

From: Nora Sharp [christy@afamilyforeverychild.ccsend.com] on behalf of Nora Sharp [nora.sharp@afamilyforeverychild.org]
Sent: Friday, July 19, 2013 8:46 AM
To: scott@afamilyforeverychild.org
Subject: Matching-Eight Lessons That Apply to Older Child Adoption

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)

February 2013

A Family for Every Child

Eight things about older child adoption that every family should know.

Adopting an Older Child

Adopting an older child definitely has its rewards. A lot of families fear that they will miss out on a lot of "firsts" if they adopt a teenager, but that's not necessarily true. There are so many firsts to be had with an older child—their first dance, first college visit, first date, first family holiday, etc. But with those rewards come some unique challenges. He/she will come with their own unique personality that they have developed over the years, and a set of expectations about what life will be like in your home. Together you will be combining good and bad experiences, and that will make for some interesting days in your home. Luckily, you are not alone! Below are eight lessons from adoptive parents that they learned when they adopted an older child.



Eight Lessons Every Adoptive Family Should Know

1) **Give it time.** When a child is removed from his birth family at an older age, it's due either to abuse (physical/and or sexual), neglect, or abandonment. Once he is in the system, the child may have faced more trauma, including multiple moves. Years spent in an orphanage also take their toll.

We've begun to understand approximately how long it takes for a child to heal. If the child is 10, there were 120 months he didn't have you. Divide that time by three. For the 10-year-old, it will be about 40 months, or three-and-a-half years. This may be difficult for parents to accept. We live in a culture of instant fixes, but these children need time. Relax, and stay in it for the long haul.

2) **Review your preservice handouts.** It is easy to sit in foster classes and say, "I am a good parent. My child will not act like that." Reality is different. Recently, I worked with a mom who adopted as a single parent. She later married, and her spouse decided to attend the classes. Week after week, he came back with handouts and said, "They did tell you everything. You just ignored it." The challenges they were experiencing were normal, after all.

It's common to feel anger and sadness because you weren't there to protect your child before he came to you. You will also feel isolated. Unfortunately, no one will call you; you have to do the reaching out. Find an in-person or online support group. Read books and informational websites. Contact local agencies or your social worker and ask what support they provide.

3) **Help your child heal by integrating his past with yours.** Ask him how his other families celebrated holidays and birthdays. Maybe you can prepare a favorite dish or continue one of the traditions. Find safe people from the past (former foster parents, siblings, maybe birth family members) with whom the child can retain connections. Some foster parents will offer to provide childcare (formally, respite) to give you an occasional break.

4) **Take care of yourself and your partner.** How to do this? Get up 15 minutes earlier and have coffee together. Look into respite care and/or find a reliable babysitter (perhaps a student studying psychology, social work, or physical therapy at a local university) and go to dinner. Treat yourself to something that makes you feel good—a massage, a pedicure, or a swim. Give yourself two evenings a month to walk away, and allow your spouse the same. Don't criticize how your spouse handles things while you're away.

5) **Your child may not talk about them, but she cares about past siblings.** A child adopted from foster care may have full, half, step, or foster siblings. Children adopted internationally may miss the other children in the orphanage. Talk about them, observe a ritual. One family I work with has a sibling "unbirthday" once a year. As they eat cake, they figure out how old all of the children's siblings are.

They pray for them, tell stories, and laugh and cry about them. If they are in contact with any, they visit or e-mail them.

6) **You won't be able to do this alone.** Children adopted from foster care often have fragmented development. A 10-year-old may have the physical coordination and emotional age of a three-year-old, the intelligence of an 11-year-old, and the social skills of a two-year-old. This child needs services at school and at home. Whether you're looking for a psychologist, occupational therapist, or another provider, try to find someone who understands trauma, grief, and abuse. Ask for recommendations from a local agency or other parents.

7) **Have fun. Loads of fun.** This will build attachment. Do not make the child earn his fun. He deserves it. Don't make fun contingent on behavior ("I'll take you to the football game Friday if you are good all week"). On Friday, just decide that you want to go, and then go. No one is going to attach to a mean, grumpy, angry parent who is never fun.

8) **The child may never be whom you envisioned.** You may not be the parents he envisioned. Maybe he would prefer someone richer, less angry, more understanding, younger, and so on. But here you are together, building a family. Someone once said, "Love does not cure these children, but without love they can not begin to heal."

-Regina M. Kupecky, LSW, treats children with attachment disorders at the Attachment and Bonding Center (ABC) of Ohio. She is a co-author of a therapeutic workbook *A Foster-Adoption Story, Parenting the Hurt Child, and Adopting the Hurt Child*.

[Source.](#)

Foster Care Adoption Statistics

Estimated number of children in U.S. foster care: 400,540

Waiting to be adopted: 104,236

Waiting and legally free: 61,361

Average age: 8 years

Younger than 2 years: 13%

White: 40% **Black:** 28% **Hispanic:** 22%

Boys: 53% **Girls:** 47%

Estimated number of children adopted from foster care in 2011: 50, 516

Average age when adopted: 6.4 years

Receiving an ongoing financial subsidy: 90%

After reading those statistics, you can see why older child adoption is becoming more and more prevalent. The average age of a child in foster care is 8 years old. Being open with your child preferences to include an older child will expedite the matching process somewhat. Opening your child preferences to include older children will not only help you get matched sooner, but it will mean that a child will leave foster care sooner and have the opportunity to know what a forever family is. If you can open up your preferences to include an older child, I really encourage you to do so. If you are struggling to get matched and to find children to submit for, I encourage you to take a look at your child preferences, and see if you can stretch them to include an older child. There are so many joys, rewards and firsts associated with adopting an older child, and I ask that you consider it if you can.

Stay Connected



[Forward this email](#)



Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to cbobie@aol.com by nora.sharp@afamilyforeverychild.org | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).
A Family For Every Child | 1675 W 11th Avenue | Eugene | OR | 97402

THIS IS A TEST EMAIL ONLY.

This email was sent by the author for the sole purpose of testing a draft message. If you believe you have received the message in error, please contact the author by replying to this message. Constant Contact takes reports of abuse very seriously. If you wish to report abuse, please forward this message to abuse@constantcontact.com.