

Adoptions
with Love

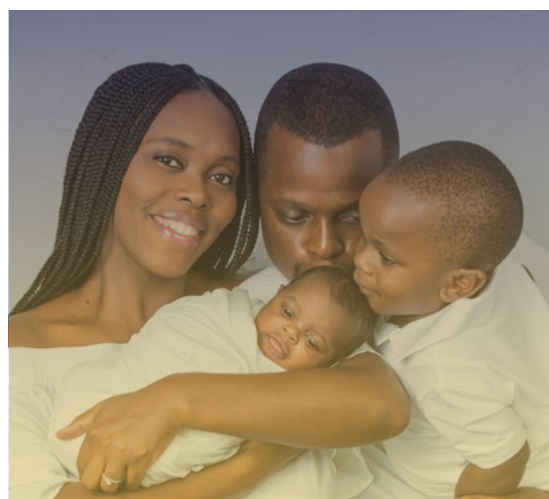


*Adopting After You
Have Children:
A Guide for Families*

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Growing through Adoption

Learn how to prepare your children for a new sibling, and raise biological and adopted children together in a blended family.

Introduction



In modern society, there are all types of families and family make-ups. There is not one, single definition of family—however, there is one common thread: families are formed with love. Similarly, there is no “right” or “wrong” way to build a family. You can become a parent by birth, IVF, surrogacy, and adoption. Some parents use a combination of these methods to grow their families.

You may be here now because you are considering adoption to complete your family. You are already raising a child (or children) at home and are looking for advice on adding another member to your family. You are in the right place.

Adopting a baby after starting your family can feel like a complicated decision at first, but it can also be a very positive one. Adoption is a wonderful option for those who cannot – or who can no longer – have children biologically, whether that is due to infertility or changing family dynamics. Adoption can provide your child(ren) with a sibling to love, as well as teach them about the loving choice of adoption. It also teaches the important lesson of inclusion, showing that families are more than just DNA.

Adopting a baby after having children is a positive choice. Raising children – no matter how they come into your family – is very rewarding and challenging at times. Raising children that come from different backgrounds can bring its own set of unique challenges. On top of this, you will want to prepare your child(ren) for the arrival of their future sibling.

If you are looking to expand your family via adoption, read on. In this guide, we will share tips on how to prepare your child (or children) for a new sibling, how to get ready to welcome another baby home, how to raise biological and adopted children together in a blended family, and much more.



Considering Adoption

Adoption is a very positive choice. As you consider this option, make sure your family is on the same page and involved in the process.

Considerations Before Adopting



There are many reasons families want to adopt after having a biological child – or adopting for a second (or third or fourth!) time. Whether you have struggled with infertility, or you have always had this adoption plan in your heart, you now feel ready to pursue adoption. Discuss this decision with your partner, if you have one, as it is life changing for everyone in the family. Once you are on the same page, you will want to take the following into account:

- **Birth order.** Children naturally fall into their place in the family, and this often happens depending on the order in which they were born. Frequently, families choose to adopt a child or baby that is younger than the youngest child in the house. This may not be the right choice for everyone, but it is one that typically works well for other children, as it maintains birth order and family roles that already exist within the home.
- **Age gap.** How old will your child (or children) be when the new addition joins the family? Will they be old enough to “help out” around the house? Even children as young as two can play a part in helping get a diaper or sing for baby. Think about the age gap you would like your children to have. For some families, bigger age gaps can make life a little easier. For others, a smaller age gap means better play between siblings and lifelong friendships. Consider what you would like your family to look like, in terms of the ages of the children in the house, and this may help you decide when you would like to adopt.
- **Adoption options.** There are many paths to take to grow a family through adoption. Some of the most popular choices include:
 - Foster care adoption
 - Private, domestic infant adoption
 - International adoption

Many families today prefer private, domestic adoption as it enables them to adopt a newborn baby. This helps preserve birth order and avoids many of the challenges that come with foster care and international adoption. [You can learn about your options as a family here.](#)

Preparing Your Child for a Sibling



Adopting a child is a big step. Adopting a child when there is already a child (or children) in the house makes this decision more complicated.. It may seem overwhelming to explain the adoption to your child at first, but there are plenty of resources available to make the process easier. It is important that the other members of the family are well-prepared for the adoption, by first understanding what adoption is, how it works, and that it is a normal, positive choice.

In general, children should never be treated differently than one another at home, whether they were adopted, were born biologically, or welcomed via another method like surrogacy. At the end of the day, all your children should be cared for and loved. This is an expectation you can help set with your child(ren) leading up to the adoption. A new child will not take away the love you have for them. You can also help to instill pride in your adoption journey and help them learn to be proud of this choice for your family.

