieved from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/09/NSAP/chartbook/chartbook.cfm?id=2>.

Information Gateway publishes a series of factsheets to help adoptive parents learn about parenting their adopted children and dealing with developmental adoption issues:

- *Parenting Your Adopted Preschooler* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/preschool.cfm)
- *Parenting Your Adopted School-Age Child* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/parent_school_age)
- *Parenting Your Adopted Teenager* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/parent_teenager)

Other useful factsheets include:

- *Helping Your Foster Child Transition to Your Adopted Child* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_transition.cfm)
- *Parent-Child Interaction Therapy With At-Risk Families* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_interactbulletin)
- *Parenting a Child Who Has Been Sexually Abused: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Parents* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_abused/index.cfm)
- *Selecting and Working With an Adoption Therapist* (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_therapist.cfm)

Depression

After months or years of anticipating parenthood, the excitement of the actual adoption can give way to a feeling of being “let down” or sadness in some parents. Researchers have dubbed this “postadoption depression syndrome,” or PADS, and it may occur within a few weeks of the adoption finalization.² The realities of parenthood, including the tedium, lack of sleep (for parents of infants or children with behavioral or sleep issues), and the weight of parental responsibilities can be overwhelming. Parents may have difficulty attaching to the new child and may question their parenting capabilities. They also may be hesitant to admit that there are any problems after the long-awaited adoption.

In some cases, the depression resolves on its own as the parent adjusts to the new life. In cases in which the depression lasts for more than a few weeks or interferes with the individual’s ability to parent, peer support or professional help (with an adoption-competent therapist) may help the parent to address the issues causing the depression and regain the confidence necessary to assume the parenting role.

Identity and Attachment

Adoption is a life event that changes the identity of the parties as well as the identity of the involved families. Sometimes, adoptive parents are slow to adjust to

² Postadoption depression syndrome was named as such by J. Bond in “Post Adoption Depression Syndrome” from the Spring 1995 issue of *Roots and Wings*. More recent research includes K. Foli’s (2009) “Depression in Adoptive Parents: A Model of Understanding Through Grounded Theory” from the *Western Journal of Nursing Research*.

their new identity, or they wonder what expectations accompany the new identity.

Adoptive parents may worry that they don't "feel" like parents, even after the adoption is complete. They wonder whether they are really entitled to parent their new son or daughter. Or, after years of keeping their parenting desire in check, either as foster parents or because of an uncertain legal outcome, they are reluctant to fully embrace parenthood or to believe they are truly parents like other people are. Parents may even question why they don't immediately love their new child or wonder if they love their child enough. For these new parents, parenting may seem like a tentative status at best. Furthermore, the lack of role models for adoptive parents may give them a sense of isolation.

Identifying as a parent or as a parent of a particular child may be a more gradual process for some parents. If the parents have adopted from foster care, they may have had visits with the child, or the child may have actually lived with them before the adoption. Even so, the finalization creates a permanent family situation, and both parents and child may take some time to develop a bond and evolve into their new identity, just as a couple adjusts to marriage after dating for a long time.

If the parents have adopted an infant, taken in an emergency placement, or adopted through an intercountry adoption, the suddenness of the child's arrival may leave parents little time for becoming accustomed to their new identity. They may be so absorbed in the practical tasks of meeting the needs of their child(ren) and relationship that they have little time

to dwell on their new status. The feeling of being a parent may take some time to develop but may eventually be a result of being able to meet the child's needs and form a mutual attachment.

For some parents, there is a pivotal moment when they first feel like a parent (e.g., the first visit to the doctor, school registration, the first time the child says and means "momma"). For others, it is the day-to-day routine of caring for the child and helping the new son or daughter navigate the world that gradually leads to self-identification as the child's parent. Identifying as the parent is generally linked to a sense of entitlement, or "claiming," and responsibility. Parents are able to move beyond feelings of being "not worthy" or "not capable" of parenting their child; they become comfortable in their new role, accepting the responsibility and recognizing and feeling fully entitled to parent their child.

There are a number of things that adoptive parents can do to help them adjust to their new status as parents and as a family. In fact, there are strategies that may be useful right after an adoption as well as 5, 10, or 20 years later as parents and children encounter identity and adoption issues through their lives—especially around particular milestones, such as birthdays, holidays, births, and deaths. Some strategies that may be useful right after an adoption as well as many years later include the following:

- **Connect with parents who have completed a similar adoption.** Learning how other parents have made the adjustment and have dealt with challenges can be reassuring. Parents

who adopted 1 year or 10 years earlier can serve as role models to new parents. And parent support groups are meant for just that—supporting and lending a hand and a sympathetic ear to parents who need it. (Information Gateway’s National Foster Care and Adoption Directory lists regional groups: www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad)

