

From: Scott Corcoran [scott@afamilyforeverychild.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2013 3:54 PM
To: scott@afamilyforeverychild.org
Subject: Talking to your child about their adoption



Dear ,
Having the adoption talk can be scary and stressful for parents. Trying to figure out the right words and timing can be difficult, especially if your child was removed from their home due to violence, abuse, or neglect. The following tips from The Kinship Center and an adoptive mother should help you discuss adoption with your child.

Tips for Talking to Children About Their Story:

- Talk to your children early on, and tailor the story to match your child's developmental level
- Tell the truth. You want to build a relationship with your child based on honesty, and it's much easier to be truthful from the start than to have to retract what you said later on.
- Be as accurate as possible. Not all the details surrounding a child's history may be available to you or their worker, but do your best to tell your child all that you know. If you don't, they will most likely create their own version which may place the blame on themselves and make them feel ashamed.
- Keep your own feelings, biases and triggers in check when talking to your child about their story. If you need to, seek out professional help talk to someone about your feelings.
- Learn how to become comfortable with the subject matter. Talk to other adoptive parents, or practice with your partner, adoption worker, therapist, or trusted friend or family member. Your body language, tone, and facial expressions will display your level of comfort/discomfort, and your child will pick up on that. If you come across as uncomfortable, your child may interpret that as shame, leading them to believe that he/she must have done something bad.
- Seek out support groups and counseling if you need to grieve about your child's past. This will allow you to be present and give comfort and support to your child.
- You can tell your child that you are sad/angry about what happened to him/her, and that you will make it your mission to keep them safe.
- Practice self-care so you can grieve properly with your child, rather than rushing him/her through the adoption process by trying to cheer them up.
- Make it clear that what happened to the child was not his/her fault.
- If your child was sexually abused, be prepared to talk to him/her about how our bodies are designed to be aroused, and as a result even painful abuse may have had aspects that felt good. Assure your child that this is not their fault. Feelings of shame and guilt are often associated with sexual abuse, and children have a hard time with their emotions surrounding their past abuse.

The above suggestions come from [Your Child's Story: Tips from an Adoptive Parent](#) (PDF) on the ATTACH website.

Additional Information

Read one woman's story about answering her child's questions about what would have happened to her had she not been adopted. Chicago Now: [What Would Have Happened to Me if You Didn't Adopt Me?](#)

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