

# News from Matching Assistance

## A Family For Every Child

### Adopting Older Foster Kids And Teens

Adopting a teenager may not exactly be what you had in mind when you made the decision to adopt. You were probably envisioning a cute little kid with darling little dimples and a smile that could just melt hearts. However, the benefits of adopting a teenager are numerous and really should be considered when making your final decision to adopt.

#### 1. That younger kid you're adopting? He or she is going to turn into a teen anyway.

Okay, I know. I understand that you are hoping that by the time your kid turns into a teenager you will be ready for it, and that the relationship with the kid will give you a foundation to navigate the teen years. Still, I did have to get this point out there. If you adopt you can decide to skip the baby years, but there is no way you can skip the teen years.

#### 2. Contrary to what you may think adopting a 15-year-old doesn't mean that you will only be parenting for 3 more years.

Human beings need pretty intensive parenting well into their 20's. That can mean different things, but they do need it. Some may need or want to live at home longer. Others just need a lot of emotional support. All of them need parents.

#### 3. You know what you are getting.

It is not unlike voting or hiring someone with experience and a track record. If you know what issues you are good at dealing with, then you can be MORE confident that you are matching with a kid whose needs fit your skills.

#### 4. They can just be so cool.

Okay, I don't know how to say this in ways that don't sound particularly offensive, so here goes. The younger the child is, the more competition there is. By the time kids are 15 most people aren't even considering them. There are so many wonderful kids with no history of criminal behavior and relatively-minor psychological issues. I mean, there are really cool kids wanting families.

#### 5. They may share actual interests you have.

It depends upon what you are interested in, of course. Let's be honest though. A lot of parents talk about the joy of watching cartoons with their kids, playing with their little plastic toys, and reading *Goodnight Moon* two dozen times every night. To some of us though there just isn't a whole lot of attraction in that. How about instead of watching *Dora the Explorer* with your kid you got to watch *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*? Huh? How about that? What if they wanted to go to the art and craft fair with you? How about taking a jewelry-making class for adults? I am not saying they will or should be thought of as a substitute for a friend, socializing and entertaining you, but I am saying that your bonding parent/child interactions can be done in activities you actually enjoy.

#### 6. They do their own self-care.

Really. They are usually even willing to do their own laundry. Okay, so instead of bugging them to take a shower you are worrying about how to pay for all the hot water since they don't come

OUT of the shower, but still, the icky, gross part of parenting is over. When they are sick, they don't crawl into your lap and stick their running noses into your hair.

Most parents say they don't want to miss all the "firsts" in a child's life, hence wanting a younger child.

\*Even if you're adopting a teen, you'll still get tons of the firsts

1. First period (if you get a girl) which is a huge bonding experience naturally
2. First driving trip, first trip to get the permit, etc
3. First college visit
4. First shopping trip where THEY pick the clothes and you just pay for them (which honestly, was a stinking blast!!!!)
5. First time to help them cook dinner for a friend or family
6. You get to be there for graduation
7. You get to be mother/father of the bride/groom
8. Birth/adoption/foster of first child (your grandchild)
9. First crush/boyfriend/girlfriend
10. Prom
11. You get my point!

You may miss the first word, but you may get to hear the first word in Spanish, learned in high school

You may miss the first step, but you'll get to see the first step in high heels for the valentines banquet

You may miss the first hair cut, but you'll be there for the first set of highlights (in our case, done by me on the deck of our house with an audience of teens!)

And the best reason to adopt teens/preteens?

They are NOT typically morning people. No 4 am feedings, no 6 am diaper changes, no 7 am wake up to watch Barney/Doodlebops.

Teens almost always like the late hours, wanting to talk and eat cookie dough and doritos and "bond". They don't bug you first thing in the a.m. unless you forget to give them something they need for school.

Knowing that surveys have shown that more than 65% of the population prefers evenings over mornings, this alone should be an incentive!

Ultimately, though, you have to remember it isn't just about you. Ideally, yes, you'd have a child from birth/toddlerhood through adulthood, raised in your home with your values and your memories, who will grow up to automatically cherish you simply b/c you are mom & dad.

But in reality, there are just tons of teens who are facing tomorrow knowing they are completely alone. Desperately latching onto anyone that will pause enough for them to know, or rejecting everyone thinking they can do it alone.

Imagine going to college without someone to call home to on the weekend. Imagine falling in love without a mother's shoulder to cry on when it goes downhill. A trip down the aisle to the Wedding March without a dad to escort you.

Children born without grandparents to send huge bears and balloons. First home purchased and decorated and no parents to have over to exclaim how lovely it is.

First car purchased without a parent to glare down the dealer into a reasonable price.

You get the picture. It isn't about us, it's about making sure that every child has a family.

I'm not perfect, how can I expect a perfect child?

This information was copied from the following website:

<http://pflagfostermom.blogspot.com/2008/03/reasons-to-foster-or-adopt-teens.html>

A Family For Every Child  
880 Beltline Rd.  
Springfield OR 97477  
1-877-343-2856