Here are some of the many ways to prepare your child(ren) for the adoption:

- **Start simple.** Depending on your child's age and stage of development, you may choose to broach the topic with age-appropriate books, movies, and TV shows about adoption.
- **Consider their feelings and opinions.** Before moving forward with the adoption, check in with your child (or children) for their thoughts regarding adoption. This is a good opportunity to teach them about adoption.
- **Get them involved.** Children want to feel they are an important part of the family – and they are! Keep them in the loop on what is happening with the adoption and where you are in the process. Check in with them every step of the way.
- **Explain and remind** them that family is made from love and that your love for them will never change, even with the addition of a new sibling.
- **Validate any emotions** that your child (or children) may have before, during, and after the adoption is complete.
- Keep the conversations **age appropriate.**

You can – and should – lean on your adoption specialist for more guidance throughout the adoption process, even when it comes to preparing other children or siblings in the family.

Welcoming Baby Home



Adopting your child – and bringing baby home – is an exciting moment for any family. When you have another child (or children) at home, consider a little extra planning prior to your baby's arrival. For example, you might ask yourself:

- ***Will you all go to the hospital together as a family?***
- ***What are your sleeping arrangements going to be?***
- ***Will your child (or children) need to share or change rooms?***

These are just a few of the considerations that parents of multiple children should discuss before welcoming a baby home.

Once everyone is settled at home, you will want to settle into your daily routine. Life with a newborn can be challenging. Many new parents struggle with the lack of sleep, particularly the second time around when there are other little ones to care for at home. Depending on your older child's age, you may find that you now have two little ones taking daily naps. If you can, try coordinating their naps at the same time so that you can get a break occasionally.

If you have a supportive extended family and network of friends, you may also want to lean on them for help. It is important that loved ones are all on the same page when it comes to the new family dynamic. Their awareness of and respect for adoption is important. Children are always listening – and if they are hearing negative comments or misinformation, it can send a confusing message. You may want to consider teaching close family relatives about positive adoption language. Your relatives must understand and respect the fact that your newly adopted baby is, in fact, your child's "real" sibling. Your baby is just as real and just as much a part of the family as anyone else at home. Hearing positive messages about adoption can make a world of difference when an older sibling is welcoming a newly adopted baby into the family.



The Transition Period

Welcoming any child into the family requires an adjustment period. Spend time with each of your children and have open conversations.

Raising Biological and Adopted Children



Growing up in a blended family can be a wonderful experience for children. It helps them learn, at an early age, that families come together in multiple ways.

When you adopt a child after having biological children, or having adopted previously, know that the transition may not be seamless at first. There is a possibility of developmental regression in your child, as the new baby may receive a lot of attention in the first few months. You can help prevent this by laying the groundwork for your child ahead of time. Let them know they may experience feelings of jealousy, or things may be disproportionate for a bit as the family adjusts. Babies have needs that older children do not. Allow your child to share their feelings openly with you and encourage them to talk to you if they are feeling upset. It can also help to schedule one-on-one time with each of your children to help mitigate any regression.

If you are adopting an older child or toddler, be aware of their possible regressions, as well. They may be feeling overwhelmed, scared, or lacking confidence in their new home. They may act out or cling closely to you during the adjustment period. This is normal. It can also help to prepare your existing child for these potential dynamics. If this is the case, you may want to plan on being home full-time for several months during the adjustment.



The Sibling Bond

While it can take time, your children will begin to develop deep, meaningful relationships that will last forever.

Raising Biological and Adopted Children *continued*



While it can take some time to adjust to a new family dynamic, most adopted and biological children – or adopted children from different birth families – have no problem getting along with one another over time. As they grow comfortable, your children will begin to develop deep, meaningful relationships that can last a lifetime. This bond is beautiful to witness.

Of course, along with that deep bond comes the very common – and normal – sibling rivalry. There will be moments of arguing and fighting. Give your children the space needed to develop their own relationship and navigate their disagreements safely. There will be times when you need to step in, just as you would with any sets of siblings, but typical bickering is all part of the experience as they build their lifelong bond.

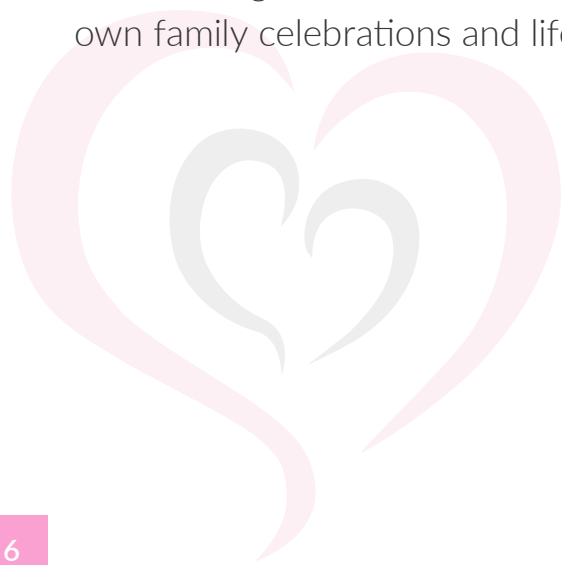
One other consideration to keep in mind when adopting is that, more than likely, your children will not look the same. Children who are not genetically related to their parents or siblings often do not share the physical resemblance that is noticed in biological families. Physical and ethnic differences are more obvious in transracial adoptive families. It is important to teach your children about adoption and diversity. Remind them that these differences are beautiful and something worth celebrating. As a transracial family, you will need to navigate the questions and sometimes racist comments of others.