- **Establish family traditions or rituals.** Parents may want to establish daily or weekly schedules of activities. Routines can be comforting and stabilizing for children and they can help to normalize family life. Rituals can be as simple as bedtime reading or family movie night. Parents may also want to establish traditions to commemorate important days (the day of the adoption placement or finalization) or holidays. These special occasions can be a time for celebration and can reinforce parent and family identification. (Visit Information Gateway’s web section on Parenting After Adoption: www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_parenting/)
- **Create a family storybook.** In their 1994 book, *Real Parents, Real Children*, Holly van Gulden and Lisa Bartels-Rabb suggest that writing a family storybook can help all the family members feel a sense of belonging to their family. Parents can start the book while they are awaiting the adoption; they begin with their own stories, from their own childhood through their decision to adopt. As each new member joins the family, his or her background and story are added. These books can be maintained through multiple generations. (A family’s storybook will be different from the

child’s individual Lifebook, which focuses only on the child and may include information about the child before he or she joined the family.)

- **Connect with your child’s birth culture.** Developing a strong family identity that involves all the members and makes everyone feel included may be especially important for the transracial or transcultural family or for any “conspicuous” adoptive family. Parents can choose activities, schools, friends, encounters with professionals, and neighborhoods that send a message that they value the diversity of all family members.
- **Prepare to respond to outsiders** (including relatives, friends, and strangers) about the adoption. New adoptive parents may be caught off guard by some of the questions that generally well-meaning friends and relatives ask. (In the worst cases, the questioners may not be well-meaning.) Preparing for how to respond to questions, how much of the child’s story to share, and how to inform or educate relatives and friends about adoption can reinforce the new identity of parents and children, empower the new family, and even be a family attachment experience (if the children are old enough to be involved).³ (Visit Information Gateway’s web section on Parenting After Adoption: www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_parenting/)

³ Marilyn Schoettle (2000) has written the *W.I.S.E. Up Powerbook* for adopted children to help them feel empowered to share information about their adoption when, if, and how they choose.

- **Find an adoption-competent therapist.** In many cases, parents will need to reach outside the immediate family for the first time in their lives in order to seek the help of a therapist, social worker, or other helping professional. If parents decide to see a therapist or to arrange for therapy for any family members because of the adoption, it's important that the therapist have experience with adoption issues and with all the members of the adoption triad. While adoption may mark the end of involvement with the adoption or child welfare agency or the social worker involved with the placement, the agency or worker may be a resource for postadoption help or referral.

Issues Related to the Type of Adoption or Age of Child

Different types of adoption may raise various issues for adoptive parents that impact their identity as a parent and their feelings about the adoption.

Open adoption. There is a growing trend toward open adoption in which a birth parent or other birth relative continues to have some type of contact with the adoptive family after the adoption. It's common for a birth mother to choose the family who will adopt her child and to meet and form a relationship with the prospective adoptive parents. It is also common for birth families and adoptive families to have open adoption agreements in mediated adoptions and in some adoptions from foster care. After the adoption, the extent of the communication can vary, but it may include the periodic exchange of letters and photographs between birth family and adoptive family, or it may be occasional,

regular, or holiday visits with the birth mother, birth father, or other birth relatives.

Research shows that open adoption arrangements generally work well for all involved. They remove much of the mystery and fear that may accompany adoption. In fact, some studies have shown that openness is associated with better postadoption adjustment for adoptive parents as well as birth parents and adoptees.⁴ Initially, adoptive parents may be nervous about whether their child will understand “who is who” or feel fearful of birth family contact. However, parents can provide consistent, age-appropriate information to their child to help the child better understand about the adoption and birth family, and contact with the birth family can serve to support this information. Contact removes much of the mystery for the both the adoptive and the birth families, and it can help the child learn more directly about his or her history and identity. (See Information Gateway's *Openness in Adoption* factsheet for families at http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_openadopt.cfm)

Intercountry adoption—limited information and cultural expansion.

Children adopted from other countries come from a wide variety of situations. In some cases, they arrive as infants or toddlers who have spent time in foster homes in their native country. In other cases, they have been in orphanages or other institutions for months or years.

⁴ See, for example, findings from the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project (www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/Centers/mtarp) as well as Ge et al.'s (2008) “Bridging the Divide: Openness in Adoption and Post-adoption Psychosocial Adjustment Among Birth and Adoptive Parents” from the *Journal of Family Psychology* 22(4).

The children often come into care for the same reasons that children enter foster care in the United States—parental abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse, abandonment, and poverty. Often, there is little reliable information about the child’s background, relatives, or medical history. Parents should be prepared to deal with such unknowns and to accept the fact that their child has had previous experiences that the parents may never know about.

