

*Adoptions
with Love*



*A Guide to
Transracial Adoption
For Adoptive Families*

Table of Contents



Introduction	1
What is Transracial Adoption?	2
Tips for Adoptive Parents	3
What to Expect as a Mixed-Race Family	4
How to Talk to Your Children About Race	6
How to Embrace Your Child's Background	7
Where to find support	8
Conclusion	9



Transracial Adoption

In this guide, we will discuss what prospective parents should know about adopting a child of another race.

Introduction



Raising a child is a dream-come-true for many families, and adoption helps make that possible. Adoption helps families come to fruition and flourish and brings so much love and fulfillment to adoptive parents. Without adoption, parenthood is not always attainable for these couples and individuals. Parents who have grown their families through adoption understand the deep love and happiness that a child can bring.

Along with this happiness, of course, parenthood can also bring many challenges. All parents, whether adoptive or biological, can attest to this simple truth: **Parenthood is hard.** Throughout the years of a child's life, moms and dads everywhere struggle with behavior and safety. We all want our children to be safe, healthy, and happy.

"It takes a village," as the old African proverb goes. As parents, we want to make sure that our "village" is filled with supportive and compassionate individuals. We also want to make sure that we, as parents, are always supporting our children in the best way possible. For adoptive families, this often means open communication and exposure to the child's ethnic roots.

In 2020, Americans witnessed – and experienced – a renewed push for social justice. The public conversation focused on race and the large role it plays in our country today. As we look toward a better future for our children, we want to consider those families who have, and those who will have, **transracial adoptions.**

If you are planning to adopt, or have already adopted, a child of a race that is different from yours, this guide is for you. Here, we will discuss some of the most important topics regarding transracial adoption, and help you navigate the transracial adoption journey.





What is Transracial Adoption?

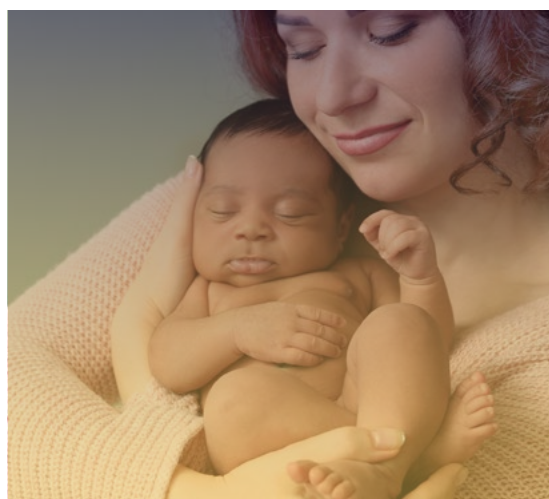
Transracial adoption happens when a child of one race or ethnic group is placed with adoptive parents of another race or ethnic group.

Some families seek to adopt children of a particular race or culture because of their own ancestry, or through personal life experiences such as travel or military service. Many families want to adopt a child in need of a good home, no matter the race or ethnic background. After all, family is based on love, not DNA.

Adoption experts have many varying opinions about transracial adoption and how children should be placed. Ultimately, the goal is to place children of all races with safe, stable, and loving homes. Most agree that, when placing a child of color with a Caucasian family, it is important to prepare the adoptive family for their experience.

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, the number of transracial adoptions in the U.S. is increasing every year. In fact, a recent survey from the Department of Health and Human Services found that more than 40 percent of adoptions today are transracial.

This adoption dynamic receives attention because of the social challenges it can present. It raises questions surrounding the impact that transracial adoption can have on a child. It also calls attention to the varying parenting approaches and the way race is, and should be, handled among adoptive families.



Family is Founded on Love

Families are based on love, not DNA. Today, 40% of adoptions involve transracial families and children.