If one or more of your children comes from a different cultural background, be sure to celebrate their heritage and work those traditions into your own family celebrations and life.



Celebrating Differences

Your children may not look the same. Always celebrate diversity and your differences as a family. Families are built on love, not DNA.



Adjusting to Life as a Blended Family



Navigating life as a blended family is a different experience, though not uncommon. More families – particularly in the U.S. – are growing through adoption. While it is becoming more common to see these modern families, it is still less common than the traditional family dynamic.

Part of adjusting to life as a blended family is learning how to deal with the comments of others. Physical differences between siblings and parents can spark unsolicited opinions or questions, and can sometimes lead to children feeling singled out, hurt, or as though they do not belong. There are many resources to help handle these comments, however rude and uncalled for they may be. Frequent conversations with your children can help them understand what is happening when outsiders make these remarks and can help them deal with others' comments when they are on their own at school or with friends.

The adjustment to life as a blended family can be challenging for transracial families. Racial inequality continues to be a topic of conversation in America. We continue to live in an age where a lack of education and understanding can cause unwanted, negative comments from others. This is something that many adoptive families deal with occasionally. Families must have these important conversations with their children regarding these comments. Education starts at home.

As your child (or children) adjusts to having a new sibling, allow them time to get to know one another naturally. This is something that does not need to be forced, and, in fact, bonds will blossom much better when left to happen on their own. Give it time and be patient. This is one of the most rewarding adjustments you will experience – and it is well worth the wait.



Setting the Tone

You, as a parent, set the tone. Do not categorize your children as “adopted” or “biological.” Avoid favoritism. Always encourage love.

Reach Out for Help



If you or your children are having trouble adjusting to the new family dynamic, or you are noticing some challenges in terms of your child's behavior, you may want to consider reaching out for some help. Your adoption agency is available for you to help navigate post-adoption challenges, conversations, and life in general.

If you live and are adopting in Massachusetts, Adoptions With Love can help. In addition to offering [all adoption services](#) for Massachusetts families, we also help guide families through the post-adoption adjustment period. Our services extend well beyond the finalization of your adoption. Our adoptive families are a part of our family, and we will always be here to offer guidance and support.

There are many other places to seek help as you adjust to life as a blended family. There are online resources – such as Facebook groups and support groups – wherein you may connect with others who have similar family dynamics and have shared experiences in parenting. There are also many books, blogs, and podcasts wherein you may find sage wisdom that helps you settle into your new, wonderful life.

There are many more resources with information about parenting both adopted and biological siblings together, such as:

- [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
- [Creating a Family – The National Infertility & Adoption Education Nonprofit](#)
- [Adoptive Families](#)
- [North American Council on Adoptive Siblings](#)

If you are looking for even more resources to help guide you through this adjustment period, reach out to your adoption professional or Adoptions With Love.



Final Tips for Parents Considering Adoption



Children bring a great sense of joy and purpose to our lives. Whether you are looking to adopt after having biological children, you have married someone who already has children, or you are adopting for a second (or third) time, you may be ready to expand your family through adoption. You are about to embark on one of the most exciting chapters of your life!

Being prepared for this major life change is key. Preparing your child (or children) at home will prove to be crucial in their adjustment to life with a new sibling. Get ready to have multiple, age-appropriate conversations about life with a new adoptive sibling. Include your child in the “getting ready” for the new baby.

As you settle into your new family dynamic, remember that you – the parent – set the tone. Make it clear through your actions that you do not categorize your children as “adopted” or “biological.” They are simply your children. Children pick up on parents’ attitudes and follow their lead. Setting the right tone will help things fall into place organically.

You will also want to consider your child’s (or children’s) feelings and remember to avoid favoritism. When possible, avoid giving your newly adopted child special treatment that your other child did not receive at the same age. This will help avoid favoritism and, therefore, resentment between siblings.

Be prepared for ups and downs during this transition. Parenting is a joy, but it is also hard work. There will be challenges, of course, and there may even be moments of prejudice and unfair treatment that your family may face. However, any adoptive family will tell you that the journey is well worth it. The bonds that you will create will be incredibly gratifying. You will finally be able to complete your family and fill the spaces in your heart. Your children will grow up feeling supported, loved, and inspired by their siblings. This is a true gift for parents.

For even more information about adopting after having children, contact Adoptions With Love. Our experienced and compassionate staff can help you navigate this journey as you grow your family. Reach out to us any time of day, any day of the week. Call us toll-free at 800-722-7731 or [contact us online](#).