Parenting a child adopted from another country offers both the joys and the challenges that occur when two cultures come together. Many of the joys come from learning to love and celebrate the unique characteristics of each child; many of the challenges come from raising children in a society that may not always be welcoming or approving of transracial and transcultural families or of children from other countries. Parents may prepare themselves for the following experiences:

- Helping the child develop a racial and cultural identity
- Creating a family identity for the multiracial or multicultural family
- Living a multicultural life
- Dealing with racism and bias about race and culture

Adopting a child from another race or culture forces parents to examine their own lifestyle and community and to view them through the eyes of their child.

Adoption from foster care and the older child. Foster parents are the most frequent

adopters of children from foster care.⁵ They have already established a relationship with the child, generally know something about the child’s background, and probably know members of the child’s birth family. That doesn’t necessarily mean, however, that there will be a seamless transition from foster care to adoption! Parents should not be surprised if the child acts out or continues to have issues stemming from past abuse or neglect after the adoption is finalized. The child may be dealing with the loss and adoption issues that all adoptees need to resolve at various developmental stages throughout their lives.

Some researchers have noted that children adopted from foster care may act out or misbehave in order to “induce” feelings of rejection, anger, pain, and abandonment in their parents. This testing behavior may actually indicate that the child feels comfortable enough with the parents to communicate his or her own true feelings. Parents should prepare for their own response, modeling understanding and appropriate reactions/discipline, if that occurs.

Parents who adopt from foster care without having served as the child’s foster parents may have similar experiences. Whereas the child’s visits may have been relatively calm, and the immediate postadoption period may have seemed smooth, the child may still act out after this early “honeymoon” period. This is a normal reaction for a child whose life has been filled with

⁵ According to statistics from the U.S. Children’s Bureau’s Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) for FY 2009, 54 percent of children adopted from foster care that year were adopted by foster parents.

rejection, abandonment, abuse, trauma, and instability.

Parents who adopt from foster care may experience internal struggles regarding their child's birth family. The parents know that, in most cases, it is important for their child to maintain ties with his or her birth siblings, grandparents, or birth parents, but they also know that some of these relatives are the same people who may have neglected or maltreated their child. Adoptive parents may even question their own identity in relation to the child ("Am I the parent?") when their child visits or has other contact with birth family members. As with most parenting tasks, this is a case of putting the child's needs first. Maintaining those ties may be important for the child's identity, development, and long-term well-being, and the adoptive parent's willingness to facilitate the contact provides a model of mature behavior for the child.

Finding help. Adoptive parents who seek help for themselves or their children or families may want to start with their adoption agency. Many agencies offer some kind of postadoption support and services. Some offer preservation programs dedicated to keeping the adoption intact by helping parents understand their child's behavior and manage it appropriately. Research has shown that a good therapeutic relationship between adoptive parents and their social worker can also help during the postadoption phase.⁶

⁶ Zosky, D. L., Howard, J. A., Smith, S. L., & Howard, A. M. (2005). Investing in Adoptive Families: What Adoptive Families Tell Us Regarding the Benefits of Adoption Preservation Services. *Adoption Quarterly*, 8(3).

Any counselors or therapists that the adoptive parent or family uses should always be "adoption competent," that is, they should have experience with adoption issues and knowledge about the adoption triad of adoptee, adoptive parent, and birth parent. Other adoptive families are often good sources of referral for therapists and other assistance. Other adoptive families can also offer their own support and experience as well as normalizing the experience. Local support organizations may maintain lists of adoption competent counselors and therapists.

Visit Information Gateway's webpage on Parenting After Adoption: www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_parenting/

Read Information Gateway's *Postadoption Services*: www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_postadoption.cfm

For more information on resources for adoptive parents, refer to list of resources below.

Conclusion

Adoption is a lifelong commitment, and adoption-related issues may arise at any point in parents' or their child's lifetime. A willingness to learn about the issues and to be open to seeking support if necessary can help to ensure that parents and children experience happy and healthy family lives.

Resources

Resources are divided into websites and books and articles.

Websites

AdoptUsKids: www.adoptuskids.org

While the AdoptUsKids website is a tool for connecting foster and adoptive families with waiting children throughout the United States, the website also offers a number of resources for adoptive families, including information about the adoptive process, adoption advocacy, and stories for parents and children. Parents may also be interested in the respite manual, “Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Respite in Your Community” (<http://adoptuskids.org/resourceCenter/publications/respitemanual.aspx>).

Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E): www.adoptionssupport.org

C.A.S.E. provides support and education for everyone in the adoption community. The website includes information on adoption-competent therapy, adoption training, community education, and publications.

Center for Family Connections: www.kinnect.org/index.html

This educational and clinical resource center specializes in the developmental, structural, and systemic issues related to adoption, foster care, kinship, and guardianship and offers training, education, advocacy, and clinical treatment.

Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children’s Bureau, Information Gateway offers information on all aspects of adoption for professionals, policymakers, and the general public. Information Gateway develops and maintains a computerized database of books, journal articles, and other materials on adoption and related topics, conducts database searches, publishes materials on adoption, and gives referrals to related services and experts in the field.