Tips for Adoptive Parents



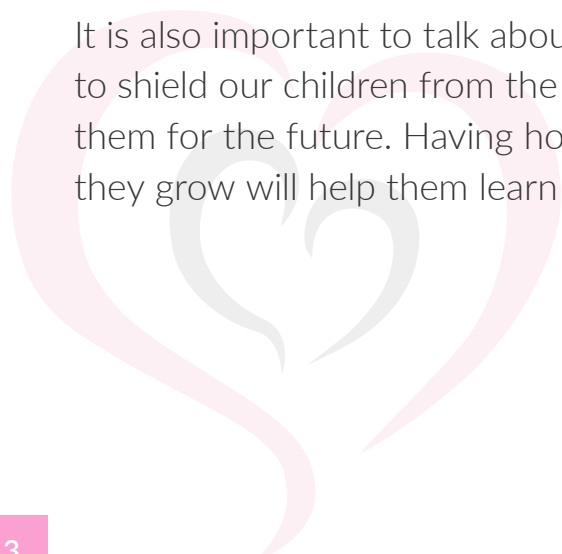
Before adopting a child of a different race than your own, it is important to consider your current circumstances and environment.

- Do you live in a diverse neighborhood?
- If not, are you willing to move to a neighborhood that has a more culturally diverse population?
- Will your child be the only one of his race at school, or are there students of all backgrounds there?
- Do you have friends of other races and ethnic groups?
- Do you explore various cultures, such as attending festivals and trying different ethnic foods? If not, are you willing to start?
- How big of a change would this require on your end?

We know that representation is important. It is important for a child of color, that is growing up with Caucasian parents particularly, to be immersed in various races and ethnic groups. Adoptive parents are, of course, excellent role models for a growing child, but it is important that the child also have role models from their own race or ethnic group.

It is also important to celebrate your child's race or ethnic group. In the past few years, many white families who were taught to "not see color" – to treat everyone equally – have come to learn that this **is not** the right approach. It is important to teach our children that skin color is nothing to be ashamed of, but rather, something to be celebrated. Acknowledging your child's race and celebrating all cultures should be a priority in your home.

It is also important to talk about race and culture openly. As much as we want to shield our children from the harsh realities of the world, it is better to prepare them for the future. Having honest, open, and age-appropriate conversations as they grow will help them learn the importance of racial equality.



What to Expect as a Mixed-Race Family



Transracial adoption is a wonderful act of love, but it can present unique challenges that families of the same race may not experience. When families set out to adopt a child of a different race, it is important that they prepare for the road ahead.

When you adopt a child of another race or culture, it is not just the child who is “different.” Your family becomes a mixed-race family. Today, many people are comfortable with difference. To these people, different means interesting, wonderful, and special. They understand that this country was built from immigrants and a mix of ethnicities from all over the world. However, some individuals may not understand difference, and therefore are scared by it. When families adopt a child of a different race, they will notice the friends and relatives who are supportive and accepting but may encounter others who make negative comments and stare. According to an article from Time Magazine, children of color can experience prejudice as early as preschool. Therefore it is important to have age-appropriate conversations with children as early as infancy. More on that to come.



Talking About Race

It is important to talk about - and celebrate - your differences as a mixed-race family. This is beneficial for your child.

What to Expect as a Mixed-Race Family *continued*



Adoptive parents should also prepare for the way their child will feel about their own identity. Looking one way but feeling another can be common among adopted children. How your child presents to others will have an impact on how they identify. It is important to acknowledge any conflicted feelings and explore them with your child. Navigating this new territory can be challenging – particularly for Caucasian parents who want to be sensitive but have not lived the experience of a person of color. It is important to support your child and let them know that they are not alone.

As a child grows, it is natural for them to start observing physical characteristics that they may share with family members. Children who have been adopted, regardless of race, may start to notice physical differences between them and family members. This can raise questions for your child regarding their own identity and may bring up feelings of isolation. It is important for adoptive parents to address this appropriately through open communication about how everyone is unique, as well as find ways to incorporate their child's background or race into their everyday lives.

These steps can help foster a sense of belonging. Some adoptive parents consider adopting siblings of the same race or ethnic group of their child for this very reason. Having other family members, or at least close friends, who are an important part of your child's life are important in helping your child feel like they belong. It is also important to remind your child that a family is made from love, not DNA or skin color. We are all different, and that is something that should be celebrated.



