



Empowering Your Children to Share Their Adoption Stories

Helping your children to share their adoption story can have far-reaching benefits for your children, your family, and the community surrounding you. By helping your children share their story, you also help them to own their story.

It's natural to want to share your children's adoption story with others, but as adoptees, their stories belong solely to them. As parents, you may feel as though the story belongs to you as much as your children, but in truth, these are two separate journeys: yours and your children's.

How it helps your children

By allowing your children to tell their adoption story in their own way, you may find that your child may not feel comfortable sharing parts of his or her story, and that's okay.

You may also find some inaccuracies in your child's story. It could be that your younger child doesn't fully understand the process of adoption, or your older child feels embarrassed by certain events that occurred as part of the adoption process.

Identifying inaccuracies will help you work with your child to overcome some of the reasons they may feel uncomfortable sharing certain parts of their story, while at the same time reassuring them that they only have to share what they feel comfortable sharing.

How it helps your community

When your children feel empowered to share their stories, they can help teachers, friends, neighbors and even strangers understand what adoption is and what it means. Being open about it helps them understand the world of adoption better and hopefully they learn some positive adoption language as well.

Knowing when not to share

While teaching your children that it's good to share their adoption story, they should also know that it's okay not to share, too.

There may be times when they don't feel comfortable answering the question that was asked of them or they simply don't want to share at that particular time.

In those cases, you can empower them to share a fact about adoption to the

person asking them their story. You may want to teach your child some interesting facts about adoption that are easy to remember, so that they can easier deflect questions.

For example, if your neighbor asks your son if he was placed for adoption because his mother was too poor to take care of him, he might tell the neighbor, "My birth country has an excellent adoption system, and it's culturally acceptable for infants to be placed with foster families who work with many international families."

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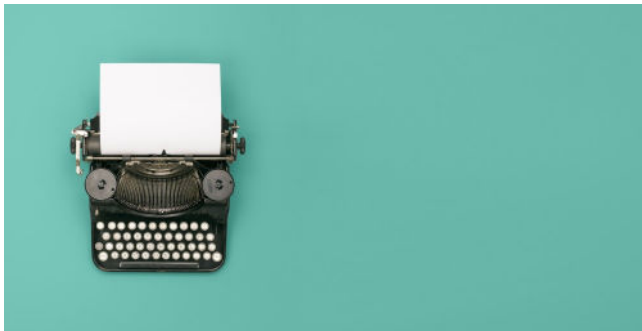
How to help your children with their stories

So *how* can you help your children share their stories? Start by having them tell you their story and allow them to ask questions. Answer their questions and talk about emotions that come up about their story. Try to help them identify their feelings, and if the opportunity presents itself, open up the topic for discussion. You might say, “I can’t imagine what it feels like to know your birth parents struggled a lot, but it sounds like you feel sad for them and maybe a little angry at the world for there to be such hard times in life.”

Have these initial talks in a private place and make sure they remain between you and your child, unless he or she gives you permission to share. Your child will likely be willing to ask more questions when it’s a private conversation. However, if you have other kids who were adopted, sometimes including them in adoption conversation is also helpful (while recognizing that each person’s story is different).

There are many places and situations in which the topic of adoption may arise. Talk about what places are the most appropriate to discuss adoption. Some examples could be:

- **School.** School assignments sometimes involve students revealing private information regarding their family. Talk with your child’s teachers ahead of time and introduce them to adoption friendly school assignments. If your child is uncomfortable with revealing their adoption story at school, then you will need to talk this through with your child ahead of time in order to address how



these assignments will be handled by you and your child.

- **Community.** If people have questions about being adopted, have your kids be ready with a response or something that they’re willing to share.
- **Religious organizations.** Your family’s church or other faith-based organization often has forums or “temple talks,” and maybe adoption is something you and your kids could talk about.
- **Family gatherings.** When spending time with members of their extended family, again, have your child be prepared ahead of time with something to say.
- **Employers.** When your children start working, they may wish to share their story or some facts about adoption with their employer or co-workers. Or, if appropriate, they might even share their story with *your* coworkers.
- **Personal journal.** Your children can write in a journal as therapy for themselves or to show others when they feel comfortable.

These are just a few examples of ways your children may feel comfortable sharing their story or some facts about adoption. Most of all, teach your children how to share safely. Make sure your children know that when sharing information about their adoption with someone outside of their safety zone (family members, close friends, teachers, etc.), not to share too many personal details.

They shouldn’t share their full name, where they currently live, or any other information that can identify them to a stranger or casual acquaintance who asks them a question in passing.

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Empowering your children to share their story with others, or to write it down for others to read, can be extremely rewarding for your children. Each child will have a different level of comfort in sharing his or her story and how much of it he or she might want to share.

Your children will most likely change their story over time as they feel more or less comfortable sharing certain aspects. They also may adjust their story depending on who they are telling it to.

When your children are sharing their adoption stories, they are educating others about adoption, they are owning the fact that they were adopted and they are proud to share their experiences with others.



Resources

From the [Lending Library](#)

- *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*, by Sherrie Eldridge
- *W.I.S.E. UP Curriculum*, by the Center for Adoption Support and Education

Additional Resources

- [Real Stories from FosterClub](#)