- Visit Information Gateway’s webpages on Adoption and Parenting After Adoption: www.childwelfare.gov/adoption and www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_parenting/
- Access the National Foster Care and Adoption Directory Search: www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad

Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute: www.adoptioninstitute.org/index.php

The Adoption Institute seeks to improve the quality of information about adoption, to

enhance the understanding and perceptions about adoption, and to advance adoption policy and practice.

Families Adopting in Response (FAIR): www.fairfamilies.org

Through its all-volunteer organization, FAIR offers information, education, support, and fellowship to adoptive and preadoptive families. Membership includes families who have adopted children through public and private agencies, from the United States, and from many other countries. FAIR focuses on the children who need a permanent, loving family and the parents who have opened their hearts and homes to those children, infants through teens.

Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project: www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/Centers/mtarp

This site provides research findings from this major study of variations in openness in adoption and the effect of openness on all members of the adoption triad.

New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children (NYSCCC): <http://nysccc.org>

While this website is focused on New York families, many of the resources have relevance for other adoptive families. Transracial and transcultural resources and questions and answers may be particularly useful (<http://nysccc.org/family-supports/transracial-transcultural>).

North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC): www.nacac.org

Founded in 1974 by adoptive parents, NACAC is committed to meeting the needs of waiting children and the families who adopt them. NACAC offers advocacy, education, parent leadership capacity building, and adoption support.

Pact, an Adoption Alliance: www.pactadopt.org

Pact's goal is to create and maintain the Internet's most comprehensive site addressing issues for adopted children of color, offering informative articles on related topics as well as profiles of triad members and their families, links to other Internet resources, and a book reference guide with a searchable database. The site provides reprints of past Pact Press issues, as well as opportunities to interact with other triad members and to ask questions of birth parents, adopted people, adoptive parents, and adoption professionals.

Books and Articles

National Adoption Magazines

- *Adoptive Families* (www.adoptivefamilies.com)
- *Adoption Today* (www.adoptinfo.net)
- *Rainbow Kids* (www.rainbowkids.com)
- *Fostering Families Today* (www.fosteringfamielstoday.com)

- Blomquist, B. T. (2001). *Insight into adoption: What adoptive parents need to know about the fundamental differences between a biological and an adopted child—and its effect on parenting*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Eldridge, S. (2009). *20 things adoptive parents need to succeed*. New York, NY: Delta, a Division of Random House.
- Foli, K. J., & Thompson, J. R. (2004). *The post-adoption blues: Overcoming the unforeseen challenges of adoption*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale.
- Gray, D. D. (2007). *Nurturing adoptions: Creating resilience after neglect and trauma*. Indianapolis, IN: Perspectives Press
- Keck, G. C., & Kupecky, R. M. (2009). *Parenting the hurt child: Helping adoptive families heal and grow*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
- Kirk, H. D. (1984). *Shared fate: A theory and method of adoptive relationships*. Port Angeles, WA: Ben-Simon Publications.
- Kruger, P., & Smolowe, J. (Eds.). (2005). *A love like no other: Stories from adoptive parents*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Marindin, H. (Ed.). *The handbook for single adoptive parents*. Washington, DC: National Council for Single Adoptive Parents.
- May, P. (2005). *Approaching fatherhood: A guide for adoptive dads and others*. London, England: British Adoption and Fostering Federation.
- Melina, L. R. (1986). *Raising adopted children: A manual for adoptive parents*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers. (Available on Kindle)
- Pavao, J. M. (1998). *The family of adoption*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Schooler, J. E., & Atwood, T. C. (2008). *The whole life adoption book: Realistic advice for building a healthy adoptive family*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
- Van Gulden, H., & Bartels-Rabb, L. M. (1994). *Real parents, real children: Parenting the adopted child*. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau funds research projects on postadoption services. The following is just one example:

The Colorado Coalition of Adoptive Families (CCAF) received an Adoption Opportunities and Healthy Marriage grant to provide training and support to families who adopted children from foster care in Colorado. The CCAF trained 641 adoptive parents in relationship strengthening skills and provided direct postadoptive services to 730 children and 945 adults over the 5-year grant period (2004-2009). Services included parent support groups, family advocacy, crisis intervention, therapy, respite care, case consultation, special events, a speaker series, and more. The project also was responsible for developing a network of adoption professionals, parents, community leaders, and others. Among the goals of the project was a reduction in adoption disruptions. Statistics comparing 616 participating adoptive families with 1,439 nonparticipating adoptive families showed that participating families had a rate of adoption disruption that was 16 percent lower than nonparticipating families (1.46 percent vs. 1.74 percent of finalized adoptions).

Find more information on the CCAF website: www.cocaf.org