Support Your Child

Have open and honest conversations with your child. Let them know you are there to answer questions or listen to their concerns.

How to Talk to Your Children About Race



Speaking to your adoptive child about race is important, particularly if your child is a person of color. Gone are the days of pretending to be “color blind.” It is critical to show your child that you see them for all that they are, including the color of their skin. White people are known to sweep this issue under the rug, even with good intentions, claiming that they see people’s souls and not their skin color. Having open and honest conversations, while it may feel uncomfortable at times, is important, as it shows your child that they are able to speak freely about their feelings and ask questions regarding their race, without fear of punishment.

There are many resources to help you get these conversations started. From books on racism to communities that share the same race or ethnic group as your child, there are many valuable resources wherein to turn. If you are an adoptive parent looking for resources on transracial adoption, you can also contact your adoption agency or Adoptions With Love.

A child’s pre-verbal phase of life is the time to lay a foundation for important conversations surrounding race, racism, and self-identity. It is important, before you start, to understand the difference between race, ethnicity, culture, heritage, nationality, and identity. There are many books, toys, and media that can help provide visual representations for your child’s ethnic heritage. For black and brown children, for example, the following children’s books are great for exploring and celebrating diversity:

- “Skin Like Mine” by Latashia M. Perry
- “I am Enough” by Grace Byers
- “All Because You Matter” by Tami Charles

As your child grows and takes notice of the comments made by others, ask your child questions to start an open and honest conversation. If your child hears or uses a certain racial or ethnic term, ask them how the word makes them feel. Does it make them feel proud? Uncomfortable? Uncertain? Put aside your own uncertainty and let your child know they are in a safe place to share these feelings. Be there to support them while helping them boost their own confidence in their identity and self-worth.

How to Embrace Your Child's Background



Honoring your child's race or ethnic group is important. In doing this, you can help your child feel a strong sense of self-worth and identity. You will also strengthen the bond that you already share. A parent is a child's first love, first friend, and first trusted confidant. Sharing support and pride in your child's background will be the boost they need to gain confidence in their place in the world.

There are many ways to celebrate your child's ethnic roots. Your adoption agency may be able to help provide you with reputable sources and local groups specific to your needs. In addition, it is important to find cultural events, places, and groups that celebrate your child's background. Find the festivals and restaurants that highlight cultures all over the world but be sure to find as many opportunities as you can to honor your child's own roots, too. Perhaps having a pediatrician or teacher of the same race would also be helpful to your child.

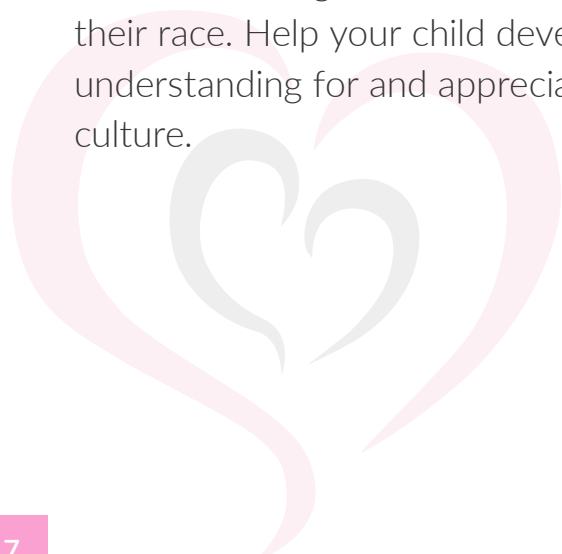
Do your research. If your child's lineage traces back to Mexico, learn about Mexico's history and culture. Consider learning the language, cooking traditional foods, and listening to the native music. Share this knowledge and these traditions with your child. Not only will it help your child, but it will also help you gain understanding of this part of the world and feel even more connected with your child.

As you learn about your child's background, it is important to steer clear of stereotypes that are sometimes perpetuated in modern society and entertainment. Be sure that your child knows about significant historical figures within their race. Help your child develop a deep understanding for and appreciation of this culture.



Celebrate Differences

Educate yourself about your child's ethnic background and culture. Incorporate learnings into your home and traditions.





Where to Find Support

There are many places wherein to find support for your transracial adoption. The first place to turn, of course, is your adoption agency. You want to find an adoption agency that has experience with transracial adoption. Look for an adoption specialist that works as an advocate for children of all races and ethnicities. This kind of adoption professional will be there for you when you need support the most. Adoptions With Love has been placing children with their families for more than 35 years. Our experience with transracial adoption can help you as you navigate these uncharted waters. Our compassionate staff is always happy to offer resources, advice, and a listening ear for open and honest conversations.

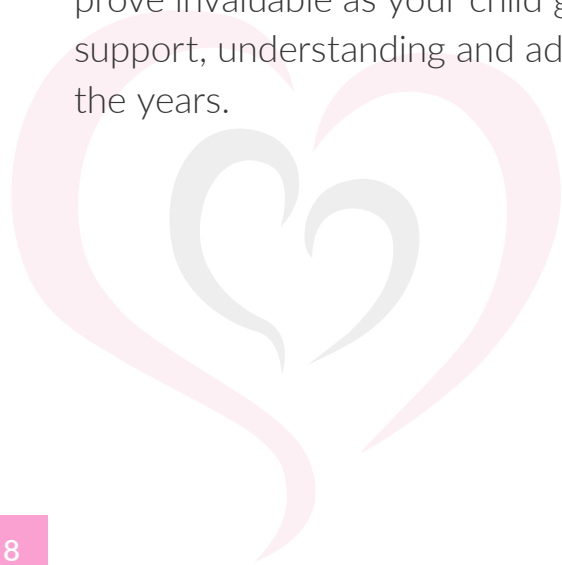
Another great source of support can be found in transracial adoption groups. There are many groups on Facebook or other social media platforms and chat forums. The internet can be a great place for support because many feel some anonymity when posting questions that may be uncomfortable to ask in person. If you would rather find an in-person group, you can also find those in your area, as well. Your adoption agency can point you in the right direction if you are looking for a local community facility.

Additionally, look to your inner circle for support. It is important to find family and friends who are educated in, aware of, and sensitive to racial matters. Build your tribe. Lean on your most trustworthy and understanding friends for support. Forge relationships with people who share your child's race or ethnic background. These friendships will prove invaluable as your child grows, offering support, understanding and advice throughout the years.



Expand Your Circle

When adopting a child of another race, help them feel a sense of belonging by connecting with other people that look like your child.





Conclusion

Adoption is an incredible act of love, and race and ethnic background is an important aspect to all involved. At Adoptions With Love, we know that families are built out of love, not DNA. The child you adopt and raise is **your child**, no matter the differences between you. Love is more than skin deep, but color is something that should never be ignored or dismissed. It is important to honor, celebrate, and embrace your child's race and ethnic background. Learn about your child's heritage, and help them to learn about it, too. Find ways to incorporate your child's culture into your home, from the interior design to the weeknight meals eaten on a regular basis.

It is also important to acknowledge systemic racism as a very real problem in the world today. As parents, we want to protect our children from anything scary or hurtful but sheltering your child will not prepare them for the harsh realities of life. With open, honest, and age-appropriate conversations about race and racism, your child will grow up feeling seen and heard. Your child will also know that their parents are aware of the prejudice and unfair treatment they may receive, as they go out into the world. Your child will feel supported and validated as a person of color.

If you would like more information regarding transracial adoption, contact Adoptions With Love at any time. Our dedicated staff will help support and guide you through this life-long journey that is – while challenging at times – incredibly rewarding and full of love. [Contact us online.](#)



Stay Aware & Supportive

In our world today, racism and prejudices still exist. As a parent, always stay educated, aware, open, empathetic, and supportive.